

## **Humanities Elective: The Devil in Christian Thought**

Shimer College  
Spring 2014  
TBD Classroom  
MWF 12:45-3:05

**Instructor:** Adam Kotsko  
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### **Course Description**

This course is an exploration of the ever-shifting role of the devil in Christian theology. Beginning with the devil's roots in Jewish thought, the course investigates key texts from the New Testament as well as the patristic, medieval, and Reformation eras. Hence, this course can serve as an idiosyncratic introduction to the history of Christian thought, from its beginnings up to the dawn of secular modernity. Major themes include the devil's relationship to the so-called "problem of evil" (how a good, all-powerful God could permit evil to happen), his place in various attempts to make sense of how Christ secured our salvation, and the way he serves as a privileged site for thinking through major political and social problems.

### **Learning Outcomes**

After completing this course, students will be able to

- give an account the diversity of the Christian tradition over time, even with regard to central beliefs.
- give an account of the complex relationship between Christianity and Jewish apocalyptic thought.
- accurately recount and assess various approaches to the problem of evil from the Hebrew Bible and the Christian tradition.
- analyze portrayals of the devil from a variety of traditions and historical periods, in both theological and social-political terms.

### **Required Texts**

*The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha* (Oxford UP)  
Anselm of Canterbury, *The Major Works*, ed. Davies and Evans (Oxford, World Classics Series)  
Athanasius, *The Life of St. Anthony and Letter to Marcellinus*, ed. Gregg (Paulist, Classics of Western Spirituality Series)  
Augustine, *City of God*, trans. Dods (Modern Library)  
Dante, *The Divine Comedy, Part 1: Hell*, trans. Sayers (Penguin)  
Hardy, ed., *Christology of the Later Fathers* (Westminster, Library of Christian Classics)  
Harnack, *Marcion: The Gospel of the Alien God* (Wipf & Stock)  
*The Malleus Maleficarum of Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger*, trans. Summers (Dover Occult)  
Milton, *Paradise Lost: Norton Critical Edition*, ed. Elledge (Norton)  
Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jew and Its Relation to Modern Anti-Semitism* (Jewish Publications Society)

Other readings will be provided in a course packet and marked (\*\*) on the syllabus.

### Course Requirements

The student's grade depends on demonstrating the qualities listed in the learning outcomes above. Class discussion and written work will serve as the means of demonstrating progress toward those outcomes. Grades will be determined according to the following formula, depending on the number of credits for which the student is taking the class:

- **5 credits:** Discussion 50%; Presentations 30% (2 at 15% each); Final Paper 20%
- **3 credits:** Discussion 60%; Presentations 40% (2 at 20% each)

**Discussion** assumes conscientious preparation for and prompt attendance at each class. Bring questions to class, and come ready to listen to others and share your ideas with one another in a respectful, attentive, and caring way. You should read all texts thoroughly, annotating or taking notes.

This course will follow the standard Shimer attendance policy—more than three absences will put you in danger of failing the course, and each absence will result in a reduction of your participation grade.

**Writing** will consist of brief in-class presentations (also called protocols or focus statements) and a final paper. All students will be required to complete two in-class presentations; those taking the course for five credits will also be required to complete a final paper, due at the end of the semester.

*In-class presentations* should be based on a paper of 2-3 double spaced pages, to be read out at the beginning of class. Students should bring printed copies for the professor and all class members. When writing these presentations, students should consider the following questions:

- What does this text tell us about the “problem of evil”?
- What does this text tell us about the relationship between God and earthly political and social conflicts?
- What does this text tell us about the figure of the devil? How does its portrayal of the devil differ from that of previous texts?
- If the text does not overtly mention the devil, what might that omission tell us about the author's view of God and the world?

Presentations should reflect an engagement with the editorial background materials provided in the course texts or basic background research from sources such as Wikipedia or the Catholic Encyclopedia (available online). All sources should be clearly indicated, both verbally and in writing.

Students will sign up for in-class presentations via a Google Drive spreadsheet; this should be completed by the end of the second week of class. Late presentation papers can be submitted up to a week after they were due or else students can sign up for a later presentation date if one is available—in either case, the student's grade will be reduced.

*Final papers* allow students an opportunity to explore their own interests. While they must engage with texts and themes from the course—and indeed, they may limit themselves to the course materials if desired—they should be on a topic of the student's own choosing. Comparing the portrayal of the devil in the course materials with modern and even contemporary sources (literature, opera, art, film, etc.) is encouraged.

Papers must follow a recognized documentation style in the humanities—preferably University of Chicago or MLA—and be **between eight and ten pages** in length, double-spaced, in a standard font. Students are strongly urged to discuss their topics with the professor beforehand, though this is not strictly required.

No written work will be accepted after the last day of classes. Students who wish to have a chance to rewrite their final paper must turn it in two weeks early (as indicated on the class schedule). **All Final Papers must be submitted via e-mail, using a Microsoft Word or LibreOffice-compatible format (.doc, .docx, .rtf, .odt) or Google Drive.** Please do not submit papers in PDF or Pages formats.

