



St. Augustine's *Confessions*

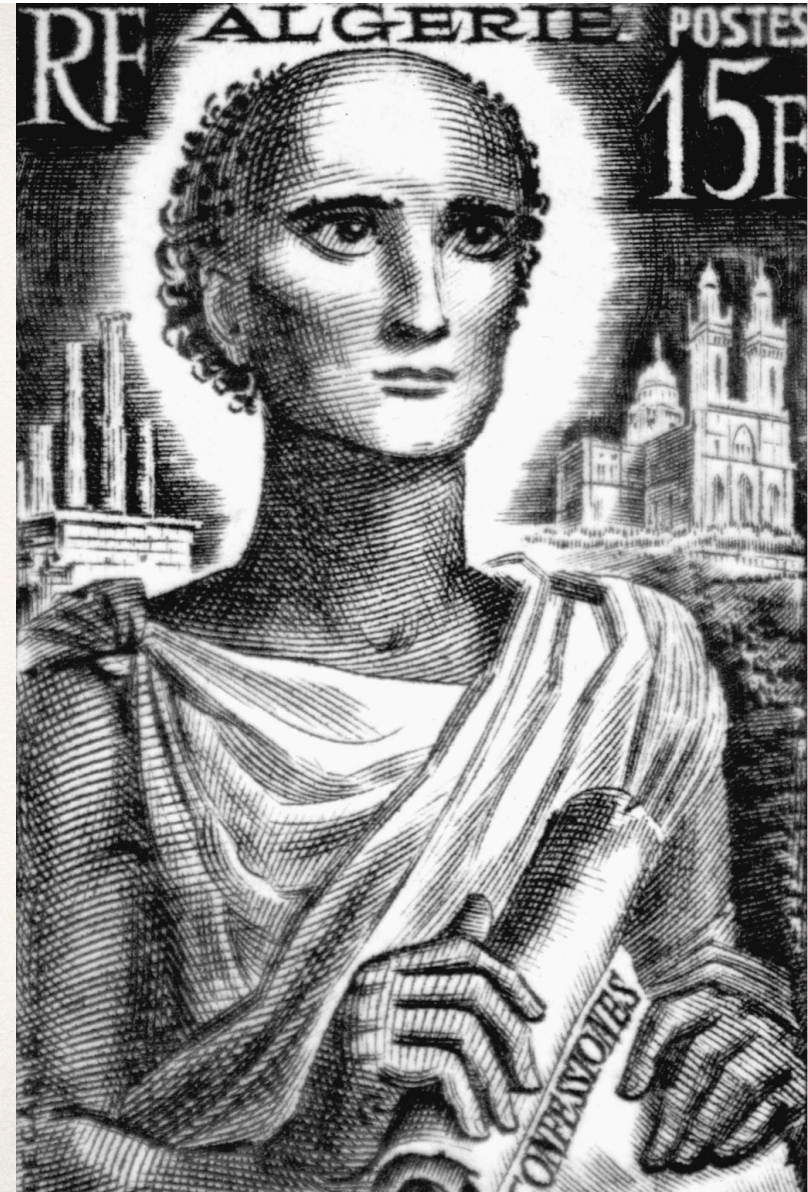
November 13, 354 A.D. – August 28, 430 A.D.





# Life

- ❖ 354 – 430 A.D. Born in Roman North Africa (now Algeria)
- ❖ Moves to Carthage, then Rome, then Milan for teaching positions (rhetoric and Latin literature)
- ❖ Converts to Christianity in 386. Baptized the following year.
- ❖ Moves to Hippo (today Annaba, Algeria), where he becomes a priest in 391, then bishop.
- ❖ Writes *Confessions* in 397-400, *City of God* after 410



# Style

- ❖ As one would expect from a professor of rhetoric, the style—especially in the original Latin—is extremely complex and elegant. Viewed with suspicion.
- ❖ A dense web of *Biblical* citations; citations from pagan authors either mock them (Vergil) or are left unmarked.
- ❖ Alternates highly rhetorical and effusive praise and thanks to God with more narrative passages.



