

## Philosophical Perspectives: First Paper Topics

19 January, 2005

Write a five page paper on one of the following topics. Papers are due by 1pm on Friday, 3 February. Good luck!

1. In Book 7, section xii of the *Confessions*, Augustine gives an argument for the conclusion that evil does not exist. Explain this argument. Present what you regard as a compelling objection to the argument. How might Augustine reply? What do you think: has Augustine shown that everything is good?
2. In Book 8, section x of the *Confessions*, Augustine contends that the Manichean explanation of a common phenomenon is no good. The common phenomenon is conflict of the will: wanting to do different, incompatible things. Explain what you regard as the central point of Augustine's argument. How might a Manichean reply? What do you think: has Augustine shown that the Manicheans are mistaken?
3. In the fifth paragraph of the First Meditation, Descartes observes that he can think that he is awake by the fire when he is actually asleep in bed. Why does Descartes think that throws what he believes on the basis of his senses into doubt? Why might someone disagree? What do you think: does the dream argument cast doubt on the senses?
4. Suppose I said this. "I clearly and distinctly perceive a computer screen in front of me. It does not look fuzzy and I see that it is distinct from the other things on my desk. Therefore, if I understand the second paragraph of Descartes's Third Meditation correctly, I'm certain that there is a computer screen in front of me." Would Descartes agree with my interpretation of that paragraph? Explain why or why not. What do you think of his use of clear and distinct perceptions?