

The One Creator God
STPH 3095
Fall, 2020
Thur 12:40PM-3:00PM, on Zoom
In lieu of office hours, please email me for a
telephone or Zoom appointment as needed

Michael J. Dodds, O.P.
DSPT
email: mdodds@dspt.edu

Course description: *Classical and contemporary questions regarding the nature of God and creation will be addressed through the retrieval of the tradition of Thomas Aquinas. Existence and attributes of God, divine compassion and human suffering, the possibility and nature of God-talk, divine action and contemporary science, cosmology and creation.*

Goals: *Students will acquire a fundamental understanding of what it means to speak of God, using Dionysius's three ways of causality, negation and eminence, and Aquinas's notion of analogy. They will discover the possibility and meaning of "proofs" for the existence of God and come to understand certain basic problematics regarding divine attributes, knowledge, will and action.*

Outcomes: *Students will be conversant with the notion of analogy in the thought of Thomas Aquinas and be able to apply it to contemporary issues in God-talk. They will be able to analyze and critique arguments for and against the existence of God. They will be able to discuss certain key issues regarding God's being and relation to the world including: (a) the meaning of divine attributes, (b) the understanding of divine knowledge and will in relation to creaturely contingency and freedom; and (c) the possibility of divine action in the world as the world is understood by empirical science. They will also be capable of serious academic research regarding the subject matter of this course.*

Course time composition: *Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this course is being offered online. One sixty-minute asynchronos session per week, comprising reading of the assigned section of the professor's textbook and responding (via Moodle) to the weekly questions. Two sixty-minute synchronous sessions per week on Zoom (separated by a fifteen-minute break to avoid Zoom fatigue), comprising lecture/discussion of the weekly subject matter. Students should also expect to spend an additional six hours per week in personal study and reflection on the weekly readings and other assessment requirements for the course.*

Course modality: *Asynchronous reading and Moodle assignment: 35 %*
 Synchronous Zoom lecture/discussion meeting: 65%

Sep.10	Introduction
Sep. 17	Existence of God Dodds, <i>The One Creator God</i> , 1-44 Anselm, Proslogian; Reply, in Hick, <i>Existence</i> , 25-30 ST I, Q.2, aa.1-3. (Esp., first, second and third "ways") Gilby, Appendix 1; Appendixes 4-7 [located at the top of the Moodle page]
Sep.24	Existence of God Dodds, <i>The One Creator God</i> , 44-56 ST I, Q.2, a.3, (Esp. fourth and fifth "ways") George, "On the Occasion of Darwin's Bicentennial: Finally Time to Retire the Fifth Way?" Spitzer, <i>New Proofs for the Existence of God</i> , 14-46 Maritain, <i>Approaches to God</i> , 1-15
Oct.1	Atheism Dodds, <i>The One Creator God</i> , 56-60. Flew, "Theology and Falsification" in Hick, <i>Existence of God</i> , 224-228 Lash, "Where Does <i>The God Delusion</i> Come From?" Hyman, "Atheism in Modern History" Schall, "Thomism and Atheism" Turner, "On Denying the Right God: Aquinas on Atheism and Idolatry"
Oct. 8	Divine simplicity, perfection, and goodness Dodds, <i>The One Creator God</i> , 61-67 ST I, Q.3, prologue and a.1-4, 7-8; Q.4, 1-3; Q.6, 1 Gilby, Appendixes 12-13