# Confession

- ❖ From *con+fateri* [*fessus*] (avow, declare); to profess is to declare in public (*pro* = in front of)
- ❖ Different in Augustine's time—less formal (no confessional), penance more a public matter
- ❖ Done for of individual soul, but also for the community, which is harmed by “unsatisfied” sin in its midst
- ❖ Suggests an opening up of private shame, secret inner life





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MOVIE EDITION

BEVERLY LEWIS'  
The CONFESSION



ALFRED  
HITCHCOCK'S

# "I Confess"



IF  
YOU  
KNEW  
WHAT  
HE  
KNEW-  
WHAT  
WOULD  
YOU  
DO?

A shame confessed - a sin concealed! This is  
love with the brand of Hitchcock burned in!



All its excitement filmed  
in Canada's colorful Quebec  
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# in STRANGE CONFESSION

with  
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J. CARROL NAISH  
Lloyd Bridges  
Milburn Stone  
Addison Richards**



An Inner Sanctum Mystery · By arrangement with Simon & Schuster, Inc., Publishers  
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Screenplay by M. Coates Webster  
Produced by BEN PIVAR  
Based on a Composition by Jean Bess  
A UNIVERSAL PICTURE



“I confess  
I’m the kind of  
girl every  
man wants –  
but shouldn’t  
marry!”

COLUMBIA PICTURES  
presents

# One Girl's Confession

STARRING  
CLEO MOORE · HUGO HAAS · GLENN LANGAN

Written, Produced and Directed by HUGO HAAS

**SHOCKING!**  
the **NAKED TRUTH**  
on the morals of a young girl!





























# Bibi Confessions of Sweet Sixteen

starring MARIE FORSA in COLOR

# Confession

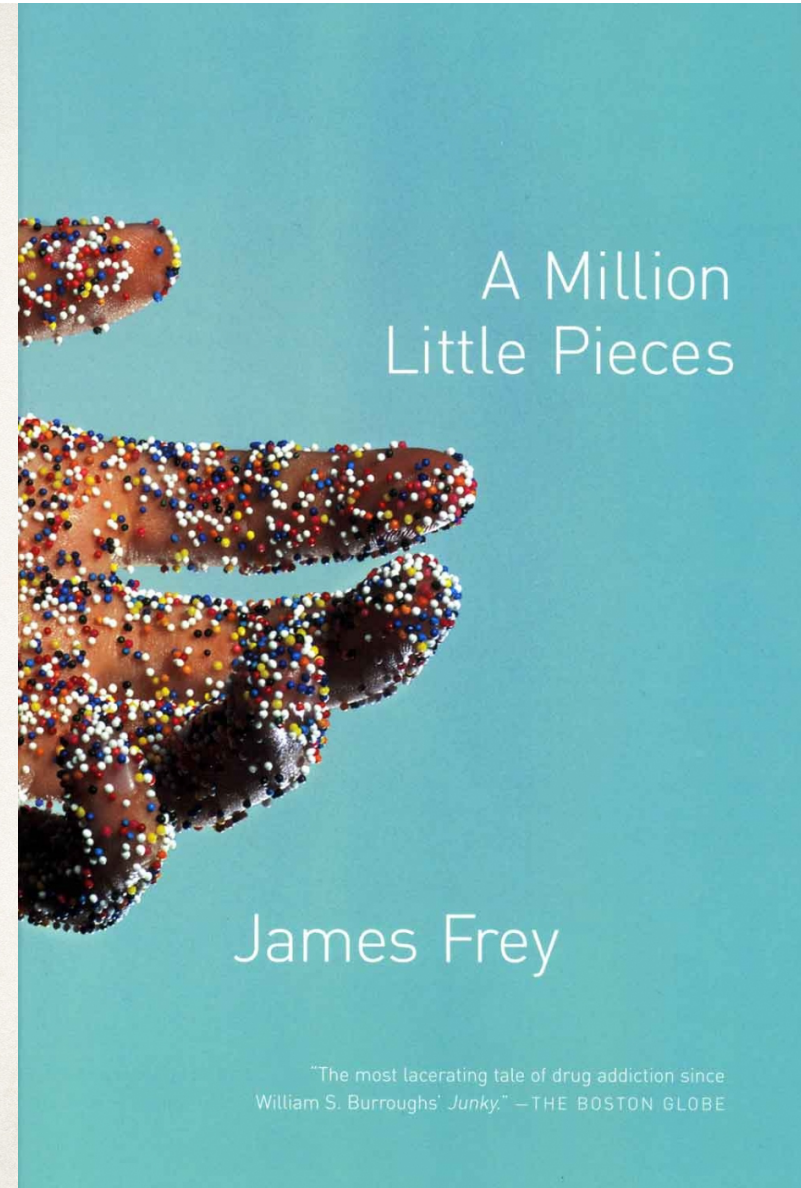
- ❖ Augustine inaugurates a long Western tradition, still present today, that a person's "inner core" (perhaps truth) is found in their secret sexual life
- ❖ What do we learn about Augustine's sex life? It's pretty specific, actually:
- ❖ "shadowy jungle of erotic adventures... pleasing myself" (24)
- ❖ "I could not have been wholly content to confine sexual union to acts intended to procreate children" (25)
- ❖ "Shameful" admissions seem to *guarantee* the writer's honesty and authenticity; Rousseau did the same 1300 years later in his *Confessions* (I get turned on by being spanked!); still going: Karl Ove Knausgaard's 6,000 page *My Struggle* is largely about his problems with premature ejaculation.



