TMST8506 • SEMINAR: AQUINAS ON GOD

Thursday, 10–11:50, Fall 2015
Theology and Ministry Library (TML), Room 311

Instructor: Dominic Doyle
doyleda@bc.edu
Office: 9 Lake St, Rm 311
Office Hours: Thu 3–5

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Overview

This seminar offers a detailed and systematic examination of Aquinas’ doctrine of God in the prima pars of the Summa theologiae. For the most part, primary readings will be drawn from the treatises on the unity of the divine essence and on the Trinity of persons (questions 1–43), with secondary readings from contemporary Thomist theologians.

Objectives

By the end of this class, students will be able to:
• read Aquinas carefully and fruitfully
• demonstrate a solid comprehension of the basic features of his doctrine of God
• evaluate the coherence and persuasiveness of his arguments with reference to some contemporary theologians in the Thomist tradition.

Schedule of Topics

1. Introduction
2. Structure of the Summa theologiae (selected prologues)
3. Sacra doctrina (q. 1)
4. Existence of God (q. 2)
5. Simplicity and Perfection of God (qq. 3–4)
6. Goodness, Infinity and Omnipresence of God (qq. 5–8)
7. Immutability, Eternity, Unity of God (qq. 9–11)
8. Knowing God (q. 12)
9. Naming God (q. 13)
10. Creation (qq. 44–45)
11. Divine Intellect and Will (qq. 14 and 19)
12. Divine Providence (q. 22)
13. Procession, Relations, and Missions of Divine Persons (qq. 27–29, 43 and 93)
14. Student presentations of research papers
Requirements

[1] Attendance at all class meetings and active participation in class discussion that shows evidence of a close reading and thoughtful evaluation of the text. Class participation will count for 30% of the grade.

[2] Weekly papers (1 page, double-spaced, 12-point font, 1 inch margins on all sides -- no exceptions) uploaded to the course website by 5:00 PM the day before class.
   Guidelines for weekly papers: select one article; briefly place it in the context of its question; state the problem it addresses and why you think it is important; explain the argument Aquinas used to address the problem; briefly evaluate Aquinas’s argument in light of one or more of the secondary readings. The weekly papers will count for 30% of the grade.

[3] Final research paper (10–15 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font, 1 inch margins on all sides -- no exceptions), due 5:00 PM Tuesday December 15, 2015. Students must submit a provisional title of their research paper (formulated as a question), a one paragraph statement of problem, and bibliography (1 page total) by week 12 (November 19). The final paper will count for 40% of the grade.

COURSE BOOKS AND ARTICLES

The following books can be purchased online or at the Boston College bookstore. They are also on reserve at the STM library.

- Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae, Questions on God* edited by Brian Davies and Brian Leftow (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006)

The remaining readings are posted on the course website.

The following web sites are worth exploring:

- [http://www.home.duq.edu/~bonin/thomasbibliography.html](http://www.home.duq.edu/~bonin/thomasbibliography.html)
  Bibliography of Thomas Aquinas in English, with links to English translations of the ST.
- [http://www.corpusthomisticum.org](http://www.corpusthomisticum.org)
  Complete works of Aquinas in Latin. This web site includes extensive bibliographical information and a useful search engine.

The relevant volumes of the multivolume Latin–English (side by side) edition of the ST are also on reserve at the STM library:

COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE OF READING ASSIGNMENTS

Sept 3  Introduction  Week 1

Sept 10  The Structure of the *Summa theologiae* (prologues)  Week 2

Selected prologues from *ST* (especially those marked *) handed out in first class.

Sept 17  Nature and Extent of *sacra doctrina* (q. 1)  Week 3


Sept 24  Existence of God (q. 2)  Week 4

[=ch. 12 “The Five Ways”].
Oct 1  Simplicity and Perfection of God (qq. 3–4)  Week  5

Te Velde, Aquinas on God, 65–67, 72–90.

Oct 8  Goodness, Infinity and Omnipresence of God (qq. 5–8)  Week  6


Oct 15  Immutability, Eternity, Unity of God (qq. 9–11)  Week 7

Brian Davies, The Thought of Thomas Aquinas, 101–121.
Eleonore Stump, Aquinas (New York: Routledge, 2003), 131–47 [=from ch. 4 “God’s eternity”].

Oct 22  Knowing God (q. 12)  Week  8


Oct 29  Naming God (q. 13)  Week 9

Te Velde, Aquinas on God, 95–118.
W. Norris Clarke, The One and the Many, 42–59.
[=ch. 3 “Special Characteristics of Our Idea of Being as Transcendental and Analogous].
**Nov 5**     Creation (q. 44 and 45)     Week 10


**Nov 12**     Divine Intellect and Will (qq. 14 and 19)     Week 11


**Nov 19**     Providence (qq. 22)     Week 12


**Nov 26**     Thanksgiving recess – no class

**Dec 3**     Procession, Relations, Missions of Divine Persons (qq. 27–29, 43, 93)     Week 13


**Dec 10**     Student presentations on research papers     Week 14
ADDITIONAL NOTICES

For Students with Disabilities:
If you have a disability and will be requesting accommodations for this course, please register with either Kathy Duggan (Kathleen.duggan@bc.edu) Associate Director, Academic Support Services, the Connors Family Learning Center (learning disabilities and ADHD) or Paulette Durrett (paulette.durrett@bc.edu), Assistant Dean for Students with Disabilities (all other disabilities). Advance notice and appropriate documentation are required for accommodations.

The STM Writing Companions Corner (WCC) offers students one-on-one help with writing research papers, exegeses, reflection papers, and other assignments frequently given by STM faculty. Please watch STM News for more information on signing up for an appointment in the WCC.

Academic Integrity Policy:
Plagiarism is the act of taking the words, ideas, data, illustrations, or statements of another person or source, and presenting them as one’s own. Penalties at Boston College range from a grade penalty to dismissal from the University. To avoid plagiarism, any use of another’s words or ideas must be fully cited. If in the original wording, quotation marks or blocked, indented quotations must be used. For more information regarding plagiarism and other violations of academic integrity, please consult the STM website at http://www.bc.edu/content/bc/schools/stm/acadprog/acadpol.html

Bias neutral and Inclusive Language:
Language is not fixed or static, but is constantly evolving and changing as society’s attitudes and practices change. Be aware of the development of new forms of expression that endeavor to describe persons in non-discriminatory ways that are appropriate, respectful and just. In accordance with the Chicago Manual of Style and generally accepted contemporary canons of scholarship, the expectation is to use bias neutral language in academic writing. In addition to gender inclusive language, conscientious effort should be made to use appropriate language with reference to race, ethnicity, disability, age, religion, social status, etc.