

Catholic Studies 299:20

Special Topics: Angels and Demons

Winter 2017

Instructor: Martin Sastri

Office: 707 Nicholson Tower

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N1 Block (Monday @7:00p.m.)

Classroom: NH 361

Office Hours: Monday-Thursday 1:00-3:00p.m. or by appointment

Course Description

The Greek word ‘angelos’ (ἄγγελος) simply means ‘messenger.’ In the Catholic tradition, however, this term designates messengers of the most exalted form, both in terms of occupying the highest ranks of creation, and in delivering messages sent by God Himself. Moreover, the Catholic faith is far from alone in its reverence for such messengers: competing and complementary angelic doctrines are found in Judaism, Gnosticism, and Islam. Thus, the very doctrine of angels serves to deliver messages from one faith to the next.

This course will trace the evolution of the Catholic doctrine of angels, or ‘angelology.’ As a parallel to angelology, we will also study the nature and role of demons in Catholicism. By the end of the course, we will examine what the contemporary Church teaches about the role of angels in everyday life, about demons, and exorcism.

Since angels also serve as powerful visual symbols, we will take a look at some of the classical depictions of angels in art. Consideration of the testimony of other faiths – particularly Judaism and Islam – will also help us to cultivate a complete understanding of angels in Catholicism.

Evaluation

First Paper	15%
Second Paper	15%
Midterm Exam	30%
Final Exam	40%

Required Textbook

“Angels and Demons” Coursepack (available at the university bookstore)

The Two Papers

Two papers will be assigned over the course of the term. The first, **due Monday, January 30th**, will be a brief (2-3 pp.) report on what the Bible allows us to say about angels. The second, **due Monday, April 3rd**, will be a slightly longer paper (4-5 pp.), concerning Aquinas’ angelology in the *Summa Theologiae*. More specific instructions for each assignment will be distributed in due course.

Midterm and Final Exam

Following the winter break, there will be a short **midterm exam**, consisting of terms to be defined and short-answer questions concerning the material we have read up to that point. There will be a **final exam**, scheduled for the April examination period, which will test your knowledge of the course material in greater detail than the midterm. The final exam will require, in addition to definitions and short-answer responses, short-essay length responses to more detailed questions, inspired by course readings, lectures, and discussion.

Attendance

Attending course lectures is essential for success in this course. Notwithstanding, attendance is solely the responsibility of the student, and will not be monitored.

Late Policy

Late papers will be penalized at a rate of 2% per day. Reasonable requests for extensions must be made at least 48 hours before the assigned due date. In the case of sudden illness, documentation is required.

Class Schedule

Jan. 9 Introduction; Old Testament selections up to the Book of Daniel

Jan. 16 Book of Daniel; begin Book of Tobit

Jan. 23 Finish Book of Tobit; selections from the New Testament

Jan. 30 St. Augustine, selections from *On Genesis*; begin selections from *City of God*
First paper due

Feb. 6 Selections from *City of God*; begin Pseudo-Dionysius, *Celestial Hierarchy*

Feb. 13 Pseudo-Dionysius, *Celestial Hierarchy*

Reading Week

Feb. 27 Midterm; Iamblichus, selections from *On the Mysteries*

Mar. 6 Aquinas (handout)

Mar. 13 Bonaventure/Pico (handout)

Mar. 20 Voltaire/Catechism (handout)

Mar. 27 *Wings of Desire* (dir. Wim Wenders)

Apr. 3 Review

Second paper due

Centre for Accessible Learning

Students requiring accommodations for this class are advised to contact the Centre for Accessible Learning as soon as possible: Bloomfield Centre 421; 867-5349.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty, which includes plagiarism, is not permitted at St. Francis Xavier University. Please review the university policy on plagiarism here: http://www.sites.stfx.ca/registrar_office/academic_integrity. If you are in any doubt as to how these rules apply to the assignments of this course, please ask me without delay.

The Writing Centre (aka, the Student Success Centre)

Students are encouraged to make use of the Writing Centre for help with any stage of their assignments. The Writing Centre staff are friendly, encouraging, and – best of all – very helpful in bringing writing skills to where they need to be at the university level. You can book an appointment on the Writing Centre website: <http://sites.stfx.ca/writingcentre/>.