↑ 2 ↓	 <b>revenge on my manipulative incel ex bf</b> <b>noregrets</b> Posted by u/metricunitgang 7 hours ago	 23 ...
↑ 9 ↓	 <b>Sometimes I close my eyes for 5 seconds while im driving</b> <b>Remorse</b> Posted by u/markbelarde 22 hours ago	 22 ...
↑ 0 ↓	 <b>I tell my students "no" for no reason.</b> <b>Tough Love</b> Posted by u/redassaggiiegir17 1 day ago	 28 ...
↑ 0 ↓	 <b>I used to beat my dog, I hope she forgives me</b> <b>Remorse</b> Posted by u/throwawayshame63829 10 hours ago	 20 ...
↑ 2 ↓	 <b>Brief and regretable sexual encounter with Wife's sister</b> <b>Remorse</b> Posted by u/kubama2008 3 hours ago	 2 ...
↑ 2 ↓	 <b>I eavesdropped on a Japanese conversation at the hair salon today to see if I could recognize any words.</b> <b>Light</b> Posted by u/That1weirdperson 8 hours ago	 8 ...
↑ 11 ↓	 <b>When I was about 6-7 years old, I killed my hamster by putting it in the microwave. I hate myself for it and think the aftermath gave me PTSD</b> <b>Light</b> Posted by u/throwaway274638918 23 hours ago	 10 ...
↑ 2 ↓	 <b>I lost my girlfriend of 10 years.</b> <b>Remorse</b> Posted by u/Theonlyrhys 6 hours ago	 12 ...
↑ 0 ↓	 <b>Stole final art project from classmate who was a great artist...they failed and I did extremely well</b> <b>Light</b> Posted by u/Pulloutprince 21 hours ago	 13 ...
↑ 3 ↓	 <b>I blast gangsta rap on full volume when im alone in the car</b> <b>Conflicted</b> Posted by u/bmaxme 1 hour ago	 3 ...
↑ 0 ↓	 <b>[Light] The more I live the more I long to have been born decades ago</b> <b>Light</b> Posted by u/pinpop 6 hours ago	 7 ...
↑ 0 ↓	 <b>I missed my friends quince</b> <b>Remorse</b> Posted by u/rottencheese122 18 hours ago	 12 ...
↑ 0 ↓	 <b>I groped someone when I was a teen and I feel sh*t about it every day</b> <b>Remorse</b> Posted by u/glimozeen 23 hours ago	 10 ...
↑ 9 ↓	 <b>Sometimes seriously doubt the future of my relationship because of the poor genetic makeup of my partner.</b> <b>Conflicted</b>	 18 ...

