

RS 144: Religious Dimensions of Literature

C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien

Professor: Dr. Jed Wyrick

Fall 2004, MW 5:30-6:45 GLNN 216

jwyrick@csuchico.edu

Trinity 233

x-6379

Office Hours: M1-3 TW 1-2 or by appt.

Course Description and Aims:

C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien were close friends and the first readers of each other's works of fiction. While they shared a religious tradition (Christianity), they were divided in their approaches to this tradition: Tolkien was Roman Catholic, and Lewis was an Anglican and an advocate of "Orthodox" Christianity. Their impact on contemporary literature is vast. Nevertheless, they are usually not considered as writers of "serious" literature.

Lewis and Tolkien have important views about the nature of the human condition that will be explored in this class. These views are either shaped by their respective religious beliefs, or resemble the writings of other religious traditions. Lewis and Tolkien discuss the nature and origin of evil, the seductiveness of technology and control, the existence of non-human beings and spirits, the place of earth in the solar system, the purpose and origin of mankind and the universe, and the justification of God (theodicy).

Lewis and Tolkien chose to voice these views in symbolic form, in the genre of the fairy-story or the child's tale. Lewis employs creatures and images derived from pagan mythology. Tolkien's works partake of genres such as myth, epic, tragedy, and historiography; his works also in part derive their form and subject matter from precursors like the Bible, Old Norse saga, and Anglo-Saxon or Finnish poetry. How do these authors justify their use of non-Christian materials to convey what is essentially or at least in part a Christian message?

One goal of this course will be to gain skills in the "close-reading" of texts and in forming written arguments about the ideas explored in these works. We will also consider the dramatization of fantasy and the worlds of Lewis and Tolkien in film.

Requirements:

Attendance: **100 points** (minus 10 for each missed class)

Class Participation (= intelligent questions, comments in class): **50 points**

Wednesday Response Quizzes: **100 points**

2-page analysis paper: **100 points**

Midterm Exam (bring blue book): **150 points**

Term Paper (double spaced, typewritten): **300 points**

Final Exam (bring blue book): **200 points**

Total: **1000 points**

Policies:

All papers are required; **you cannot pass the course without handing in all of them.** You are required to keep a back-up copy of each essay you submit, either in a computer disk or in hard-copy, to be printed out and resubmitted upon my request. **Any paper not resubmitted on request will be considered as not having been completed.**

Required Books:

Available at AS Bookstore:

1. C. S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*
2. C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*
3. C. S. Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet*
4. C. S. Lewis, *Perelandra*

5. J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*

1. J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion*
2. J. R. R. Tolkien, *Unfinished Tales*

Available at Mr. Copy (Main St. at 1st St., next to the 7-Eleven):

8. RS 144 Reader

QUESTION OF GOD: C.S. LEWIS AND SIGMUND FREUD - Special Two Part Series - (Two - 2 Hour programs)
Wednesday, September 16, 2004 and Wednesday, September 23, 2004 - 9:00 PM

KIXE-TV - Channel 9 (PBS)

This four-hour series explores, in an accessible and dramatic style, issues that preoccupy all thinking people today: What is happiness? How do we find meaning and purpose in our lives? How do we reconcile conflicting claims of love and sexuality? How do we cope with the problem of suffering and the inevitability of death? The series, based on a popular Harvard course taught by Dr. Armand M. Nicholi, author of the *The Question of God*, frames these issues through the eventful lives and challenging ideas of two of the greatest thinkers of the 20th century, Sigmund Freud and C.S. Lewis. In the series, the ideas of Freud - an atheist and lifelong critic of religious belief - and Lewis - a Christian and arguably the most popular and widely read proponent of faith based on reason - are brought together in a debate centering on the central question of human existence: Does God exist? Each episode combines dramatic reconstruction with lively discussion led by Dr. Nicholi and commentary from other experts, and deals with a specific theme related to actual incidents and emotional turning points in the lives of Freud and Lewis.

Syllabus:

Readings from *The Lord of the Rings (LotR)* indicated in **bold print**

FotR = *The Fellowship of the Ring*

TT = *The Two Towers*

RotK = *The Return of the King*

Mon., Aug. 23: **Introduction to Christianity and Fantasy**

Wed., Aug. 25: **Watership Down, Christian Ethics, and Narrative Fiction**

Stanley Hauerwas, "A Story-Formed Community: Reflections on *Watership Down*" (in RS 144 Reader)

*****Begin Reading the Fellowship of the Ring*****

Mon., Aug. 30: **The Conversion of Jack Lewis; John Tolkien's Catholicism, Life, and Influences**

Humphrey Carpenter, "Mythopoeia" and "'The sort of thing a man might say,'" from *The Inklings: C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, and Their Friends*, pp. 33-52 (in RS 144 Reader)

The Letters of Tolkien: 142, 250, 306, 257 (in RS 144 Reader)

Wed., Sept. 1: **The Salvation of Edmund and the Crucifixion of Aslan**

C. S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*

Close Reading: chapters 4, 9, 13-14

No Class Monday, Sept. 6: Labor Day

Wed., Sept. 8: **Lewis' Christian Polemic**

C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (selections in RS 144 Reader)

