

AUGUSTINE AND CULTURE SEMINAR
ANCIENTS
SECTIONS V08, V09 AND GXP

Dr. Peter Busch
Fall 2011

Office: SAC 130 Office Hours: TR 11:15-12 and by appointment

Contact by email: peter.busch@villanova.edu

Class meetings: Section V08: TR 10-11:15 in CEER 109
 Section V09: TR 1:00-2:15 in Bartley 027A
 Section GXP: TR 2:30-3:45 in Bartley 027A

Welcome to ACS

The *Augustine and Culture Seminar* is your gateway to the intellectual life of the university. Whether you major in business or biology, whether you sing or play soccer, you will share this experience with every other student at Villanova.

γνώθι σαυτόν

My duty as a teacher of ACS is to help you become a more thoughtful human being by reflecting on life's big questions. We will be especially concerned with asking, "Who am I, and what am I?" At first glance, these questions may seem less important than others, e.g., "How can I find a job that will make me happy?" "Who are my real friends?" or "Why do I love him when he keeps breaking my heart?" But as a minute's reflection will show, these other questions, which seem so much more urgent, can't be answered adequately unless we truly know ourselves. How can that happen?

Here's a one-word answer: Culture. We all go through life with opinions about who we are and what we're meant to be. None of us devised those opinions entirely on our own; we learned many of them through the life-education that we received from teachers – not just schoolteachers, but parents, friends, congregations, fellow-citizens, movies, Youtube videos, and so on.

However, is that one-word answer sufficient? Our class begins from the assumption that it is not – that culture needs to be pondered, long and hard, because we don't get it right automatically. After all, we often misunderstand our teachers, and even when we do understand them, one of them will often disagree with another. It pains me to say so, but teachers are often wrong. How then can we become truly wise about culture, rather than just accepting what we've received from society and hoping for the best?

Our class is called the "Augustine and Culture Seminar" because our model for cultural inquiry will be Saint Augustine. Like us, Augustine received many opinions from others in his life, but those

opinions couldn't all be true. For example, some people in the ancient world thought that love comes from the God of the Bible, others thought it comes from Venus, and still others thought it was simply a natural phenomenon. Augustine spent years living with this problem; growing up, he kept changing his mind about the most important things in life. Through it all, however, he also kept reading books that commanded his respect or provoked his curiosity. That is how we will follow his example: like Augustine, we will spend this year reading some of the greatest books ever written, the ones most useful for discovering the truth about ourselves.

We'll try to understand our books as best we can in the short time available to us. To this end you will be reading a lot, writing a lot, and – I hope – having some of the most interesting conversations you have had in your life.

Leadership Learning Community

This section is reserved for students in the Leadership learning community. What this means, in the first place, is that you and your classmates all live together in the same building. Whenever you want to talk about an assignment, a book, or an idea with a friend from class, the conversation is only a few doors down the hall.

You will also be involved in programs that will prepare for the day when you are called upon to help rule the world. You should be enrolled in a separate 1-credit Villanova Experience workshop, and for my class you will be attending cultural events that deepen your understanding of our books and their connections with leadership.

Evaluation

Class participation (20%)

This includes consistent attendance, preparation, attention, and thoughtful conversation about the texts in class. It also includes any informal writing assignments that I will require from time to time in order to prepare you for class discussion.

3 essays (15%, 15%, 15%)

These papers will be assigned, submitted, and graded on Blackboard, which is accessible through your "MyNOVA" homepage. The essays will be 4 or 5 pages in length and will involve careful interpretation of the assigned books with a view to the leading themes of the course.

Cultural events (15%)

See below for a description of this requirement for our class.

Final exam (20%)

During the exam period at the end of the semester, you will deliver a 5-minute speech on how Dante's *Purgatorio* might help us begin to think about and respond to the challenges of Middle Eastern politics. You will also submit on Blackboard a 3-page paper presenting your argument in a more scholarly manner.

Cultural Events

All ACS students are required to attend co-curricular events. As Leadership students, you have some especially interesting ones coming up.

At the end of the semester you will be submitting a single report on all of the cultural events you attended. Discuss how the event illuminated, and was illuminated by, the books and class discussions that we had leading up to the event. Rather than a summary, your page should be a succinct but thoughtful *commentary* that would be interesting to other people – to me, to your fellow students, and especially to the people who put on the event.

1. **Electives.** *Please pick one of the following*, attend the event, and write a commentary of at least one page. If you want an opportunity for extra credit in this class, you may do two or three of these instead of just one.
 - a. Weds., Sept. 28, 4 p.m., Driscoll Auditorium: ““Rembrandt and the Face of Jesus.” Victoria Conte of the Philadelphia Museum of Art will talk about the Rembrandt exhibition, which we will be visiting later in the semester.
 - b. Monday, Oct. 3, 7 p.m., Driscoll Auditorium: Dr. Peter Enns will discuss connections between Genesis and the Book of Mark. His talk is called, “Seeing the Old Testament in the New.”
 - c. Nov. 29, 7 p.m., Driscoll Auditorium: Dr. Paul Wright of Cabrini College will speak on “People and Places in Dante’s *Purgatorio*.”
2. **Required.** *Please plan on attending both of these events.* Be sure to keep your schedules free. Here your commentaries should each be at least two pages.
 - a. Saturday, October 22, noon: Philadelphia trip, to see the Rembrandt exhibit at the Museum of Art.
 - b. Wednesday, Nov. 16, evening (time TBA): Anthony Zinni, a four-star general (Ret.), diplomat, and expert on Iraq and the Middle East, will join us to talk about the challenges facing the next generation of leaders in world politics.