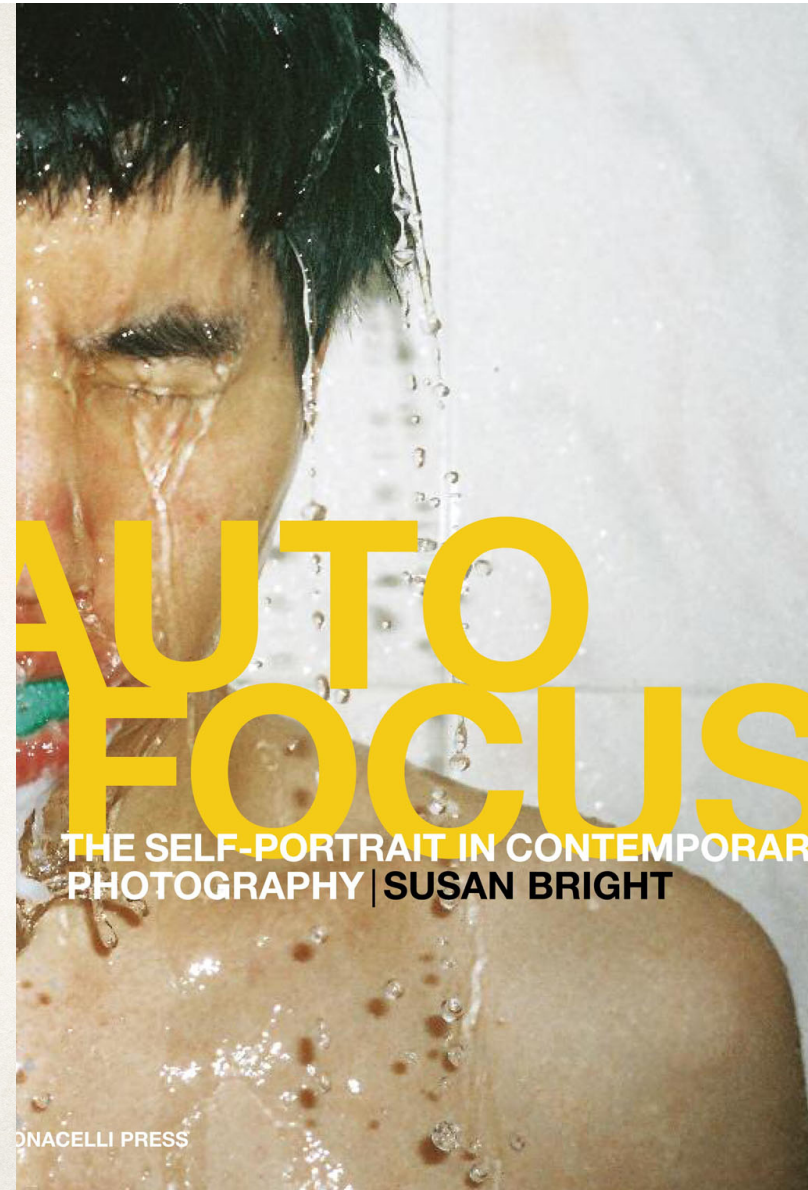
# Confession

- ❖ From Augustine onward, the idea of confession and autobiography are profoundly intertwined; to tell your sins is to tell your life
- ❖ The shameful confession guarantees authenticity; suggests writer has “come to terms” with inner self, true nature
- ❖ Confession moves the narrative forward, by marking the self as radically *changed*
- ❖ Indeed, confession splits the self: the narrating self (confessed, a changed man) and the narrated self (sinful, unreformed, unfinished)



# The Self

- ❖ Arguably, this means that our very idea of selfhood rests on form that Augustine gives us
- ❖ When we tell ourselves who we are, we tell a story about our secret, inner self (intimate, sexual) and a narrative about our younger, naive self told by a wiser, more restrained self
- ❖ Moreover, we conceive of others the same way; we are all Augustinian selves



