

Advanced Reading Course: Augustine's *Confessions* (7,5 ECTS credits)

Level: 1st cycle

Discipline: THEOLOGY (historical theology, systematic theology) or PHILOSOPHY

Course ID: 2016

Admission requirements

General admission requirements for university studies. 60 ECTS credits in theology or religious studies.

Educational goals

After completing the course, the student is expected to be able to:

- Identify and critically discuss the main themes in Augustine's *Confessions*.
- Develop a familiarity with key passages in the work.
- Experiment with different approaches to the interpretation of Augustine's work.
- Relate Augustine's life to the late-antique context.
- Read and evaluate scholarly literature on this work.
- Show knowledge of the reception of Augustine's *Confessions* and the impact of this book on Western intellectual tradition.

Course content

Besides many works of a theological nature, Augustine of Hippo (354–430 CE) also wrote a best-seller in the form of an autobiography entitled *Confessions*. This diary-style account set an important precedent for future biographical works both in terms of style, genre, and contents. It left memorable traces in subsequent literature for its spiritual depth and arresting images and became a paradigm of how to write a *Life*. Staying close to the text, this course will follow the development of Augustine's trajectory as a spiritually awake and aware human being from the different points of entry he suggests both for his private life and his public career. In the process, we will learn about the critical late antique period that marked his thought and discuss themes such as love, conversion, family relations, sex, friendship, rhetoric and language, sin and grace, orthodoxy and heresy, pride and humility.

Teaching and examination

Teaching will take place in the form of seminars where primary sources are discussed. Students are expected to prepare readings and actively participate in the discussion (10%) and make at least one

topical presentation with PPT assigned by the teacher (20%). The course will be examined through two written assignments in the form of short essays of 5-6 pages each (50%) and an oral exam of 3-4 questions covering the entire material in the course (20%). Course language will be English but written work can also be in Swedish.

Bibliography

Confessions. London: Penguin Classics, 2003./ *Bekännelser*. Skellefteå: Artos, 2003.

Fox, Robin Lane. *Augustine: Conversions and Confessions*. London: Penguin, 2015.

O'Donnell, James. *Commentary on the Confessions of Augustine: An electronic edition*. (1992).
<https://faculty.georgetown.edu/jod/conf/>

Toom, Tarmo, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine's 'Confessions'*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.

Wolfe, Suzanne M. *The Confessions of X: a Novel*. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 2016.

Reference literature:

Brown, Peter. *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*. University of California, 2013.

O'Donnell, James. *Augustine: A New Biography*. New York: HarperCollins, 2005.

Pollman, Karla, ed., *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*, 3 vols. Oxford, 2013.

Vessey, Mark, ed., *A Companion to Augustine*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2012.

See also "Kursplaner: allmänna bestämmelser" (Course plans: General rules)

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Valid as 2024-07-15