

Syllabus: COM 785 (graduate level)
C. S. Lewis: Man, Myth and Imagination

May 12-August 1, 2008

Mission Statement: The mission of the School of Communication and the Arts is to impart knowledge and understanding of the human communication process within the context of a Judeo-Christian worldview and to help students to develop advanced critical thinking and communication skills.

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: This class examines the life and work of C. S. Lewis as it relates to our understanding of communication theory and practice. The class will give special attention to Lewis' contributions to the study of reason, myth and imagination by examining his writings and by exploring the city of Oxford and the people who contributed to his work. Our exploration of the themes and events of Lewis' life and the culture in which he lived will help us to better understand why he continues to be so popular and influential among both scholars and practitioners.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

This course will offer a balanced emphasis on theory and practice with the aim of helping each student come to appreciate C. S. Lewis as a communicator, a Christian thinker, and a person. At the end of this course the attentive student should be able to:

- A. ...recognize and be sensitive to the problems and challenges inherent in engaging, describing, and interpreting the work of C. S. Lewis.
- B. ...be conversant with some of the key thinkers and theorists that populate his work and have contributed to his writing.
- C. ...be proficient in discussing and writing about some of the key works produced by Lewis.
- D. ...be familiar with some of his major works and to have read, analyzed, interpreted, and discussed many of his key works.
- E. ...understand the implications of Lewis' work to the present day study of communication theory and research.

TEXTBOOKS:

REQUIRED:

Jacobs, A. (2005). *The Narnian: The Life and Imagination of C.S. Lewis*. New York: HarperCollins, Publishers.

Lewis, C. S. (1943). *Mere Christianity*. New York: The Macmillan Company.

Lewis, C. S. (1943). *Perelandra*. New York: The Macmillan Publishing Company.

Lewis, C. S. (1951). *Prince Caspian: The return to Narnia*. New York: Collier Books

Lewis, C. S. (1961). *The Four Loves*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company.

Lewis, C. S. (1946). *The Great Divorce*. New York: HarperCollins, Publishers.

Lewis, C. S. (1996). *The Screwtape Letters*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Lewis, C. S. (1955). *Surprised by Joy*. New York: Harcourt. Inc.

Ward, M. (2008). *Planet Narnia: The seven heavens in the imagination of C. S. Lewis*. London: Oxford University Press.

RECOMMENDED:

Lewis, C. S. (1949). *The Weight of Glory*. New York: HarperCollins.

Lewis, C. S. (1956). *Till We Have Faces*. New York: Harcourt, Inc.

Lewis, C. S. (1970). *The Chronicles of Narnia*. New York: Collier Books.*

* The Chronicles of Narnia series has seven books. One is required but all are recommended.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Because of the brief and intense nature of this course, it is critical that all assignments be completed on time.

A. All required reading must be completed and “digested” before the class period they are due. Because this class meets at Oxford, England for only seven days, **you need to read the required texts before the on-campus portion of the class begins at Oxford.**

Although we will be discussing the readings from the texts during the formal meeting times, there is not enough time for you to read all the material assigned if you wait until you arrive at Oxford.

B. Each graduate student will orally present two written abstracts summarizing and analyzing two of the works of C.S. Lewis from either his required or recommended works as noted previously. These abstracts are to be approved by the Professors before the on-campus portion of the class.

C. Each student will create a Screwtape blog, mimicking Lewis' style in his work, *Screwtape Letters*. The blog will be a senior devil writing to a junior devil, just as Uncle Screwtape wrote to his nephew Wormwood.

D. Each graduate student must submit a twenty to twenty-five page academic paper based on some aspect of the life or writings of C. S. Lewis. Papers should include a literature review, analysis and interpretation, and any applicable theoretical observations or insights made by the student. All papers must follow the MLA or APA guidelines (5th editions). Papers must cite at least a dozen or more scholarly published articles or book chapters of other scholars.

COURSE EVALUATION:

In-class discussion and participation	30%
Abstracts and presentations	20%
Screwtape blog	10%
Final paper	40%

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Prologue Distance Portion

May14-June 20 **In this distance portion of the class we will assign course readings and discussion questions to consider to help you reflect on the written texts.**

Oxford Portion

June 21 (Saturday)

Topics – Introduction, Hertford College tour, biography of Lewis

Readings: *overview of course and Lewis's life*

June 22 (Sunday)

Topics – Lecture, walking tour and church

Readings: handout titled *The Weight of Glory*

June 23 (Monday)

Topics – Lewis' apologetics, lecture and tour of Merton College

Readings (Books): *The Life and Imagination of C.S. Lewis*
Mere Christianity

June 24 (Tuesday)

Topics – Lewis' autobiographical and scholarly work, lecture, crucibles of thought (pubs of Lewis & friends)—we will visit the Lewis home (The Kilns) and his church.