### Class and Reading Schedule

Wednesday	January 15	Bible: Job, chs. 1-14, 29-42
Friday	January 17	Bible: Deuteronomy, chs. 1-11; Jeremiah, chs. 1-6, 25, 50-52; Isaiah, chs. 40-45
Monday	January 20	<b>NO CLASSES—Martin Luther King Day</b>
Wednesday	January 22	Bible: 2 Maccabees, chs. 5-9; Daniel (whole book)
Friday	January 24	Bible: Gospel of Mark (whole book); Gospel of Matthew, chs. 3-4; Gospel of Luke, chs. 3-4
Monday	January 27	Bible: Gospel of John (whole book)
Wednesday	January 29	Bible: Revelation (whole book)
Friday	January 31	Tertullian, <i>De Spectaculis</i> (**)
Monday	February 3	Harnack, <i>Marcion</i> , chs. 1-3 (pp. 1-24)
Wednesday	February 5	Harnack, <i>Marcion</i> , ch. 6 (pp. 65-92)
Friday	February 7	Harnack, <i>Marcion</i> , chs. 7, 9-10 (pp. 93-98, 123-146)
Monday	February 10	Athanasius, <i>On the Incarnation of the Word</i> , sections 1-32 ( <i>Christology of the Later Fathers</i> , pp. 55-86)
Wednesday	February 12	Athanasius, <i>On the Incarnation of the Word</i> , sections 33-57 ( <i>Christology of the Later Fathers</i> , pp. 87-110)
Friday	February 14	<b>NO CLASSES—Dean's Break</b>
Monday	February 17	Athanasius, <i>Life of St. Anthony</i> (pp. 29-99)
Wednesday	February 19	Gregory of Nyssa, <i>Address on Religious Instruction</i> ( <i>Christology of the Later Fathers</i> , pp. 268-296)
Friday	February 21	Gregory of Nyssa, <i>Address on Religious Instruction</i> ( <i>Christology of the Later Fathers</i> , pp. 296-325)
Monday	February 24	Augustine, <i>City of God</i> , Book XI (pp. 345-379) Bible: Genesis 1-3
Wednesday	February 26	Augustine, <i>City of God</i> , Book XII (pp. 380-411)
Friday	February 28	Augustine, <i>City of God</i> , Book XXI (pp. 763-809)
Monday	March 3	Anselm, <i>Why God Became Man</i> , commendation, preface, Book 1 ( <i>The Major Works</i> , pp. 260-315)

Wednesday	March 5	Anselm, <i>Why God Became Man</i> , Book 2 ( <i>The Major Works</i> , pp. 315-356)
Friday	March 7	Anselm, <i>On the Fall of the Devil</i> ( <i>The Major Works</i> , pp. 193-232)
Monday	March 10	Aquinas on angels and demons (**)
Wednesday	March 12	<i>Malleus Maleficarum</i> , Part 1, Questions 1-2, 5-6 (pp. 1-21, 31-48)
Friday	March 14	<i>Malleus Maleficarum</i> , Part 1, Questions 9, 12-13, 17 (pp. 58-61, 66-73, 82-84); Part Two, Question 1, ch. 2 (pp. 99-104).
Monday	March 17	<b>NO CLASSES—Spring Break</b>
Wednesday	March 19	<b>NO CLASSES—Spring Break</b>
Friday	March 21	<b>NO CLASSES—Spring Break</b>
Monday	March 24	Trachtenberg, <i>The Devil and the Jews</i> , intro, chs. 1-4 (pp. 1-76)
Wednesday	March 26	Trachtenberg, <i>The Devil and the Jews</i> , chs. 5-10 (pp. 77-155)
Friday	March 28	Trachtenberg, <i>The Devil and the Jews</i> , chs. 11-15 (pp. 159-220)
Monday	March 31	Aquinas on hell (**)
Wednesday	April 2	Dante, <i>Hell</i> , cantos 1-8 (71-121)
Friday	April 4	Dante, <i>Hell</i> , cantos 9-16 (pp. 122-173)
Monday	April 7	Dante, <i>Hell</i> , cantos 17-25 (pp. 174-232)
Wednesday	April 9	Dante, <i>Hell</i> , cantos 26-34 (pp. 233-291)
Friday	April 11	Milton, <i>Paradise Lost</i> , bks. 1-2 <b>Draft of Final Paper due via e-mail by class time if planning to rewrite</b>
Monday	April 14	Milton, <i>Paradise Lost</i> , bks. 3-4
Wednesday	April 16	Milton, <i>Paradise Lost</i> , bks. 5-6
Friday	April 18	Milton, <i>Paradise Lost</i> , bks. 7-8
Monday	April 21	Milton, <i>Paradise Lost</i> , bks. 9-10
Wednesday	April 23	Milton, <i>Paradise Lost</i> , bks. 11-12
Friday	April 25	Discussion of selected visual artworks in class (no reading assignment) <b>All papers due by The Absolute Deadline</b>