

Theology and Politics of the Devil

Chicago Theological Seminary

Fall 2014

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Course Description

This course explores the ever-shifting place of the devil in Christian theology. Historically speaking, the course covers material ranging from the biblical origins of the figure up to Milton's hugely influential depiction of Satan in *Paradise Lost*. This course is not, however, primarily a historical survey, but an investigation of the possible significance of the devil from the perspective of the emergent discipline known as political theology—the study of the often uncanny resemblances and parallels between political and theological concepts. While many approaches to political theology begin with the parallel between God and the earthly ruler, the wager of this course is that the devil, as representative of all that is unruly, unaccountable, and yet strangely necessary, provides a more productive point of departure for radical theological and political thought.

Course Objectives

Upon completing this course, students will be able to

- give an account of the varied roles the devil has played in Christian theology from the biblical period up through the dawn of modernity
- evaluate differing approaches to the problem of political theology, including those of Carl Schmitt and Giorgio Agamben
- connect classic theological reflections on the devil to contemporary political and theological issues
- (for PhD students) use the devil as a starting point to connect political theology with other schools of critical theory and contemporary theology

Course Textbooks

Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa and Matteo Mandarini (Stanford University Press). ISBN: 0804760160

Athanasius, *The Life of St. Anthony and Letter to Marcellinus*, ed. Gregg (Paulist, Classics of Western Spirituality Series). ISBN: 0809122952

Dante, *The Divine Comedy, Part 1: Hell*, trans. Sayers (Penguin). ISBN: 0140440062

Catherine Keller, *Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* (Routledge). ISBN: 0415256496

The Malleus Maleficarum of Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, trans. Summers (Dover Occult). ISBN: 0486228029

Milton, *Paradise Lost: Norton Critical Edition* (Norton). ISBN: 0393924289

Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Theory of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (University of Chicago Press). ISBN: 0226738892

Other materials will be made available via Moodle.

Grading and Assignments

Students' grades will be determined based on the class participation and written work, with each accounting for 50% of the final grade.

Class participation (all students): While this course will include a lecture element, at least half of every class meeting will be taken up with discussion. Students will be expected to have read the day's assignment closely, marking their texts, taking notes, and jotting down questions. The primary focus in discussion should be on deepening the class's shared understanding of the course texts and the issues they raise. Although reflection on current issues and events will often be appropriate and helpful, students should always be prepared to tie their remarks back into the text, citing specific passages and concepts. Excessively long or "free-associative" contributions to discussion are discouraged so that everyone has a chance to contribute and build on others' contributions.

Class presentations (doctoral students): In addition to regular class participation, every doctoral student enrolled in the class will be responsible for presenting over one of the course texts and leading discussion over it. Doctoral students should view this as an opportunity not only to present their ideas, but also to hone their skills in leading discussion. The initial presentation itself may take whatever form the student thinks is most appropriate (including a lecture of not more than ten or fifteen minutes or some form of visual presentation).

Within one week of their presentations, doctoral students should e-mail the professor a brief paper of approximately 1,000 words connecting the text over which they presented to their other academic work (including other courses, exam preparation, or possible dissertation topics as appropriate).

Final papers: All students will be required to complete a paper over the course materials. Possible topics may include research papers going into depth on a particular text or author, creative theological appropriations of the concepts and images at work in one or more texts, or discussions of the possible relevance of the course materials to contemporary theological or political controversies. **All students should discuss possible topics with the professor early and often.**

All papers must use a standard documentation style (preferably Chicago), and all must be submitted **via e-mail** using a file format compatible with Microsoft Word or Libre Office—.doc, .docx, .rtf, or .odt. (Please do not submit papers in PDF or Pages format.) Students must either submit their paper or alert the professor that they will be taking an incomplete within one week of the final class session. Masters students are strongly discouraged from taking incompletes unless there is a genuine hardship involved; doctoral students are encouraged to be as circumspect and cautious as possible in invoking this sometimes dangerous option.

Papers from **masters students** should be of approximately 2500-3000 words (10-12 pages using standard font sizes and double-spacing) and may—but need not—limit themselves to the course materials only. Papers from **doctoral students** should be of approximately 5000-6000 words (20-25 pages) and must include an element of outside research. Possibilities include delving into the scholarly literature surrounding one or more course texts or connecting course texts to other theological or theoretical works.

Tentative Course Schedule

September 4: The devil and the problem of evil

Reading: The Book of Job; Keller, *Face of the Deep*, preface, ch. 1

September 11: The problem of political theology in modernity

Reading: Schmitt, *Political Theology* (full text)

September 18: Paradigms of political theology in the Bible

Reading: Daniel; 2 Maccabees (available on Moodle); Revelation

September 25: Patristic political theology

Readings: Tertullian, *De Spectaculis*; Gregory of Nyssa, *Great Catechism* (both on Moodle)

October 2: From martyrdom to monasticism

Reading: Athanasius, *Life of St. Anthony*

October 9: Creation and evil

Readings: Augustine, *Confessions*, bks. 11 and 12 (Moodle); Keller, ch. 4

October 16: **Reading week, no class**

October 23: Political theology and providence

Reading: Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, through ch. 5

October 30: The fall of the devil

Readings: Anselm, *On the Fall of the Devil*; Aquinas, selections (both on Moodle)

November 6: Visions of hell

Readings: Aquinas (selections); Mechthild of Magdeburg (selections); Agamben, *K&G*, ch. 6

November 13: Life in hell

Readings: Dante, *Hell*, cantos 1-3, 11, 26-34 (and scan through for all diagrams); Schneider, "When Hell Freezes Over" (Moodle)

November 20: Unruly bodies: The devil and witchcraft

Reading: *Malleus Maleficarum*, book 1

November 27: **Thanksgiving Day, no class**

December 4: The devil on the threshold of modernity

Reading: Milton, *Paradise Lost*, books 1-4, 9 (and read the "argument" to all other books)

December 11: Rethinking the problem of evil

Reading: Keller, *Face of the Deep*, chs. 7, 9-14