# Themes

- ❖ Signs, language, literature (11, 15-20, 35, 39, 41)
- ❖ Theological / philosophical questions (pre-existence of the soul? 7-8; body / soul, 42; “another reality,” 43)
- ❖ The nature of time (8, 10)
- ❖ Education (11-12, 17, 21)
- ❖ Sex and desire
- ❖ Sin (the pear theft: 29-33)
- ❖ The law and history (44-46)



## Body, Soul & Evil

But you are no body. Nor are you soul, which is the life of bodies; for the life of bodies is superior to bodies themselves, and a more certain object of knowledge. But you are the life of souls, the life of lives. You live in dependence only on yourself, and you never change, life of my soul.

# Body, Soul & Evil

I was unaware of the existence of another reality, that which truly is, and it was as if some sharp intelligence were persuading me to consent to the stupid deceivers when they asked me: 'Where does evil come from? and is God confined within a corporeal form? has he hair and nails?' In my ignorance I was disturbed by these questions, and while traveling away from the truth I thought I was going towards it. I did not know that *evil has no existence except as a privation of good....*



# Sin

My desire was to enjoy not what I sought by stealing but merely the excitement of thieving and the doing of what was wrong. There was a pear tree near our vineyard laden with fruit, though attractive in neither color nor taste. To shake the fruit off the tree and carry off the pears, I and a gang of naughty adolescents set off late at night.... We carried off a huge load of pears. But they were not for our feasts but merely to throw to the pigs. Even if we ate a few, nevertheless our pleasure lay in doing what was not allowed.

# Sin

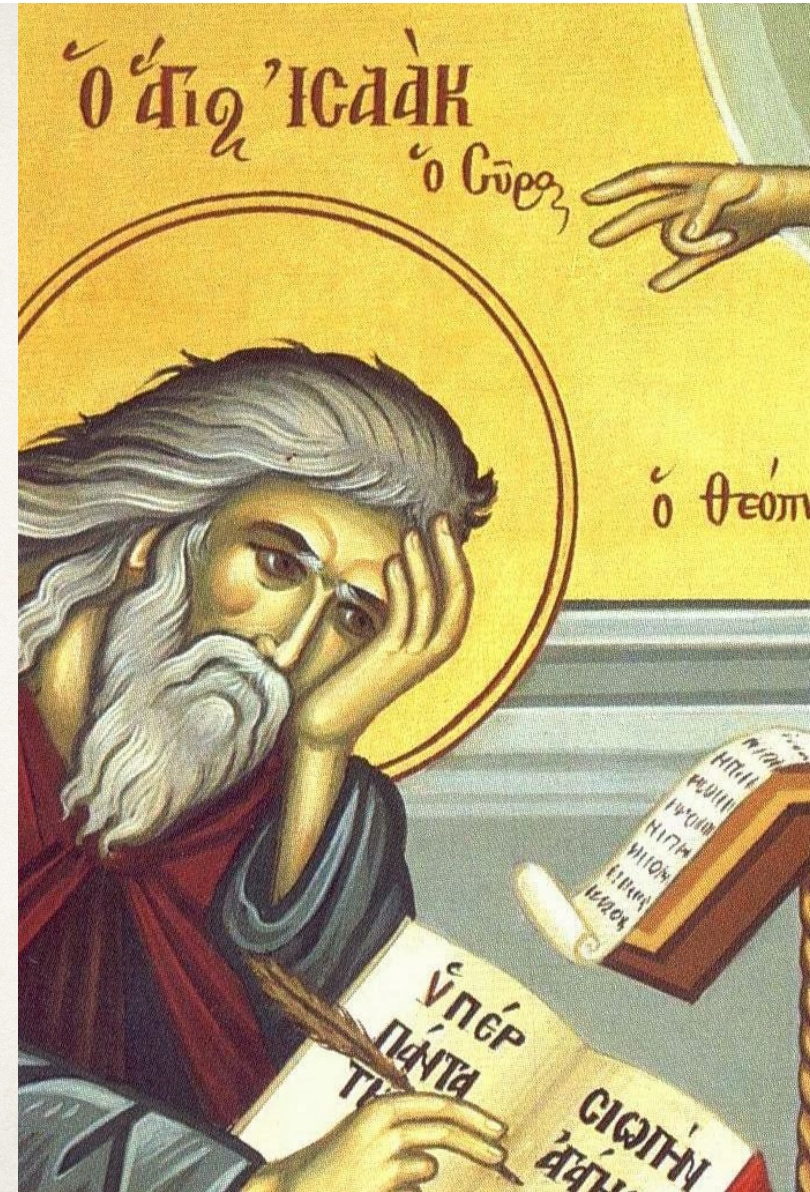
Such was my heart, O God, such was my heart. You had pity on it when it was at the bottom of the abyss. Now let my heart tell you what it was seeking there in that I became evil for no reason. I had no motive for my wickedness except wickedness itself. It was foul, and I loved it. I loved the self-destruction, I loved my fall, not the object for which I had fallen but my fall itself. My depraved soul leaped down from your firmament to ruin. I was seeking not to gain anything by shameful means, but shame for its own sake.

