Welcome to lecture 2 on our course on Saint Augustine, and today we’re going to consider together the sources for the study of Augustine and his age. But as our habit will be, we’ll begin with prayer, and I’d like to read first for you a quote from Saint Augustine on prayer, and then a prayer of Saint Augustine’s.

Augustine said in one place about prayer: “What can be more excellent than prayer; what is more profitable to our life; what is more sweet to our souls; what more sublime, in the course of our whole life, than the practice of prayer.”

Here’s one prayer of Saint Augustine’s, and if we could pray together and rest our hearts before the Lord and consider the truth of this prayer as we bring it again up before our Intercessor. Let’s pray.

Blessed are all Your saints, O God and King, who have traveled over the tempestuous sea of this mortal life, and may the harbor of peace and felicity watch over us, who are still in our dangerous voyage; and remember such as lie exposed to the rough storms of trouble and temptations.

Frail is our vessel, and the ocean is wide; but, as in Your mercy You have set our course, so steer the vessel of our life toward the everlasting shore of peace, and bring us at length to the quiet haven of our heart’s desire, where You, O God, art blessed, and live and reign for ever and ever.

We ask these things with intercession in the name of our risen Lord. Amen.

It’s an interesting prayer as we think about that as we open up our contemplations on Saint Augustine. Last class we talked a little bit about what the world was like in Augustine’s day, and as I think about this prayer and have prayed it now with you, it
opens up to me the world of Augustine once again and helps me think about the dangers of sea travel and how that would be a very real and ever-present threat to some. There’s nothing worse to the unconverted, the pagan of the ancient world, than to die at sea. Their myths, their legends are all interwoven with stories of sea travel and being lost at sea.

The Greek and Latin classics are filled with this theme, and I recall an inscribed gravestone that’s in the National Archeological Museum in Athens that shows a young man with his helmet beside him, a Hoplite Athenian warrior, looking out from a hill on a shoreline over the sea. The text goes on to read that in fact he had lost his life at sea and was now without a proper burial, and the parents in their agony erect this epitaph in memory of him to try to keep his memory but in their legend would believe that the soul would wander aimlessly. So the power of the book of Revelation to proclaim that even the sea will give up its dead and so here in this prayer Augustine thinks about our life as being one that is filled with the perils of the ocean, and we will travel with Augustine in the next class and classes that follow from the coast of Africa to Italy, and sometimes that sea travels, we know from the narratives from Acts, could be very dangerous.

So in a very real sense he reflects on life being this way and calls upon our Lord who has in fact chartered our seas and has made our course before us that we might rest with Him with our heads on a ballast pillow of His grace in times of storm, and I hope that will be your prayer as well.

In terms of summary from our last class, we thought a little bit about the world of the Roman Empire and in particular the period that’s called the period of late antiquity. It was a period of great upheaval. There was a period of political strife; there was religious instability, economic instability. In fact, in one short period during the third century with the quick succession of Roman emperors, inflation rose over 1,000 percent and the people who were caught in the midst of that and hurt most by it were the poor people.

So Augustine lives and straddles what we now understand as two eras, the ancient world and the medieval world, and he is a critical link or bridge from the early church to the medieval church as well, and you’ve been thinking in your reflective essays about the stability that is created by an understanding of God’s control of history, of our theological understanding. And we’ve thought a little bit about the important role that Augustine played and the
church played in this era of instability, and we’ve thought as well about our own world today that you live in and I live in and how the church and our citizenship that’s in heaven brings a kind of stability and sense of purpose to our citizenship here on earth.

Today we’re going to talk about the sources for the study of Saint Augustine and his age, and this is very important material to contemplate together insomuch that the study of the early church and the church fathers can be unfamiliar and intimidating “seas,” to use our metaphor from our prayer. What my objectives will be today will be first to introduce to you the tools that can open up the study of the early church so that you can have access to the world of the early church and the people of the early church.

Second, I would like to help you become aware of the strengths and limitations of the kinds of resources that are available to you, the kind of work that you can do, how it can enhance your research, your ministry, your preaching, your teaching, and so we’ll reflect on some of those things together as we try to open up to you these resources.

And then we’ll look in particular at one source today together as I try to introduce it to you. You’ve already perhaps begun reading it: Augustine’s *Confessions*. It’s a great spiritual masterpiece, but I’d like to introduce that to you, talk about its sources that we have for it, some of the literary criticism and scholarship that has gone into the study of *Confessions*, what are the major themes, what kind of value does it bring to the study of Augustine, and to religious themes generally.

