

REL 640: Philosophical Foundations of Western Religion
Fall 2009

Instructor: Patricia Miller
Office: 520 Hall of Languages
Hours: Wednesdays 1:00 – 3:00, and by appointment

In this seminar, “western religion” refers to Christianity in the first five centuries of its history, and “philosophical foundations” refers to the Platonic philosophers and thematics that were most influential in shaping the structures of early Christian theological, cosmological, ethical, and hermeneutical thinking.

Requirements: Each week you are responsible for reading the ancient texts and contemporary scholarly discussions as listed in the outline of the seminar. Most readings are on reserve and available for copying in the Department. In addition, each week you will prepare a (typed) statement of one-to-two pages (double-spaced, please) in which you articulate what you view as the most important theme, image, concept, or problem in the relevant ancient texts (using contemporary readings to help you formulate your topic and enhance your discussion). At least one member of the seminar will be asked to read her or his statement to the seminar as a way of opening and setting the format for discussion by all seminar members. Statements will be collected by the instructor, commented on, and returned. You are also required to do one report; depending on the size of the seminar, one of these will be given during each session; the seminar member giving the report will conduct the discussion for that portion of the session.

There is also a final project, a research paper (25 pages maximum). Within the purview of the subject matter of the seminar, choose a topic relevant to your own interests, and be sure to formulate a succinct thesis or argument, defended by research in scholarly sources. Paper topics and preliminary bibliographies are due on Nov. 10. Due date for the paper: Dec. 15, by 5 p.m., in my mailbox. I do not accept late papers.

Outline of Readings

Note: The *Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, ed. A. H. Armstrong, is an excellent resource for basic introductions to authors and topics in the Platonic tradition (on reserve in Bird Library). For Christian authors, consult the *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* (shelved in the Religion seminar room).

1. Plato

Sept. 8 *The Symposium* (in Cobb, *Plato's Erotic Dialogues*)

Charles Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue*, 258-81
Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, Ch. 6

Sept. 15 *The Republic*, Books V.471c (p. 189, Penguin ed.) - VII

Heman Sinaiko, *Love, Knowledge, and Discourse in Plato*, 119-84

Report: Andrea Nightingale, *Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy*, Ch. 3: “The fable of philosophy in Plato’s *Republic*”

- Sept. 22 *The Republic*, Book X
 Stephen Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, Ch. 1 (“Representation and Reality: Plato and Mimesis”)
- Sept. 29 *The Phaedrus* (in Cobb, *Plato’s Erotic Dialogues*)
 Albert Cook, “Dialectic, Irony, and Myth in Plato’s *Phaedrus*,” *American Journal of Philology* 106 (1985): 427-41
 Report: Nussbaum, *Fragility of Goodness*, Ch. 7
- 2. Plotinus**
- Oct. 6 *Enneads* (*Enn.*) III.8, V.8, V.5, II.9 (metaphysics)
 Pierre Hadot, *Plotinus or the Simplicity of Vision*, 17-22, 35-47
 R. T. Wallis, “𐀀𐀁𐀃𐀄 as Experience,” in R. Baine Harris, ed., *Significance of Neoplatonism*, 121-43
 Dominic O’Meara, “The Hierarchical Ordering of Reality in Plotinus,” in Lloyd Gerson, ed., *Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, 66-79
 Report: Halliwell, *Aesthetics of Mimesis*, Ch. 11 (“Renewal and Transformation: Neoplatonism and Mimesis,” pp. 313-23)
- Oct. 13 *Enn.* I.1, V.1, VI.4, VI.5, VI.7.30-42 (the soul and the self)
 Hadot, *Plotinus or the Simplicity of Vision*, 23-24, 64-96
 Stephen Clark, “Plotinus: Body and Soul,” in Gerson, ed., *Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, 275-91
 Reports: Sara Rappe, *Reading Neoplatonism*, Ch. 4 (“Introspection in the Dialectic of the *Enneads*”)
 A. H. Armstrong, “The Apprehension of Divinity in the Self and the Cosmos in Plotinus,” in his *Plotinian and Christian Studies*, Ch. XX
 Dennis O’Brien, “Plotinus on Matter and Evil,” in Gerson, ed., *Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, 171-90
- Oct. 20 *Enn.* I.3, I.6, III.5, V.3.10-17, VI.9 (language, “mysticism”)
 Hadot, *Plotinus or the Simplicity of Vision*, 48-63, 97-113
 Rappe, “Metaphor in Plotinus’ V.8.9,” *Ancient Philosophy* 15 (1995): 155-72
 Michael Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*, 14-33
 Reports: Frederic Schroeder, “Plotinus and Language,” in Gerson, ed., *Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, 336-52