# Time

In you it is not one thing to be and another to live: the supreme degree of being and the supreme degree of life are one and the same thing. You are being in a supreme degree and are immutable. ... How many of our days and days of our fathers have passed during your Today, and have derived from it the measure and condition of their existence? And others too will pass away and from the same source derive the condition of their existence. 'But you are the same,' and all tomorrow and hereafter, and indeed all yesterday and further back, you will make a Today, you have made a Today (8).

# Confessional Time

- ❖ The confessing subject marks him- or herself as being in a special moment, the moment of confession
- ❖ That time is *now*, of course, but in a particular way, located between a past in which you were a different (worse) person, and a future in which you will be a different (better) person
- ❖ In the moment of confession, you are no one, in between these two more durable selves—but you (or at least your name) ties past, present and future together
- ❖ God does not ever need to confess, of course, and indeed *cannot* confess (what?! Are there things God can't do?), as his entire existence is simultaneous and outside of time; perfect, thus changeless



# The Time of History

“I also did not know that true inward justice which judges not by custom but by the most righteous law of almighty God. By this law the moral customs of different regions and periods were adapted to their places and times, while that law itself remains unaltered everywhere and always... This is the style of those who are irate when they hear that something was allowed to the just in that age which is not granted to the just now, and that God gave one command to the former and another to the latter for reasons of a change in historical circumstances, though both ancient and modern people are bound to submit to the same justice” (44).





# FINAL EXAM, **TUES.** 12/14/21, 8:00–11:00 AM, HERE!

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- A few finish in just over an hour, many finish at around the 2 hour mark, a handful stay to the very end.
- Four sections:
  - (1) short (3-4 sentences) answers to big questions: 4 questions, 5 points each; answer all (20 points).
  - (2) short answers to small questions (did you come to lectures?): 10 questions, 5 points each; answer all (50 pts).
  - (3) identifications (identify and comment): 8 questions, 3 points each; answer 5 out of the 8 (15 pts).
  - (4) long (1½ pages) essay on a “big topic” that covers much of the class (15 pts)





## FINAL EXAM: GENERAL

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- ▶ I will be looking over the same PDFs of the semester's PowerPoints to remind myself about lecture. I won't ask you about ideas and texts that aren't mentioned there (what 4 languages are unrelated to any other language?).
- ▶ Three is the magic number. Three historical-cultural eras. Three authors and three ideas. Three pieces of information for the IDs. Three examples. Three things that are correct, mind you (Augustine is not ironic; *Gilgamesh* is not lyric poetry; Cervantes did not write *The Tempest*).

## **“BIG” QUESTIONS (DID YOU DO THE READING?)**

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Answer all 4 questions with 3-4 sentences (refer to several important ideas, authors and texts). (5 pts. each; 20 pts. total).

1. Discuss the ancient world’s understanding of sex and sexuality.

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2. Discuss the idea of irony, and what it meant to different authors in different ages.

