

Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology

Institute of Salesian Studies - Spring 2018

SP-4571 - Francis de Sales: Sources and Spirit

3.0 units (5 ECTS) - Tuesday: 9:40-12:30, ISS

Instructor: Joseph Boenzi, SDB
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Course Description

Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva from 1602 to 1622, is known as a French-speaking spiritual author and director, but few understand his roots in the Italian Renaissance and how his training in secular environments prepared him to for his life mission as one of the foremost Catholic Reformers in the aftermath of the Council of Trent. This course provides the opportunity to examine his principal works as well as lesser-known personal writings in an attempt to understand the basis for Salesian spirituality that he (perhaps unknowingly) originated – a lay spirituality in the Catholic tradition that paved the way for Vatican II. Primary sources studied and discussed; final grade based on research paper and class presentation.

Expectations

Teaching method: *Francis de Sales: Sources and Spirit* is primarily a survey course. My presentations will highlight the context in the life and spirit of Francis de Sales (1567-1622). I will make use of lectures, PowerPoints or other means to help you to visualize the times and personages that you will be studying; I provide a text to coincide with my lectures and to develop material at greater depth. I shall also indicate some primary source documents – that is, the critical editions and best English translations of all the writings of St Francis de Sales, however during this course I shall present to you his masterpiece, the *Introduction to the Devout Life*, as a text for study. At key intervals we will dedicate time to group work and class discussion of this classic text.

Student roles: While I hope to provide you with positive input, I want to say that I believe that you and your classmates have the greatest role in creating a good learning environment. In this context, let me state clearly what are my expectations in terms of your participation in the course. I expect that you will attend all the class sessions; if there is a serious reason that prevents you from doing so, I would appreciate your speaking to me about your absence. I expect that you will participate in all group projects, giving everyone a chance to speak and building on one another's contributions (I believe that students add breadth and depth to the course for one another through class participation). Finally, I expect that you will complete reading and written assignments in a timely fashion.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this course, you will have gained an overview of the mission and teachings of St Francis de Sales and the origins of the Salesian tradition. You will also gain insights Early Modern Catholicism as the context for new spiritual expressions in the generation immediately following the Reformation (Protestant and Catholic) and their influence in the reforming and renewal of the wider Christian world.

You will have learned the principles of historiography, and honed skills in critical analysis of written text through participation in class/group discussions and by developing a research paper written in a succinct and organized fashion.

Tools for assessment

In addition to attendance and class participation, your learning during this course will be assessed on the basis of participation in small-group activities surrounding assigned reading, a class presentation and a final research paper (on a theme of your choosing). You will develop the class presentation and research paper in installments that will build on work pursued in the small group activity sessions.

Scheduling

SP4571 is slated to meet on Tuesdays during second and third class periods (9:40-12:30) in ISS Seminar Room (1831 Arch Street). During the second week of the semester we will firm up the instruction calendar and due dates for reading assignments; lecture schedules and reading deadlines will be finalized during the fourth week of class.

Course Outline

Introduction to the Life and Works of St Francis de Sales

1. Overview of content and thrust of the course
2. Historical, political and religious context

His life in broad strokes

1. Family life, Education and Vocation
2. Missionary: evangelization and reconciliation
3. Lenten preacher and director of souls

Introducing St Jane de Chantal

1. Life and Vocation
2. Searching to understand God's will in one's life...
3. Personalities of Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal

Reading Francis de Sales in context

1. Shepherd, Reformer, Teacher
2. The written works of Saint Francis de Sales
3. Correspondence

Hearing Francis de Sales

1. Oral culture
2. Sermons (On Preacher and Preaching)
3. Exhortations

Salesian Spiritual Direction

1. Direction as spiritual accompaniment
2. Baroness de Chantal: a new challenge for spiritual direction
3. Theme of “spiritual friendship” in Francis de Sales thought and praxis

Salesian Direction and Friendship

1. The Letters of Spiritual Direction
2. Salesian spiritual direction and accompaniment.
3. Francis de Sales prayer style and its accessibility in reference to his times

Learning and Living God’s Will

1. Opening the heart in responsiveness to God
2. The expressed will of God and God’s will “of good pleasure”
3. Living between the two wills of God

Salesian Keywords and Key Practices

1. Devotion, sweetness and daily life
2. Spiritual friendship and accompaniment
3. Pastoral zeal (*DA MIHI ANIMAS*)
4. Trust in a Provident God
5. Sacraments / Confession and Communion
6. The presence of Mary

Required reading:

Francis de Sales, Saint. *Introduction to the Devout Life*. Translated, with introduction and notes by John Kenneth Ryan. Reissue ed. New York: Image Book, 2003 [ISBN: 978-0385030090; \$16.00].

Boenzi, Joseph. *Saint Francis de Sales: Life and Spirit*. Stella Niagara, NY: DeSales Resources and Ministries, 2013 [ISBN: 978-098297137; \$25.00].

Instructor’s supplemental notes: ©Salesian Society, Berkeley: 2018 [estimated cost: \$25.00].

Primary sources (in translation):

François de Sales, Saint. *Treatise on the Love of God*. Translated and edited by Antony Mookenthottam, Armind Nazareth, Henry Jose Kodikuthiyil. Bangalore: SFS Publications, 2012 [ISBN: 81-85376-86-7; \$32.00].

François de Sales, and Jeanne-Françoise (Frémyot) Rabutin de Chantal, Saints. *Letters of Spiritual Direction*, selected and introduced by Wendy M. Wright, and Joseph F. Power. Translated by Péronne Marie Thibert. The Classics of Western Spirituality Series, ed. Kevin Lynch, New York: Paulist, 1988 [ISBN: 978-0809129904; \$22.95].