Discussion Questions for First Augustine Assignment
First Session—Monday, July 21
In Dialogue with Augustine Seminar
"Augustinian Realism(s) and Politics"
Instructors: Santurri and Werpachowski
Summer, 2014

(1) As Ernest Fortin notes in his introduction, Augustine’s City of God was written in response to the charge that the fall of Rome in 410 was the fault of Christianity. Based on your reading of Fortin (esp vii-xvii) and Books I and II of CG describe how Augustine tries to refute this charge.

(2) What Christian understanding of the Roman Empire (as evidenced in the writings of Eusebius and Orosius) did Augustine call into question? What do you think are the implications of Augustine’s view for the relation between church and state?

(3) What are the main themes of Books I and II of the City of God? (You’ve already formed a partial answer to this question in answering question 1).

(4) “Kingdoms are great robber bands.” (30) What does Augustine mean? Do you agree?

(5) “God ... gives earthly kingdoms to both the good and the evil.” Significance?

(6) Book V. According to Augustine, why did God raise the pagan Roman Empire? What does Augustine think of pagan Roman virtue? Why does God sometimes make rulers Christians and some not?

(7) Book XIV is an important book for understanding certain elements of Augustine’s theology. Here he introduces his notion of the “two cities.” What is this all about? He also gives his theological account of the circumstances and consequences of the human fall. What are the principal features of this account? What does Augustine say about human freedom, its relation to God’s foreknowledge and its loss after the fall (Book V)? The effects of the fall are particularly important for understanding Augustine’s political theology. For Augustine what is the state of the human condition after the fall?
Discussion Questions for Second Augustine Assignment
Second Session—Monday, July 21
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You will notice that most of the questions for the second Augustine assignment deal with Chapter XIX, which is arguably the most important section of the *City of God* for understanding Augustine’s political theology. Concentrate on the texts relevant to the questions.

(1) In Chapter 52 of Book XVIII Augustine tries to refute those who argue that the conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity signals the end of the earthly city’s persecution of the church. The editors conclude: “In rejecting the position of Orosius, Augustine refuses to simply identify the welfare of the city of God with its present dominant position within the Roman Empire.” If this is true, what are the larger implications for an Augustinian view of the relation between political institutions and religion? Note also in chapter 54 Augustine’s claim that both “cities” use temporal goods.

(2) In Book XIX (140-149) Augustine launches a full-scale attack on certain non-Christian, philosophical views of human happiness. What are the arguments?

(3) In XIX, 6 (147-148) Augustine discusses the plight of a human judge. What are the issues here? What are the implications for the character of political life?

(4) For Augustine peace is the central political value. In Book XIX, 11-13, he provides a larger theoretical account of peace. What are the account’s principal features? What are its strengths? What are its weaknesses? Can the value of peace carry all the political-theoretical load Augustine wants it to carry?

(5) Slavery? (155-156)

(6) Domestic order? (156-157)

(7) Book XIX, chapter 17 has become a kind of locus classicus for those who see in Augustine a theological foundation for religiously neutral political arrangements/separation between religion and politics. Why? Is there enough here to provide a modern Augustinian with a theological rationale for separation between church and state?

(8) A Christian culture or lifestyle? (158-159)

(9) In Book XIX, chapter 21, Augustine argues that there never existed a Roman people or a Roman republic. What is the argument? In chapter 24, he recasts the
definition of a new people and republic and proposes that on this new definition we may speak of a Roman people and republic. What do you think Augustine is up to here?
Discussion Questions for Third Augustine Assignment
First Session—Tuesday, July 22
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Summer, 2014

The reading for this assignment is relatively straightforward (as far as Augustine readings go!), and the selections are divided in orderly fashion according to topics (though there is some overlap in the themes): (1) the compatibility between the Christian life and doing one's political duty (including discussion of the Sermon on the Mount (“turn the other cheek”)) and its relevance to Christian assessment of political violence; (2) divine law/temporal law and self-defense; (3) war and divine providence; (4) political persecution of religious groups (Are Augustine's judgments on the Donatists compatible with his view of the state in City of God XIX, 17?); (5) the moral status and justification of property.