AQUINAS ON GOD: PERSPECTIVES FROM ANALYTIC THEOLOGY

Instructor: Dominic Doyle                 doyleda@bc.edu

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Overview

This seminar intends a detailed and systematic examination of Aquinas’s doctrine of God in the *prima pars* of the *Summa theologiae* from the perspective of analytic theology. For the most part, readings will be drawn from the treatises on the unity of the divine essence and on the Trinity of persons (questions 1–43).

The aim of the course is threefold: [1] to learn how to read Aquinas carefully and fruitfully; [2] to achieve some comprehension of the basic features of his doctrine of God; and [3] to examine and evaluate the coherence and persuasiveness of his arguments through rigorous, contemporary philosophical and analytic theology.

Schedule of Topics

1  Introduction: Thomism and Analytic Theology
2  Structure of the *Summa theologiae* (prologues) and *sacra doctrina* (q. 1)
3  Existence of God (q. 2)
4  Simplicity and Perfection of God (qq. 3 and 4)
5  Goodness, Infinity and Omnipresence of God (qq. 5–8)
6  Immutability, Eternity, Unity of God (qq. 9–11)
7  Knowing and Naming God (qq. 12 and 13)
8  Creation (qq. 44 and 45)
9  Evil (qq. 48 and 49)
10 Divine Intellect and Will (qq. 14, 15 and 19)
11 Divine Providence and Predestination (qq. 22 and 23)
12 Procession, Relations, and Missions of Divine Persons (qq. 27–29, 43 and 93)
13 Mission of the Word: Incarnation—divine-human union in Christ (III, qq. 1–4)
14 Mission of the Spirit: Grace—participation of humanity in God (I–II, qq. 109–114)
**Requirements**

[1] Active participation in class discussion that shows evidence of close reading and thoughtful evaluation of the readings.

[2] Weekly papers (1 single-spaced page) e-mailed to the instructor 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; examine the argument(s) Aquinas used to address the problem; evaluate Aquinas’s argument(s) in light of one or more of the secondary readings.

[3] Final research paper (20–25 pages), due the last day of exams, Spring, 2012. 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.

**Grading**

Each of three components listed under “Requirements” comprise one third of the final grade.

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**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)

A coursepack will include all other readings and will be available for purchase at the bookstore.

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

Week 1  Introduction: Thomism and Analytic Theology


John Haldane “Afterword: Analytical Thomism: How We Got There, Why it is Worth Remaining and Where We May Go Next” in Analytical Thomism, 303–310.

Week 2  The Structure of the Summa theologiae (prologues) and the Nature of sacra doctrina (q. 1)

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


Week 3  Existence of God (q. 2)

Te Velde, Aquinas on God, 37–60.

 [=ch. 4 “How the Existence of God Explains the World and Its Order”].
Michael J. Buckley, *Denying and Disclosing God*, 48–62
 [=from ch. 3 “Thomas Aquinas and the Rise of Modern Atheism”].

**Week 4**  
**Simplicity and Perfection of God (qq. 3–4)**


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

W. Norris Clarke, *The One and the Many: A Contemporary Thomistic Metaphysics*  
 [=“Part Two: The Transcendence of Being and the Good”]

**Week 6**  
**Immutability, Eternity, Unity of God (qq. 9–11)**

Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 101–120.
133–56 [=ch. 7: “God Everlasting”].
Week 7    Knowing and Naming God (q. 12 and 13)

Te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 95–118.


[=ch. 3 “Special Characteristics of Our Idea of Being as Transcendental and Analogous].


Week 8    Creation (q. 44 and 45)


Week 9    Evil (qq. 48 and 49)


Week 10    Divine Intellect and Will (qq. 14, 15, and 19)


Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, “God’s Knowledge and its Causal Efficacy” in

Gregory Doolan, Aquinas on the Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press), 156–190

[=ch. 5 “The Causality of Divine Exemplars”].

Week 11  Divine Providence and Predestination (qq. 22 and 23)

Additional Questions: ST, I, qq. 103–105 on divine government.


Week 12  Procession, Relations, and Missions of Divine Persons (qq. 27–29, 43 and 93)

Te Velde, Aquinas on God, 67–72.


Week 13  Mission of the Word:

Incarnation—the union of divinity and humanity in Christ (III, qq. 1–4)


Week 14  
Mission of the Spirit:  
Grace—the participation of humanity in God (I–II, qq. 109–114)

Te Velde, Aquinas on God, 147–169.
Eleonore Stump, Aquinas, 389–404 [=ch. 13 “Grace and Free Will”].