And as a fourth objective, I’d like to look at the major themes of the *Confessions*, and I’d like to think with you about how those major themes can be transported to the life of the church today.

With this by way of background, let’s dive into the background materials for the study of Augustine and his era, and the first thing that I’d like to say is, and you may be well aware of this and forgive me if you are, but for perhaps the general student, the novice in this area, you may be overwhelmed by the breadth of resources that are available to us. When we talk about Augustine in terms of the extant sources that are known of him, they consist of or amount to well over five million words of text. That’s astronomical to think that these sources have been copied, copied by scribes and scriptoria, and we’re talking about an era preceding by a millennium the invention of printing, and so many
sources certainly have not survived to us. So it’s just thinking about Augustine, it’s just amazing the depth of sources that have survived and the wealth of resources, his writings, and about his life and so forth.

If you take him and you look at the world of the early church, as well, there are literary sources, there are historical sources. I tried to suggest in the last discussion with you that we want to take the church out of a vacuum and place it into the world of its time, and how the church is in fact a city on a hill. It’s not a light under a bushel basket, and we want to understand the life of the church in the context, the economic and political and social context, of the world in which these events are taking place. And so this then provides for us another range of materials so that when one is contemplating a sermon by Augustine on poverty, there are resources that can open up to you or me the economic factors of the day in any given region.

By way of introduction, one of the huge challenges then is that it is interdisciplinary, this study, it takes a lot of different skills, and one that is of great importance is a breadth of languages. Increasingly these things are provided in translation, but for the most part Greek and Latin are absolutely necessary, and as well there are other marginal languages that will be important depending on the topics that are studied, but the sources that survived to us for the mainstream, for the Eastern/Western church are in Greek and Latin. There are not only literary works but there are also inscriptions (we referred to an inscription in our introduction today in reflection on our prayer), there are catalogs of inscriptions in Greek and Latin, and databases that are available so word searches and topic searches and thematic searches can be done, and as well there are artistic iconographic kinds of sources.

We will in the classes to come and in your resources you have references to early artistic evidence for Augustine’s world as well for Augustine himself, sixth-century portraits of him. These are all the range of surviving materials generally that can be available to us as researchers. In thinking about that and trying to work through the muddle of it all, I’d like to point out a couple key bibliographical resources for primary source research on Augustine himself if we were to ask the question, Where do we get at Augustine’s works? How do we get at them as primary sources, that is, in edited original language texts, and how do we get at them in translation? And so we’ll talk about that briefly together.
First, my suggestion always in research in an area like this is to begin from general and then to move to the specific, and you should always begin with excellent dictionary and encyclopedic-type articles. I’ve relegated the discussion and the introduction to those things to later in our discussion here, but that’s where one ought to begin, and they’ll provide for you bibliography. Oftentimes excellent articles in comprehensive encyclopedic works are as well signed, that is, you’ll know the scholar who made the contribution and some of his or her strengths and weaknesses as you begin to learn about these people, their biases and so forth.

But to begin with, with the bibliographical resources for primary research in Augustine, I had mentioned three. and let me briefly describe them. One is entitled *Patrology*, and it’s the fourth volume of a series that first began by Johannes Quasten, three excellent works done on primarily the Greek fathers, and they’re arranged chronologically. They include a historical introduction to a writer; they’re arranged by writers and then arranged thematically. The particular church father, the author; his works then are subdivided thematically and those themes then are briefly discussed; and there are summaries that are given and then specific works that correlate to a given theme are then listed out where at that time, and remember this four-volume series began in the 1950s, and so the earlier volumes are dated with regards to more recent publications, but they will provide access to the bibliography of that time and they’ll provide original source references as well as available translations and some bibliography. But the fourth volume is on the Latin fathers and it was edited by an individual named Angelo Di Berardino and others, and it contains a lot of very useful information relevant to the study of Augustine.

Augustine bibliography is astronomical. I’ll mention some resources that summarize them annually, but it is a popular area of study particularly among Catholic Parisian-type scholars in Europe, and so many of these things are in French and in German. But there are some very helpful bibliographies in this fourth volume of Quasten’s *Patrology*, so I would begin working there to get an idea of the range of sources attributed to Augustine and falsely attributed to him, pseudo-Augustinian works, and this will provide access to it.

The second important bibliographical resource, *Patristica*, and there are other sources like it that provide access to publications annually concerning various church fathers, their writings, or even themes within their writings. In some cases, one can have access
to, if one wanted to study redemption or conversion or baptism, these themes are then followed out in these bibliographical sources such as this, and they provide all information that the editors were able to compile for that particular year on that particular subject matter, and so it’s very very useful.