Academic Integrity

I expect all of you to adhere to the most rigorous standards of academic integrity, and you can expect the same of me. I’m expecting you to have basic knowledge of what those standards are, since you should have completed a tutorial on the subject already this summer. (If you haven’t done so, see me for help.)

Regarding Sparknotes, Wikipedia, etc.: these online resources can be useful for people who want some quick background information without needing to be sure of its accuracy. They generally aren’t what you need for ACS, however, either for class discussion or for your written work. Everything in ACS is for the sake of that moment when *you* notice something in the book that’s

worthy of careful reflection: when *you* put together an argument, make connections in the text, think of a question, and so on. All of that comes from working with the texts yourself. We'll go through some examples in class to help you be clear about this.

But here's the crucial point. If your work does somehow use a source, *any* source, for *whatever* reason, you *must* provide a reference for it, or else it is plagiarism. If you have questions about how to reference your work, please see me or the writing center. We will be very happy to help you. It's never a problem to ask; the problem is if you don't.

Now the grim part: Students whom I find to be plagiarizing on any assignment will receive an F for that assignment and, usually, an F for the course as well. Either way, a letter is filed with the student's dean and with the Vice President for Academic Affairs. A second offense either in this course or in any other at Villanova will result in dismissal from the university with a permanent indication of the reason for dismissal on the student's transcript.

Attendance

According to Villanova policy, anyone who misses more than five class sessions without an official excuse must fail the course.

Texts

Please buy exactly the books listed below. This will ensure that you are (literally) on the same page as the rest of the class.

1. Plato. *Symposium*. Tr. Nehamas. Hackett. ISBN 0872200760.
2. Ignatius Bible. Ignatius Press. ISBN 0898708346.
3. Dante. *Purgatorio*. Tr. Allen Mandelbaum. Bantam. ISBN 055321344X.
4. Augustine. *Confessions*. Tr. Henry Chadwick. Oxford World Classics. ISBN 1-0192833723.
5. Byrnes and Immerwahr, *Leading with the Heart*. Villanova University, 2010. (This is the text for your 1-credit "Experience" class.)

Daily Schedule

NOTE: this is what I have planned before the semester begins. It often happens, however, that we will need to tweak things as the semester goes on. All future updates to the schedule will be made on the NovaPlanner platform, which I will tell you about early in the semester.

8/25	Welcome to ACS. (In class, read beginning of <i>Symposium</i>)
8/30	Genesis, chapters 1-3
9/1	Gen. 4-9
9/6	Gen. 10-16
9/8	Gen. 17-22
9/13	Gen. 23-30
9/15	Gen. 31-36
9/18	Essay 1 due on Blackboard by midnight
9/20	<i>Symposium</i> , through speech of Phaedrus (to 180b)
9/22	<i>Symp.</i> , speeches of Pausanias and Eryximachus (to 189b)
9/27	<i>Symp.</i> , speech of Aristophanes (to 194c)
9/29	<i>Symp.</i> , speech of Agathon and cross-exam by Socrates (to 201c)
10/4	<i>Symp.</i> , speech of Socrates (to 212c)
10/6	<i>Symp.</i> , speech of Alcibiades; finish dialogue
10/11, 13	No class: fall break
10/17	Essay 2 due by midnight on Blackboard
10/18	Mark, chapters 1-8
10/20	Mk. 9-16
10/22 (Sat.)	Trip to Phila. Museum of Art. (Depart at noon, location TBA)
10/25	<i>Confessions</i> , Book I
10/27	<i>Conf.</i> , Bk. II
11/1	<i>Conf.</i> , Bks. III-IV
11/3	<i>Conf.</i> , Bk. VII
11/8	<i>Conf.</i> , Bk. VIII
11/10	<i>Conf.</i> , Bk. IX
11/15	Qu'ran (selections, to be distributed)
11/16 (evening)	Gen. Anthony Zinni (time and location TBA)
11/17	<i>Purgatorio</i> , Canto I
11/20	Essay 3 due by midnight on Blackboard
11/22	<i>Purgatorio</i> , Cantos II-VI
11/24	No class: Thanksgiving
11/29	<i>Purg.</i> VII-XIII
12/1	<i>Purg.</i> XIV-XX
12/6	<i>Purg.</i> XXI-XXVII
12/8	<i>Purg.</i> XXVIII-XXXIII
Final exams	
Section V08: Sat, Dec 17 1:30 - 4:00	
Section V09: Mon, Dec 19 2:30 - 5:00	
Section GXP: Tue, Dec 20 8:30 - 11:00	