

## Department of Theology

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### GRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTION

Term: **Spring 2009**  
Instructor: Dr. Michel R. Barnes  
Course #: THEO 261  
Course Title: Augustine of Hippo

#### Content:

A study of the theology of St. Augustine through a detailed reading of significant works against the background of late fourth-early fifth century Latin theology. I make no claim that this course gives a comprehensive survey of Augustine's theology: Augustine's engagement with Donatism, for example, is wholly untouched, and the fine points of the theologies distinct to each of the stages of the "Pelagian controversy" are not treated. Rather, this course offers one way into the fundamentals of Augustine's theology, a way which stresses the significance of Augustine's writings just to either side of the turn of the fifth century. This course is "Confessions-driven," rather than "*Ep. Romans*-driven," "controversies-driven" or even broadly "theme-driven." The approach is chronological for as long as chronology works. Particular emphasis is laid upon the subject of Augustine's moral psychology.

Students (especially those with no doctoral level background in early Christianity) might usefully gain some helpful background for the course by reading Peter Brown, Augustine of Hippo, a book which is easily obtainable: it is the standard biography on Augustine, although it has almost no understanding of, or interest in, Augustine's theology. (This, I think, is part of its modern appeal.) Much else of what you "know" about Augustine will not only be irrelevant but an impediment to your progress in the course material.\*

#### Format:

Discussion of common readings in class. Close analysis of primary source readings in conjunction with secondary source background readings. Occasional mini-lecture overviews/introductions by professor. As always, the subject of the course is not only the "facts" about Augustine's life and thought, but an understanding of the logic or "grammar" of his theology, the significance of historical context for understanding Augustine's theology, and in general the acquisition of skills in the methodology distinctive to historical theology. Students are expected to develop a working knowledge of both content and method, and therefore significant emphasis will be placed on the acquisition of historical method. The course will require large amounts of reading.

#### Assignments and/or Examinations:

- Daily primary and secondary source readings
- Rotating responsibility for recording (and distributing) class notes
- Preparation of an assigned reading "Introduction"†
- A sixteen page "dense reading" (which replaces the usual assignment of a research essay) of a short passage in Augustine (pre-approved by me.)

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\* Go read the e-reserve, "Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology." An assignment!

† As part of your "Introduction" responsibilities you must bring to class the critical edition of that day's reading.