Mon., Sept. 13: **The Piety of an Older World**

C. S. Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet*

Wed., Sept. 15: **Poetry As a Form of Knowledge**

C. S. Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet*

Close Reading: Chapters 12, 15-18

Mon., Sept. 20: The Nature of Evil

C.S. Lewis, *Perelandra*

Wed., Sept. 22: Creation without the Fall

C.S. Lewis, *Perelandra*,

Close reading: chapters 5-6, 9, 16-17

Mon., Sept. 27: Death in Protestant Fiction

C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*

Wed., Sept. 29: Death in Catholic Fiction

J. R. R. Tolkien, "Leaf By Niggle" (in RS 144 Reader)

Mon., Oct. 4: The Creation of Middle-Earth; the Valar As Angels

J. R. R. Tolkien, "The Music of the Ainur," and "Valaquenta," from *The Silmarillion*

****LotR*: complete *FotR* through p.264***

Wed., Oct. 6: The Elves: Pre-Lapsarian Humans or Incarnated Angels?

J. R. R. Tolkien, Chapters 1-5 from *The Silmarillion*

Mon., Oct. 11: Sub-creation and the Silmarils; "Lapsarian" Elves

J. R. R. Tolkien, Chapters 6-16 of *The Silmarillion*

Wed., Oct. 13: The Arrival of Men; Beren and Luthien

J. R. R. Tolkien, Chapters 17-20 of *The Silmarillion*

Mon., Oct. 18: The End of the First Age

J. R. R. Tolkien, Chapters 20-24 of *The Silmarillion*

Wed., Oct. 20: Language and the Fellowship of the Ring

Tom Shippey, "*The Lord of the Rings* (1): Mapping Out a Plot," in *J. R. R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*

****LotR*: complete *FotR* through p. 398***

Mon., Oct. 25: **Wizards , Incarnation, and Reincarnation**

J. R. R. Tolkien, "The Hunt for the Ring," "The Istari," and "The Palantíri" in *Unfinished Tales*

LotR: "The White Rider," pp. 477-494; "The Voice of Saruman," pp. 562-573, "The Palantir," pp. 574-586

The Letters of Tolkien: 153, 156 and 200

******LotR*: complete *TT* through p. 586*****

Wed., Oct 27: *****Midterm Exam (bring blue book)*****

Mon., Nov. 1: **The Nine Rings and Seen vs. Unseen**

The Letters of Tolkien: 144, 153, 181

Michel Foucault, "The Means of Correct Training" and "Panopticism," *The Foucault Reader*

******LotR*: complete *TT* through p. 725*****

Wed., Nov. 3: **Dwarves**

Appendix A III "Durin's Folk" in *The Return of the King*

"The Quest for Erebor" in *Unfinished Tales*

Close Reading: *LotR*: pp. 287-323

Mon., Nov. 8: **Economics and the Seven Rings**

Marc Shell, "The Ring of Gyges," in *The Economy of Literature*

Wed., Nov. 10: **The Rings of Power: Slowing Time, Magic, and the Three Rings**

J. R. R. Tolkien, "Of the Rings of Power and the Third Age," from *The Silmarillion*

J. R. R. Tolkien, "History of Galadriel and Celeborn," from *Unfinished Tales*

Close Reading: *LotR*: pp. 324-370

The Letters of Tolkien: 154 and 155

Mon., Nov. 15: **Heidegger, Technology, and the One Ring**

"Heidegger: for Beginners" (in RS 144 Reader)

Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology" (in RS 144 Reader)

Wed., Nov. 17: Sauron and the Nature of Evil

"Myths Transformed VII-X," from *Morgoth's Ring*, in RS 144 Reader

No class Nov. 22-24: Thanksgiving Holiday

Mon., Nov. 29: Numenor

J. R. R. Tolkien, "Akallabêth: The Downfall of Numenor," from *The Silmarillion*

Appendix A I (i-v) in *The Return of the King*

Close Reading: *LotR*: pp. 832-853

****LotR*: complete *RotK* through p. 874***

Wed., Dec. 1: The Failure of Frodo

The Letters of Tolkien: 191 and 246

Close Reading: *LotR*: pp. 912-926

Term Paper due

Mon., Dec. 6: Mortality and Immortality

"The Debate of Finrod and Andreth," from *Morgoth's Ring*, in RS 144 Reader

"Myths Transformed XI," from *Morgoth's Ring*, in RS 144 Reader

The Letters of Tolkien: 153, 212 and 325

LotR: pp. 998-1008

****LotR*: complete *RotK* through p. 1008***

Wed., Dec. 8: Allegory and the Meaning of Middle-Earth

The Letters of Tolkien: 131, 186

Final Exam, Monday December 13th, 6-7:50 pm

Plagiarism and cheating are grave violations of the academic integrity policy of the California State University, Chico. This policy (EM 04-36) is posted at http://www.csuchico.edu/prs/EMs/EM04/em04_36.htm. We view plagiarism and cheating as serious offenses. The policy of the Department of Religious Studies is that anyone found to have blatantly cheated or plagiarized on an assignment will automatically fail the course and be referred to student

judicial affairs for further disciplinary action.

If you have a documented disability that may require reasonable accommodations, please contact Disability Support Services (DSS) for coordination of your academic accommodations. DSS is located in Building E. Building E is adjacent to Meriam Library and Bell Memorial Union (BMU). The DSS phone number is 898-5959 V/TTY or FAX 898-4411. Visit the DSS website at <http://www.csuchico.edu/dss/>.

This syllabus is subject to revision.