Most importantly I would say as a third bibliographical resource is the *Clavis Patrum Latinorum*, the *Key to Latin Fathers*, and there are as well corresponding Greek volumes. If you’re near a theological library, as we’ll mention in your study guide, these are things that I’d like you to go and take the time to look at, to range through, and become familiar with, but in particular you’ll see how useful the *Key to Latin Fathers* is for studying various themes, topics, finding out the primary resources of publication information, about access to primary resources with regard to, in our case, Augustinian works. So these are the kind of general resources, bibliographical resources.

As far as primary resources, the publication of edited original language text, you do understand that Augustine’s works were originally handwritten. We can go all the way back to manuscript evidence and talk about manuscript variation and where one can have access to these manuscripts, but for the most part we’re working with editions, edited works, and we’re at the mercy of them. There’s an extraordinary amount of work that goes into these edited works, but you’re always at the mercy of the editors. The long-time, longstanding standard in patristic studies was the nineteenth-century work by J. P. Migne, and Migne lived from 1800 to 1875, worked indefatigably publishing hundreds and hundreds of volumes of edited Greek and Latin patristic text. For the most part, he used or published the works that had been edited in the late sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries by the Marists, who were Benedictine scholars from Paris, in particular, who worked very hard with useful critical notes. The point is, though, they reflect only the state of scholarship at that time, and these texts for the most part are now deemed somewhat inferior. The abbreviation for *Patrologia Latina* by Migne is PL, and those are in some cases dated editions and one should be very careful.

Your library may have these in hard copy. It may in fact have them in microfilm, and so take a look to see what’s available; for several hundred years though and up until most recently this work has been the standard for patristic studies. I’ve included a copious bibliography for you, including primary resources, and I’ve tried to include the PL number which gives you the volume number and
column numbers for each of the works that we will be discussing, as well where they’re found in more recent critical editions.

There are a couple more recent and trustworthy series of editions that have been published since the mid-twentieth century. CSEL [Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum] is a standard, CCSL [Corpus Christianorum Series Latina] as well; there’s Sources Chrétietaines, a French edition of Greek and Latin texts. There’s also the Bibliothèque Augustinienne, which is producing edited editions, critical editions of Augustine’s works. Each of these are on their own publication track, each producing slightly different critical text, and so one might find variation in translation, and it has to do of course with the text edition that they’re working from.

The Loeb Classical Library is somewhat accessible; various works of patristic fathers are found in both the Greek and Latin volumes as far as Augustine is concerned. Some of his works are found in the Loeb Classical Library. They’re dated PL-type text that they’re based on. For the most part, they’re in great need of being critically modernized, and they’re working diligently to do that at the Loeb Classical Library. The red volumes are the Latin volumes, and you may find, for instance, various letters and things of that nature with some useful introductions that are available.

As well there are miscellaneous editions of various works that have been done. Most recently in the 1990s is James O’Donnell’s three-volume work on Confessions of Augustine which will have provided a new basis for the text. It’s published by Oxford University Press as well as a very copious, carefully done commentary on the original text. As far as the text in translation, these are the original language text if you want to work in the Latin or Greek. As well, these texts have been translated in their various series. The Ancient Christian writer series is one, the Fathers of the Church is another series. The standard nineteenth-century series which is available now on the Internet is the ante-Nicene, Nicene, and post-Nicene fathers, and these texts as well you can buy in hard copy rather inexpensively. Again, they’re based on older text, and the translations reflect a kind of a nineteenth-century wooden-type translation, but they’re very useful and provide a wealth of information and give now ready access and inexpensive access to the writings of the church fathers. Again, Loeb Classical Library is a resource. It’s the Latin or Greek text on the left-hand page with translation on the right-hand page, and so there you have both text and translation provided for you. With these other series, it’s
merely translation.

As well, there are miscellaneous editions in various publications in the English-speaking world by Oxford and by Cambridge's presses here in the States; a variety of publishing houses are providing select patristic works. I think in the 1990s of the eminent early church historian Henry Chadwick published with Oxford Press, a new *Confessions*, which is very useful to get. It will be the standard English translation of *Confessions*. These are the primary resources, and these are the tools to try to get at that material. And I would say something briefly here about secondary resources. There is an annotated bibliography provided for you in the back of your study guide.

