

St. Augustine Study Questions: Bks 7-9
Hum 110, Reed College
Prof. Laura Leibman

Book 7:

What is the problem with evil? How does Augustine resolve it? Are you convinced by his argument? How does his solution compare to the other theories of evil and sin that we have read so far this year? How does Augustine use Platonism? What is the role of heresy for Augustine? How does this relate to his use of paganism, women, and other "others"?

Book 8:

Augustine converts! What is the narrative of Augustine's Conversion both in this book and in general? How does this compare to other conversion and covenant stories we have read? Does Augustine make a pact with God? If so, what kind/what are the terms? If not, why isn't it a covenant? The title of this book is "The Birthpangs of Conversion." Is he reborn? If so, into what? (i.e. do you find Sara's argument convincing?) Why doesn't St. Augustine just end the book with his conversion? What use might the rest of his book have for his readers?

Book 9:

How does Augustine define himself now that he is with God? Does his sense of self change? What do you make of the violent images of his relations with God? What light do these shed on texts we have read before that have violent encounters with the divine (including Ovid's *Metamorphoses*)? What role do Psalms play in this book? What kinds of Psalms does he refer to and mimic (see handout from lecture or on Psalms for genres of Psalms)? What do you make of the description of Monica's early life and alcoholism? How would this section appeal to female Christians? What would it tell them? Which do you think would be more appealing--this section or St. Perpetua's text? Why? How does Augustine respond to her death? What sense do you make of his response?