Readings (Books): *Four Loves, Surprised by Joy*

June 25 (Wednesday)

Topics – Lewis' fiction work and practical theology and

Tour of the Kilns

Readings: *Screwtape Letters, The Great Divorce*

June 26 (Thursday)

Topics – Lewis' fiction work and worldview

Readings: *Perelandria, Prince Caspian*

June 27 (Friday)

Topics: Paper proposal presentations

Scavenger Hunt through Oxford

June 28 (Saturday)

Day on your own – exploration of Lewis' homeland

June 29 (Sunday)

Topics – **morning reflections and summary**

Late Morning Worship

Lunch – wrap up of course

Epilogue Distance Portion

July 1-August 1 **In this last portion of the class students will be researching and writing their final paper, which is due on August 1st.**

Integration of Faith and Learning

To begin this section on the integration of faith and learning, we would like to refer to a brief comment made by John Courtney Murray, given at the inaugural series of St. Thomas More Lectures at Yale University. This class, as Father Murray reminds us, raises the question of the uniqueness of our subject matter and the problem of God amid the whole range of problems that we face. Murray states:

If God is a reality, his reality is unique; it will therefore present to man a unique problem. The problem of God exhibits only the barest analogy with the standard model of a problem as it is found in science. In the scientific world of observation and inference, hypothesis and verification, the data are, as it were, "out there." The scientist is distant and detached from them; other things being equal any number of men who are scientists can do the same experiment and record the same results. No personal issues arise in the scientific problem. In contrast, the problem of God is primary among the fateful human questions that, as Pascal said, "take us by the throat." The whole man--is profoundly engaged both in the position of the problem and its solution. In fact, he is in a real sense a datum of the problem itself, and his solution of it has personal consequences that touch every aspect of his conduct, character, and consciousness. Moreover, the problem of God is unique in that no man may say of it, "It is not my problem." Dostoevski's challenge is valid: "If God is not, everything is permitted." But the challenge needs to be amended to include, "except one thing." If God is not, no one is permitted to say or even think that he is, for this would be a monstrous deception of oneself and of others. It would be to cherish and propagate a pernicious illusion whose result would necessarily be the destruction of man. On the other hand, if God is, again one thing is not permitted. It is not permitted that any man should be ignorant of him, for this ignorance, too, would be the destruction of man. On both counts, therefore, no man may say that the problem of God is not his problem.

Murray, J. C. (1964). *The problem of God*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

As indicated by the quotation above the issues raised in this class speak to the whole of our life not just the academic. We cannot divorce the sacred from the secular, one's heart from one's mind, or the God of reason from the God of history.

Furthermore, we engage the content of this class as communication scholars looking at theology and not as theologians looking at communication. By this we mean that you are to respond to questions raised in the class or to specific class assignments as a communication scholar speaking or writing to other scholars in the field. Although the professor provides a framework or structure for the class it is the responsibility of the student to integrate the subject matter of the class into their own worldview.

Assignments

All assignments are due on the dates indicated without prior permission from the instructors. Late work is subject to grade reduction. In addition, any late papers that are graded will not include written feedback. All papers should be submitted electronically to the Blackboard drop box set up for this class.

Incomplete Grades

It is University policy that incomplete grades are to be given only for legitimate deficiencies due to severe illness or emergencies or other significant reasons acceptable to the professor and not because of neglect on the student's part. I cannot deviate from this policy. Please consult the Regent University Academic Catalogue for a more complete statement of university policy.

Academic Honesty

As should be expected, particularly at a Christian university, students will adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty. This includes the avoidance of plagiarism, defined as the uses of written and oral words of another person, including another student, without the expressed acknowledgment of the speaker's or writer's indebtedness to that person. This also applies to the use of papers and other materials previously submitted to instructors of other classes, either at Regent University or other institutions. Any violation of this policy will normally result in failure of the course.

Student Feedback

You will be given the opportunity to provide me, as well as the college administration, with written feedback and to evaluate the course structure and its conduct. However, you should feel free to bring any concerns to my attention at any time during the semester. We welcome your input, feedback and constructive criticism on this course.