There are a number of very useful bibliographical resources for a student of this period. There’s a multi-volume series that was projected in the 1970s called *The Augustinus-Lexikon*, which provides useful articles and entries on different aspects of Augustine’s thought. It’s projected to be a multi-volume series. Already in the first volume there are approximately two hundred different articles on different aspects of Augustine’s thoughts. The articles appear in English, in French, and in German. For the most part they’re European and Catholic scholars. It’s very resourceful though in providing further bibliography and access to various aspects of Augustine’s thought, so that’ll be a way of getting at current bibliography. It will be an indispensable tool for research in Augustinian studies.

There are other kinds of things like that that I’ll mention here briefly in a moment. As far as your monographs are concerned, while the autobiography by Peter Brown is somewhat dated, the very fact that it’s been published as many times as it has will show you just what kind of a classic it is. As well, there are other works along a similar vein that are dated, and so much is happening with Augustine research, but there are some pillars that are standard sources. And as you read Peter Brown’s biography, you’re reading a classic monograph on the life and times of Saint Augustine.

There are number of journals that are dedicated specifically to Augustinian or Augustinian-era studies. I’ve given you a list of them. They have book reviews of books pertinent relating to these topics. There are annuals that are published. Villanova, here in the United States, is very aggressive with Augustinian research and publication and lecture series and so forth, and so always these things are coming out. As well, journals that deal with early
church history, with late antiquity, and with medieval studies will have occasional articles, but one would get at these articles probably through the bibliographical resources. As you go to your library, look through to see the kinds of journals that are there that have articles that would relate to Augustine and his times.

There are a variety of other kinds of research tools that are available, and I’ll just mention some briefly. Range through in your library to find the outstanding French dictionary on early Christian archaeology and liturgy edited by Leclerc and Cabraal and others. It’s filled with remarkable information and drawings and articles that are done by outstanding scholars. There are as well some German counterparts in the encyclopedias of early Christian theology. There’s in terms of the ancient world and the ancient Roman world the multi-volume series Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt, (the Decline and Fall of the Roman World). Each volume is on a different topic, but there are articles in French and German and English that cover this entire period and are of enormous value to the study of this era.

The Oxford Dictionary of the Early Church there is, as well the encyclopedia of early Christianity as a one-volume primer or introduction to early Christian studies. There are various Catholic encyclopedias that are very useful.

Let me point out another oftentimes overlooked resource as I try to finish this up here for you, and that is the French Annual, le née file logique, which is an annual that summarizes absolutely everything done under the sun on the ancient world, and it’s done in a hard volume. You can look up cities, you can look up theological topics, archaeological sites, works by author, works by subject matter, and while these things like Bibliographic Patristica lag behind some years because of the amount of work that goes into it, they’re still enormously useful, and I would strongly suggest your looking at that.

Finally, there are number of resources that are available on CD-ROM, and I mentioned two for you that are going to be outstanding resources and necessary resources for early Christian studies. There’s the Patrologia Latina database, which has early Latin texts that are published on it. As I said before, it was estimated that there are well over five million words and surviving Augustine works, and when one has access to the kind of databases that these materials provide, it allows for some very resourceful language studies, bibliography that supports various researches; the
Catholic University at Duvane has been publishing for a number of years as well.

The Library of Christian Latin Texts is another resource that is somewhat less expensive and not quite as comprehensive but is very valuable so try to find out what kind of resources your library may have in this area. These will provide for you the access to original sources for searches in those original sources on themes like, for instance, Pagan. If you wanted to study the word *pagan* or anything relating to it, I think two hundred plus entries will come up in a database search such as this. However, the word will appear well over five hundred times in Augustine's work. You want to see about Augustine and his relationship to the pagan world, one access to it is this way, and these resources will provide that access.

Become familiar with the Internet as well. There are other fine resources that are available to you. Let’s turn our thoughts here, though, to one particular source. In doing that I want you to think about Augustine’s *Confessions*, and I want to open up to you his *Confessions* because this is going to be an important resource for the study of his early part of his life. As far as introductory remarks, when you take a work like Augustine’s *Confessions*, it’s certainly one of the great classics of all times. The work was a prototype for a later *Confessions*. It would be very interesting to do a comparative study of Augustine's *Confessions* and John Jacques Rousseau’s *Confessions* and how the world views are in clash between the two.

Augustine’s *Confessions* perhaps preserves one of the earliest spiritual autobiographies, and his purpose is not as much to tell us about himself, as we will be frustrated over that, but more to tell us about God and God’s pursuit of him. He contemplates philosophical themes and theological themes and psychological themes and some have said it’s the first grade psychological works. Oftentimes there’s an inordinate amount of emphasis placed on the psychological, often times as well on the philosophical, as we’ll mention. We want to try to take all these factors in balance and in context.