- Oct 15 Divine infinity, presence, immutability, eternity, and unity
 Dodds, *The One Creator God*, 67-79
 ST I, Q.7, 1; Q.8, 1, 3; Q.9, 1-2; Q.10, 1-3, Q.11, aa. 3-4
 Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p.342-351.
 Gilby, Appendixes 14-16
 PAPER TOPIC DUE
- Oct.22 Knowing and speaking of God
 Dodds, *The One Creator God*, 80-101
 ST I, Q. 12, 1, 5-6, 12-13; Q.13, 1-3, 5-8, 11
 Dodds, "Ultimacy and Intimacy"
 McWhorter, "Aquinas on God's Relation to the World"
- Oct.29 READING WEEK (No class meeting)
- Nov. 5 Divine knowledge and life
 Dodds, *The One Creator God*, 102-109
 ST I, Q.14, 1-5, 8, 13, 15; Q. 18, 3
 Placher, *Domestication of Transcendence*, p. 1-107
 ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE
- Nov.12 Divine will, love, justice, compassion
 Dodds, *The One Creator God*, 110-125
 ST I, Q. 19, 1-8, 10; ST I, Q.20, 1-2, Q.21, 1, 3-4,
 Hill, "Two Gods of Love"
 John Paul II, "On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering"
- Nov. 19 Providence, predestination, theodicy, power, and beatitude
 Dodds, *The One Creator God*, 126-157
 ST I, Q. 14, 10; Q. 19, 9; Q.22, 1-4; Q. 23, 1-3, 5, 8; Q.25, 1-3, 5-6; Q. 26, 1
 [Optional: ST I, Q.48, 1-5; Q. 49, 1-2]
 OUTLINE DUE
- Nov.26 THANKSGIVING DAY (No class meeting)
- Dec.3 Divine creation and governance
 Dodds, *The One Creator God*, 158-162
 ST I, 44, 1, 3-4; Q.45, 1-3, 5; Q.46, 1-2; Q.103, 1, 5-7; Q.104, 1-2.
 Placher, *Domestication*, p.111-27
 Barnes, "Natural Final Causality and Providence in Aquinas"
- Dec.10 Divine action
 Dodds, *The One Creator God* 162-175
 ST I, Q.105, 5-6.
 Placher, *Domestication*, p.128-45, 181-200
- Dec. 17 Final week of semester (No class meeting)
 RESEARCH PAPER DUE DECEMBER 18

ASSIGNED READINGS:

Two books are required:

Michael J. Dodds, OP, *The One Creator God in Thomas Aquinas and Contemporary Theology* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2020), ISBN: 978-0813232874 (available through DSPT Amazon.com. \$29.95).

William Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), ISBN: 978-0664256357. (available through DSPT Amazon.com. \$22.50).

All of the readings from Aquinas are in the *Summa Theologica* (ST). There are copies of this in the GTU Library. It is also available online: <https://isidore.co/aquinas/english/summa/index.html>

The other readings are on Moodle.

STRUCTURE:

The structure of the class is lecture/discussion. Active participation is expected, and this presupposes a careful reading of the assigned texts.

WEEKLY QUESTIONS:

To help focus the class in reading the texts, I will give a few questions for each class which deal with the weekly reading assignment. These assignments not be graded as such, but their absence will have a negative effect on your grade. You should write a brief (50-70 word) response to each question. The response is not meant to be exhaustive, but only to indicate a few principles or points that would be involved in answering the question. Alternatively, you may be asked to formulate one or two questions of your own regarding a certain text. Your responses should be turned in each week on Moodle by date of the class meeting for which they are assigned.

ACADEMIC RESEARCH

A particular focus of this course is the development of research ability regarding the subject matter of the course. To this end, particular evidence of research skills will be required:

Paper topic: Students are to turn in an initial paper topic on **October 15**. This will include simply a tentative title and a few sentences of description. It is recognized that the title and shape of the paper may change according to the student's research during the semester. Students interested in topics to be covered in class only later in the semester will have to do their own research and reading in advance to meet this deadline.

Annotated bibliography: In preparation for the final paper, students are expected to turn in an annotated bibliography of 15-20 books and/or journal articles on **November 5**. Each entry in the bibliography should be accompanied by a brief comment explaining the content of the book/article and how it will be more (or less) useful in researching the paper topic. Evidence of use of theological journals, relevant books, and on-line research tools is expected. Be sure to put the tentative title of your paper at the beginning of your annotated bibliography. Entries should be listed in proper form. (See Turabian, below.)

Outline: A detailed outline of the paper will be due on **November 19**.

Research paper: A 15-20 page research paper, in proper form, will be due on **December 18**. Kate Turabian, *A Manual for the Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, is the standard regarding the form of term papers at GTU. DSPT MA students may use this paper for their "Research Paper Review." by submitting the proper form with the paper.

ASSESSMENT

Grades are based on the quality of student work, demonstrating both clearness of expression and mastery of essential concepts, and evidence of research skills. Work is also evaluated in terms of the institutional goals of the school. For these, see page 1 of the DSPT Student Handbook [http://www.dspt.edu/files/Student_Handbook.pdf].

The grade will take into consideration class participation and weekly assignments (20%), the bibliography (20%), the outline (20%), and the final paper (40%).

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TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS: All students should have access to technology sufficient to complete the course successfully. This includes a computer, laptop, or tablet, with webcam & microphone, with an updated operating system (Windows, Mac, Linux) and an updated internet browser (Chrome, Firefox); high speed internet bandwidth (preferably 10 mbps or greater but at least 3 mbps); Zoom and Moodle software, and the ability to use them. If students experience any difficulties with Moodle, Zoom, or other technology, they can contact Moodle support at moodle@gtu.edu. Students will receive a response within 24 hours.