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## SECTION I: BIG QUESTIONS

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- A 5-point answer has 3-4 coherent sentences, and several important ideas, authors and texts; it convincingly shows you did some of the reading
- The “ancient sex” question: authors/texts include Gilgamesh; the Bible; Sophocles; Catullus; Ovid; Homer
- Ideas? the “public” and humanizing sex of Gilgamesh, openly bisexual; the invention of Oedipal sexuality in Sophocles; Augustine and sexual confession
- Can you tie it all together?



## SECTION I: BIG QUESTIONS

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- Irony: Plato, Sophocles, Augustine, Cervantes
- No irony in the Middle Ages
- Socratic irony, cosmic irony, modern “cynical” irony
- If you mention 3 appropriate authors and explain how they’re relevant, it’s a 5; only 1-2 examples will earn less
- The more confusion you show (Augustine is an example of cynical irony?!), the lower the grade
- Specific names and titles are good

## “SMALL” QUESTIONS (DID YOU COME TO LECTURE?)

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Answer all 10 questions, 3-5 sentences (5 pts. each; 50 total).

1. What are some ways that the story of Gilgamesh continues today

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2. Show how, in Homer's *The Odyssey*, hospitality is radically ambiguous.

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3. Compare and contrast Sappho and Catullus.

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## SECTION II: SMALL QUESTIONS

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- ▶ Here your answers are the same length, 3-5 sentences, but are focused on one author or one lecture.
- ▶ The more specific references to the lecture, the higher the score: the future of *Gilgamesh*:  
“Darmok,” Babylonian architecture, *Ghostbusters*, *Snow Crash*, pyramid aliens, *Blade Runner*, *Stargate*, *Babylon 5*, *Metropolis*
- ▶ You’ll need to do a little more than just cite titles: these show that we look to our ancient past as “another world,” handy metaphor for science fiction



## SECTION II: SMALL QUESTIONS

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- ▶ You don't need to summarize the lecture, but give several specifics that show you got some of the main points
- ▶ Compare and contrast Sappho and Catullus: both wrote love poetry, but Sappho wrote from a distance, Catullus in the midst of it; different forms and styles (give a specific form); Catullus obscene and playful, writes mostly about one woman; etc.
- ▶ Hospitality is ambiguous: cite 3 examples of how hospitality is required but dangerous

## IDENTIFICATIONS (DID YOU HAVE A SENSE OF STYLE?)

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Give author and title, and comment briefly on the passage's importance. Answer only *five* out of the eight questions (3 pts. each, 15 pts. total)

1. My tongue freezes. Fire,  
Delicate fire, in the flesh.  
Blind, stunned, the sound  
Of thunder, in my ears.

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2. The consequence of a distorted will is passion. By servitude to passion, habit is formed, and habit to which there is no resistance becomes necessity. My new will was not yet strong enough to conquer my old will, which had the strength of old habit.

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## SECTION III: IDENTIFICATIONS

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- 3 points: 1 for author, 1 for title, 1 for comment on passage
- Many poems have no title: “untitled” or the first line of the poem is fine. (Hint: “untitled” is safer)
- TAs: keep in mind that Sappho and Catullus did not give any titles to their poems—all the titles we see today were added by later editors

## “LONG” ESSAY (A CHANCE TO GO IN DEPTH)

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In the “Allegory of the Cave,” Plato suggests that *knowledge* is superior to—and at odds with—*belief*. Choose at least three different authors over the course of the semester (try to go from the ancient world to the early modern), and discuss how they understood the importance of knowledge and belief. Do you see a pattern, a direction? (15 pts. total).

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## SECTION IV: ESSAY

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- ▶ 15 points
- ▶ Here, I tell TA's to give the essay a letter grade based on the usual criteria for a paper (understanding that time is limited): does the essay have a clear argument? Is it supported by evidence? Is it well-written? Does it engage with the material from the class?
- ▶ 14-15=A; 12-13=B; 11=C; 9-10=D; 8 and below is an F