

Self and Text in Roman North Africa: Augustine's *Confessions*

The native North African Augustine of Hippo wrote the most influential autobiographical text in (so-called) Western Literature. It remains the most brilliant text I have ever read: a mind-bendingly complex and yet fully coherent literary self. Reading it will change your life.



At least, that is what the text claims. Set between Carthage and Rome in 400, Augustine wrote just ten years before the Eternal City would be sacked by the disaffected former legions of the empire (the /Goths/). Split between conqueror and conquered, civilization and apocalypse, Augustine wove humanity's existential and epistemological questions into a literary tapestry for the ages: Who am I? How do you speak? Who are you? How do I listen?

Who are we? How do we know? Memoir, critique of empire, philosophy, psychology, theology, history, criticism, and a letter, these CONFESSIONS require close, careful, focused, attentive reading and a diverse group of interpreters. Join our learning community. Spend two-and-a-half snowbound weeks at Wesleyan with a book you will never forget.

Required Texts (*both of these translations; COL Microgrants available*):

- Augustine, *Confessions*, translated by H. Chadwick (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1991) ISBN: 9780199537822
- Augustine, *Confessions*, a new translation by Sarah Ruden (Penguin: New York, 2018) ISBN: 9780812986488

Course Plan

Pre-term	Book 1 (both Chadwick & Ruden trans.)	<i>Self in Other, Reader in Text: the Conceit</i>
	Bring to class Tuesday 1/7	<u>Paper Draft</u> : Who is Reader & Author in Book 1? (2pp)
Tu 1/7	Books 1-4 (Chadwick trans.)	<i>Student & Teacher</i>
We 1/8	Books 5-8 (Chadwick trans.)	<i>Friend & Lover</i>
Th 1/9	Books 9-11 (Chadwick trans.)	<i>But What Am I?</i>
Fr 1/10	Books 12-13 (Chadwick trans.)	<i>Being and the Text: Divinity & Community</i>
	Sunday 1/12, 6pm	<u>Paper Draft</u> : What Self is Confessed? (3-4 pp)
Mo 1/13	Re-read: Books 1-3 (Ruden trans.)	<i>Childhood & Sorrow</i>
Tu 1/14	Re-read: Books 4-6 (Ruden trans.)	<i>Youth & Passion</i>
We 1/15	Re-read: Books 7-9 (Ruden trans.)	<i>Death & Eternity</i>
Th 1/16	Re-read: Books 10-11 (Ruden trans.)	<i>Self & Mind</i>
Fr 1/17	Re-read: Books 12-13 (Ruden trans.)	<i>Who I Am in You, & You All</i>
	Sunday 1/19, 6pm	<u>Reflection Paper</u> : What Does It Mean to Remember? (3-4 pp)
Mo 1/20	What do we think?	
	Weds 1/22, 6pm	<u>Final Paper</u> : What is the Self Confessed? (12 pp)

Please complete readings before the designated class meeting