Armstrong, "Beauty and the Discovery of Divinity in the Thought Of Plotinus," in his *Plotinian and Christian Studies*, Ch. XIX
Miles, *Plotinus on Body and Beauty*, Ch. 6 ("Go On Up': The One and Contemplation")

3. Origen

- Oct. 27 *On First Principles (De principiis/Peri archon)*, Book I; Book II.1-3, 8
- Joseph Wilson Trigg, *Origen*, 18-35
Henri Crouzel, *Origen*, 181-92
Virginia Burrus, *Saving Shame: Martyrs, Saints, and Other Abject Subjects*, 64-72
- Reports: John Dillon, "Looking on the Light: Some Remarks on the Imagery of Light in the First Chapter of the *Peri archon*," in Kannengiesser and Petersen, *Origen of Alexandria*, 215-30
Kannengiesser, "Divine Trinity and the Structure of the *Peri Archôn*," in Kannengiesser and Petersen, 231-49
- Nov. 3 *On First Principles*, Book IV; *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, Prologue
Skim *Homily XXVII On Numbers*, all in *Origen* (Classics of Western Spirituality volume)
- Crouzel, *Origen*, 61-84
John David Dawson, *Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity*, 47-64, 194-206
- Reports: Martin Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture*, 244-57, 265-71
Miller, "Poetic Words, Abysmal Words: Reflections on Origen's Hermeneutics," in Kannengiesser and Petersen, 165-78

4. Gregory of Nyssa

- Nov. 10 *De opificio hominis* (On the Making of the Human Being)
- Gerhard Ladner, "The Philosophical Anthropology of Saint Gregory of Nyssa," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 12 (1958): 61-94
- Report: John Behr, "The Rational Animal: A Rereading of Gregory of Nyssa's *De hominis opificio*," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7 (1999): 219-47
- Nov. 17 *On the Life of Moses*
- Verna Harrison, "Allegory and Asceticism in Gregory of Nyssa," in *Semeia* 57 (1992): 113-30
Alden A. Mosshammer, "Disclosing but not Disclosed: Gregory of Nyssa as Deconstructionist"

Reports: Macleod, "Allegory and Mysticism in Origen and Gregory of Nyssa," *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 22 (1971): 362-79
 Ronald Heine, "Gregory of Nyssa's Apology for Allegory," *Vigiliae Christianae* 38 (1984): 360-70

Nov. 24: No class – SBL meeting

5. Augustine

Dec. 1 *Confessions*, Books I-IX

Brian Stock, *Augustine the Reader*, 23-42

Eugene Vance, "Augustine's *Confessions* and the Grammar of Selfhood," *Genre* 6 (1973): 1-28

Report: Stock, *Augustine the Reader*, 75-111 ("Reading and Conversion")

Recommended: Website of James J. O'Donnell: click on "Worlds of Late Antiquity," then on "Augustine," then on "Augustine's Life and Works," then on "Confessions," then on "Detailed Introduction to the Confessions" (read only the pages on the *Confessions*)

Dec. 8 *Confessions*, Books X-XIII

Stock, *Augustine the Reader*, 207-42

Books available for purchase at Follett's Orange Bookstore

Plato, *The Republic*

Plotinus, *Enneads*, vols. 3, 5, 7 (ed. and trans. A. H. Armstrong)

Origen, *Origen* (Classics of Spirituality volume)

Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses* (trans. A. Malherbe and E. Ferguson)

Augustine, *Confessions* (trans. Henry Chadwick)

Hadot, Pierre, *Plotinus or the Simplicity of Vision*

These books are also on reserve in Bird Library. To get the call numbers, go to Blackboard, click on the Fall 09 version of this seminar, click on "course tools" and then on "course reserves."