Theo 64288, “Roads to God”

MA On-Line Course, Spring 2018

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Course Description:

This course covers representative theologies from the 6th century to the 21rst century, from St. Benedict to Dorothy Day. Our reflection on these theologies will be loosely centered around a metaphor that many of the texts use or imply, that of a ‘road’ or the ‘way’ to God. What could be the meaning of this metaphor?—especially since none of the texts we will read believe that God can be located in any particular place. As we attend to this discovery, the course will also allow students to become familiar with major figures and positions within the Christian Tradition, including a sense of the variety of theological genres across the centuries, all while  helping students develop and refine skills in the reading and interpretation of theological texts. Hopefully these goals also allow the course to assist students in their own reflections on the life of faith.

Course Website: roadstogod.wordpress.com

Course Materials:

1. Books for Purchase:

Anonymous, *The Cloud of Unknowing*

Augustine*, The Confessions* (Boulding translation, unless you already own one)

St. Benedict, *Rule for Monks*

St. Bonaventure, *The Mind’s Road to God* (Boas translation, unless you already own one)

Dante, *Inferno*

Dorothy Day, *A Life of Therese of Lisieux*

Martin Luther, On Christian Liberty

St. Therese of Lisieux, *The Story of a Soul*

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Treatise on the Virtues* (Oesterle translation, unless you already own one)

1. All other reading materials (underlined) will be posted on our course blog.

Course Requirements:

1. Students are expected to keep pace with the course week to week. A “week” begins on Monday and ends on Sunday. Expect new materials to be posted for viewing on Mondays.
2. 4 x 2-page papers (or about 500 words): 80% of final grade. Due dates are Sundays by midnight of the weeks in bold, below.
3. Final Exam: 20% of final grade.

**Course Schedule:**

Week One, Jan 16- 21:

Course Introduction; Augustine & the Fall of Rome.

*Confessions*, Books 1 and 7, plus excerpts from *On the Trinity* and *City of God*.

Week Two (Jan 22-28): The Benedictine Way

*The Life Of St. Benedict* by Gregory the Great, preface + chapters 1-3, 8-15, 23-24, and 31-38.

Benedict’s *Rule* (Prologue, 1-7, 33, 35, 71-73).

Gregory the Great, Gospel Homily 25.

Anselm’s Prayer to Mary Magdalene.

Week Three (Jan 29-Feb. 4): Cistercian Themes: Bernard, Kissed by God

Bernard of Clairvaux, Sermons on the Song of Songs, 1, 2, 8.

*The Steps of Humility and Pride*, Preface-VI.19

**Week Four (Feb. 5-Feb. 11)**: The Franciscan Way of Radical Evangelical Poverty

Thomas of Celano, “First” Life of St. Francis.

St. Francis, The Earlier Rule, Canticle of Br. Sun

Dante, *Paradiso*, Canto XI

Week Five (Feb. 12-18): Bonaventure & The Way of the Crucified Christ

Bonaventure, *Mind’s Road to God*

Weeks Six & Seven (Feb. 19-March 4): Aquinas’s Way of Excellent Friendship

Aquinas, *Treatise on Virtues*: Question 49, Article 1 and the Responses of Articles 3 and 4; skim the rest; 55.1,3; 56.1,3,4, 6; 57.1,4; 58.1,5; 61.1,2; 62 entire; 63.2,3; 64.1,4; 65.2,3,4,5; 66.6; 67.6. (if you are having trouble getting through the reading, read carefully only the “Responses” of each article and skim the rest).

**Week 8 (March 5-11):** *Dante’s Inferno,* complete, if possible.

March 12- 18: SPRING BREAK

Week 9 (March 19-25): Dante’s *Inferno*, cont’d.

Week 10 (March 26-29): The Via Negativa & The Via Positiva

*Cloud of Unknowing*, complete if possible, otherwise: Prologue, Chapters 30-7, 12-13, last paragraph of 23, 25-26, 37-41, 46, 51-54, 68-70, 75.

Julian of Norwich, *Showings*

March 30-April 2: Easter Holiday

Week 11 (April 3-8): Another Comparison

Martin Luther, *On Christian Liberty*

Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle* 1.1,7.1-4.

**Week 12 (April 9- 15):** A Wager

Pascal’s *Pensees*, sections 131, 198-99, 132-139, 44, 51, 60, 418, 423-424.

Week 13 (April 16-22): The Little Way & the Worker

Therese of Lisieux, *Story of a Soul* & Dorothy Day, *A Life of Therese*

**Week 14 (April 23-29):** Two Short Stories & An Hopeful Exhortation

Alice Walker, “The Welcome Table”

William Faulkner, “Go Down Moses”

Spe Salvi

**Exam Week: The Final Exam will be posted and available for completion, April 30-May 6.**