The *Confessions*, though, is an important work that was written to give an explanation of Augustine’s conversions and his relationship with God. It begins with a classic line in the first chapter of the first book, “That God has made us for Himself and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Him, repose in Him,
that people have a God-shaped vacuum.” *Confessions* contains thirteen books, ten of which are going to talk about this gnawing instability and disquieted spirit of Augustine and how he ranged from one thing to another until in fact he found peace with God.

There are a number of challenges that a book like this poses, and we’ll get at some of these together. One of the greatest challenges is that it is in fact autobiographical and consequently is very selective. One has to be careful not to take it to an extreme. That’s why you’re going to be reading Peter Brown’s biography at the same time. We want to take it in balance so we can contemplate in our next discussion together Augustine’s early childhood. There’s only minimal value to some things that are said in the *Confessions*, and we have to hold those things in tension and in balance.

As far as an overview of the book, *Confessions* is similar in some ways to other autobiographical works, and we have references to some in the ancient world, in the classical world, some of which Augustine himself may have been familiar with. As well, there are other autobiographical materials contained in Augustine’s writings which are of great interest. There are others that are not quite as polished and as popular that overlap in some ways with Augustine’s *Confessions*. There are as well places where Augustine will reflect on his *Confessions*, and he tells us about the writings of the *Confessions* and their value, and he will talk about their purpose. And so these later references are of great value, and I’ve provided some of those in your appendices. There are other kinds of autobiographical resources in Augustine’s works that are useful.

As well, there are other places where he reflects on the place of the *Confessions* and his purpose in writing them. It’s generally accepted that *Confessions* were written over a period of time beginning when Augustine was a young bishop and finishing somewhere in and around 397.

There are a couple other critical matters that we can talk about in discussing Augustine’s *Confessions* and its value for a study of his life. Of course, there are source-critical questions about the *Confessions* itself and its value as a historical source, and we’ve mentioned some of those things, what kind of prototype these things are based on. While there’s been a lot of debate about the date, it’s rather settled down, and it’s important to keep that in mind in terms of what’s going on in Augustine’s life.
I don’t want to go into great detail about manuscript evidence and the history of its publication, but this is a worthwhile pursuit of study as well because there was a real backlash against *Confessions* in particular in the early twentieth century by Roman Catholic scholars because they saw it as fodder for the Protestant Reformers because of the important role of conversion in it. As far as editions and resources, certainly in terms of my day as I talk to you, O’Donnell’s work is the classic, and one should begin there working in Chadwick’s translation in English.

As far as a summary book by book, let me just say that Augustine’s *Confessions* have baffled people because of its organization. Now you’re asked to read the first ten books because those are autobiographical and they’re arranged somewhat chronologically. The final three books we’ll consider when we think about Augustine and his thoughts on creation.

But the first ten then are autobiographical, and this has baffled people to some extent. Some literary critics have seen the last three books as literary criticism reflecting a Trinitarian thesis, but there doesn’t seem to be strong evidence, provocative, but not strong evidence for that. As far then as some critical remarks on this great book, the most recent scholarship has been influenced by the philosophical backgrounds, and that’s the important theme, but it’s not the only theme. There are number of avenues of approach to this great work from the psychological to the philosophical to the merely religious. Be careful not to put Augustine in your pocket as you read it, to read it through your eyes. I’m afraid that our *Confessions* are somewhat different than his and yet he speaks to us through these, and I think shows the hollowness of our own day and age today when you see the deep religious commitment of this African convert as he’s writing his testimony of his early conversion.

When you think about *Confessions*, yes, in fact it is an intellectual assent. There is a very strong spiritual aspect. The place of conversion and his use of Scripture are of extraordinary importance. Look at how he uses Scripture. We’ll talk about that in greater detail in lessons to come, but he reflects a reading of the text that is an early and interesting reading of the text, and look at his interpretations and applications, so Augustine, his *Confessions*, is a spiritual masterpiece that will open up to you the world of Augustine and somewhat of his own soul.
I hope in terms of our concluding observations that these aspects, our study of the resources will help you to have greater confidence, and in the same way that as you think about *Confessions*, think about your own pilgrimage, your own conversion. Think about the themes that relate to God’s pursuit of you and look at it in a very devotional way, and I think that you’ll find it very enriching. I hope this is helpful to open up to you some of the sources for the study of Augustine and his age. Our next time together, we’re going to think about the early years of Saint Augustine. Until then, blessings.