

Course Syllabus

Augustine for Postmoderns

Toronto School of Theology

June 1-11, Mondays-Thursdays, 9:00am-12:00pm

This description is intended to assist in the course approval process and to assist students in determining whether this course will help them achieve their educational objectives and the learning goals of their program. It is not a learning contract. The details of the description are subject to change before the course begins. The course syllabus will be available to the class at the beginning of the course.

Course Identification

Course Number: TRH 35XX/65XXH
Course Name: **Seminar with James A.K. Smith**
Campus: St. George

Instructor Information

Instructor: James K.A. Smith, PhD
E-mail: jkasmith@calvin.edu

Course Prerequisites or Requisites

N/A

Course Description

A seminar offered each summer on some aspect of the History of Theology with Professor James K.A. Smith, Visiting Distinguished Professor. Participants will explore one or more authors according to themes established by Professor Smith in his current research and writing.

Theme for Summer 2015: What could a fifth-century North African bishop possibly have to say to us secular cosmopolitans? Why read Augustine in our “secular age?” Because, in fact, our secular age is already an Augustinian age.

To tweak Faulkner just a bit, Augustine isn’t dead; he isn’t even past. We don’t need to engage in acrobatics of “relevance” to cultivate interest in a fifth-century North African bishop because, in a sense, he’s been with us this whole time: he just went underground. He is part of our cultural subconscious. And if you dig below the surface, you start to see him everywhere. You’ll notice that Hannah Arendt, under the (official) direction of Karl Jaspers (and the unofficial, er, “tutelage” of Martin Heidegger) did her dissertation on Augustine. Or that a fellow north African and existentialist, Albert Camus, also wrote a dissertation on Augustine and Neoplatonism.

The genealogy of an “existentialist” strain of 20th-century philosophy is quite directly Augustinian. In important ways, Heidegger’s *Being and Time* was the stone dropped in the pond of our complacency. His analysis of our pathetic, derivative conformity to the chattering of “the they,” coupled with his call for a resolute choice of a “project” that summons us to authenticity—these turn out to be Heidegger’s translations of Augustine into the language of phenomenology. While *Being and Time* seemed to drop from the sky, *sui generis*, in 1927, by the 1990s, when Heidegger’s early lectures from 1919-1923 began to be published in his *Gesamtausgabe* [Collected Works], we learned that his analysis was

far from original. In fact, we can see all of Heidegger's categories emerge in an important lecture course on—you guessed it—Augustine's *Confessions*.

This course will consider the theological significance of Augustine's enduring influence on philosophy (and culture) in the 20th and 21st century, exploring the direct Augustinian influence on contemporary theorists such as Martin Heidegger, Hannah Arendt, Albert Camus, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Francois Lyotard, Jean-Luc Marion, and John Milbank (and "Radical Orthodoxy" more broadly).

Course Methodology

This course will be conducted as something of a hybrid: each day, the first half of the class session will be devoted to a lecture by the instructor; the second half of each class session will be conducted as a seminar focused on discussion of the lecture alongside both primary and secondary texts. Students will have responsibility to lead at least one seminar discussion.

Course Outcomes

Students successfully completing this course will be able to:

- demonstrate familiarity with key themes and questions regarding Augustine's influence on contemporary philosophy and theology
- demonstrate a familiarity with the interactions between theology and contemporary Continental philosophy
- articulate critical grasp of Augustine's relevance to contemporary constructive theology
- critically assess appropriations of Augustine's thought in light of primary texts
- demonstrate developed skills in reading both primary and secondary sources
- demonstrate acquired skills in independent research, expression, and articulation

Course Resources

Required Course Texts

- Primary texts:
 - Augustine, *City of God*, trans. H. Bettenson (Penguin, 2003).
 - Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Chadwick (Oxford, 1992).
 - Augustine, *Teaching Christianity*, trans. E. Hill (New City Press, 1996)
- A course reader, compiled by the instructor, that will include readings from Martin Heidegger, Hannah Arendt, Albert Camus, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Francois Lyotard, John Milbank, and Jean-Luc Marion.

Course Website(s)

- Personal Website <http://www.calvin.edu/~jks4>

Evaluation

Requirements

Students will be assessed on their leadership of one seminar presentation (20%) and a final research project crafted in consultation with the instructor (80%).

Grading System

A+ (90-100)
A (85-89)
A- (80-84)
B+ (77-79)
B (73-76)
B- (70-72)
Failure

Please see the appropriate handbook for more details about the grading scale and non-numerical grades (e.g. SDF, INC, etc).

Late work (BD).

Instructors are not obliged to accept late work, except where there are legitimate, documented reasons beyond a student's control. In such cases, a late penalty is normally not appropriate. Where an Instructor intends to accept and apply penalties to late assignments, this must be set out clearly here in the course syllabus. Degree students are expected to hand in assignments by the date given in the course outline.

Late work (AD). To insert.

Course grades. Consistently with the policy of the University of Toronto, course grades submitted by an instructor are reviewed by a committee of the instructor's college before being posted. Course grades may be adjusted where they do not comply with University grading policy (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/grading.htm>) or college grading policy.

Policies

Accessibility. Students with a disability or health consideration are entitled to accommodation. Students must register at the University of Toronto's Accessibility Services offices; information is available at <http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/>. The sooner a student seeks accommodation, the quicker we can assist.

Plagiarism. Students submitting written material in courses are expected to provide full documentation for sources of both words and ideas in footnotes or endnotes. Direct quotations should be placed within quotation marks. (If small changes are made in the quotation, they should be indicated by appropriate punctuation such as brackets and ellipses, but the quotation still counts as a direct quotation.) Failure to document borrowed material constitutes plagiarism, which is a serious breach of academic, professional, and Christian ethics. An instructor who discovers evidence of student plagiarism is not permitted to deal with the situation individually but is required to report it to his or her head of college or delegate according to the TST *Basic Degree Handbook* (linked from <http://www.tst.edu/content/handbooks>) and the University of Toronto *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/AssetFactory.aspx?did=4871>. A student who plagiarizes in this course. Students will be assumed to have read the document "Avoidance of plagiarism in theological writing" published by the Graham Library of Trinity and Wycliffe Colleges (http://www.trinity.utoronto.ca/Library_Archives/Theological_Resources/Tools/Guides/plag.htm).

Other academic offences. TST students come under the jurisdiction of the University of Toronto Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>).