Introduction to Augustine
PHIL-5012-001
Spring 2019

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Class Hours: Wednesday 1.00-3.00 p.m.
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Course Description

At the age of nineteen a young man living in Roman north Africa discovered philosophy. The world has never been the same since. While the world of the late Roman Empire—a world known for its decadence and brutality—teetered on the brink of collapse all about him, this teenager gave himself wholeheartedly to the pursuit of wisdom; he developed into one of greatest philosophical geniuses of all time—a genius who did more to shape the thought and culture of the next millennium of history than perhaps any other single individual. This course is a survey of the philosophy of this singularly influential intellectual—Augustine of Hippo.

The course will begin by examining the philosophical currents that shaped Augustine, above all, Neo-platonism and the doctrines of Plotinus. We will then enter into the details of Augustine’s life, from his tumultuous and lurid youth in the streets of Carthage to his deathbed where he lay dying while the barbarians were literally at the gates. The course will discuss his intellectual struggle with Gnostic Manicheanism and Skepticism. The course will follow Augustine on his inner journey into the depths of the human soul. In addition to his teachings on being and truth, the course will examine his philosophy of education and his history-making intervention in the centuries-long battle between Socrates and the Sophists.

The last section of the course will focus on Augustine’s ethical and political ideas. Particular attention will be given to those seminal doctrines that have had a pervasive influence, such as his teachings on society, the political order, war, and his philosophy of history.