

**Classical Civilization 4550: Ancient Mythology and Religion:**  
**Augustine, Confessions.**  
Fall 2019 • John Wynne

**Topic description for Fall 2019:**

Augustine's *Confessions* are a spiritual exercise, a literary landmark, an entertaining autobiography, and a philosophical theory about life, the universe, and everything.

Augustine leads us on an expedition through the wild religious world of the late Roman empire: Christians who argue fiercely (or brawl in the streets); the 'Pagan Resistance'; Manichaeism, a forgotten world religion; encounters with mighty bishops like Ambrose and Faustus, with the emperor and, most terrifying of all, with Augustine's mother. But he builds all this into a rigorous argument, that "my heart is restless until it rests in" God.

We will read all of the *Confessions*, very slowly, in English translation, paying close attention to the artistry of Augustine's text and to its philosophical achievements. We will also read modern scholarly articles interpreting the *Confessions*, and supplementary readings illustrating the world in which Augustine lived. There will be a voluntary screening of the Terrence Malick's film *The Tree of Life*.

The *Confessions* will also be the text for Latin 3610/4610 this Fall. Students can register for both classes.

**Catalog description for CL CV 4550:** Study of classical myth and/or religion (topics vary) in the ancient Greek and Roman worlds with an emphasis on mystery religions, later Judaism, early Christianity, later literary use of ancient myth, and modern anthropological/psychological interpretation of myth.

**Required books**, available at the campus bookstore, will be:

Henry Chadwick \*, *Augustine: Confessions*, Oxford World's Classics, most recently reissued 2008. ISBN: 978-0199537822.

William E. Mann, *Augustine's Confessions: critical essays*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2006. ISBN: 978-0742542310.

\* There are very many English translations of the *Confessions*. I would be happy for you to use some of these instead of Chadwick. For example, some good versions are:

Thomas Williams, *Augustine: Confessions*, Hackett, 2019. ISBN: 978-1624667824

Maria Boulding, *Saint Augustine: The Confessions*, New City Press, 2002. ISBN: 978-1565481541

F. J. Sheed (translator), Michael P. Foley (editor), Peter Brown (introduction), *Augustine: Confessions* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), Hackett, 2006. ISBN: 978-0872208162

R. S. Pine-Coffin, *Saint Augustine: Confessions*, Penguin, 1961. ISBN: 9780140441147

Augustine's Confessions is not an autobiography in the literal sense, but is rather an autobiographical framework for a religious, moral, theological, and philosophical text. Augustine explores the nature of God and sin within the context of a Christian man's life. The work can thus be viewed as both a discursive document and a subjective personal story. It is one of the most influential books in the Catholic religion, apart from the Bible. Augustine wrote of his life and education up until the point of his conversion. Fathers of the Church, etc. The Confessions of Saint Augustine. St. Augustine, Translated by Edward B. Pusey, D. D. Table of Contents. About This Book. . . p. ii Title Page. . . p. 1 Contents. . . p. 2 Book I. . . p. 17. This edition of Augustine's Confessions is a modernized abridgement based on Albert C. Outler's translation. The language has been updated to modern English and it has been abridged to make it more accessible. Confessions was originally divided into thirteen books, written in Latin between 397 and 400 AD. The work outlines Saint Augustine's sinful youth and his conversion to Christianity. AUGUSTINE: CONFESSIONS. Newly translated and edited. by.Â One does not read far in the Confessions before he recognizes that the term "confess" has a double range of meaning. On the one hand, it obviously refers to the free acknowledgment, before God, of the truth one knows about oneself--and this obviously meant, for Augustine, the "confession of sins." But, at the same time, and more importantly, confiteri means to acknowledge, to God, the truth one knows about God.