“Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of a true education.” – ML King, Jr.

“A very popular error: having the courage of one’s convictions; rather, it is a matter of having the courage for an attack on one’s convictions!!” – Friedrich Nietzsche

“The myth allows something that is inward to take place outwardly.” – Søren Kierkegaard

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Course Rationale
Some of the most imaginative writers of the 20th century have shared not only a predilection for “mythopoeia” (myth-making), but also – perhaps surprisingly? – a deeply religious, Christian spiritual commitment. In this course, we will consider several of the works of (arguably) the two most important of these authors, C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien. We will examine both the role their faith plays on their literary productions, as well as the implicit resonances with (and divergences from) other important 19th and 20th century philosophers in these works.

Among the issues we will deal with in the course are the problem of evil and suffering in the world; what it means to be a good or virtuous person; what our proper relationship to the natural and social world should be; the importance of language and narrative in our understanding of ourselves and our world; the connection of justice, virtue, and power; the nature of grace; and the origin, fall, redemption, and ultimate end of humankind.

Required Texts
Rental Text: This is a special topics class; there is thus no rental text for the course.
Supplemental Texts: C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity; Perelandra; The Screwtape Letters; J.R.R. Tolkien, The Lord of the Rings; other short selections may be found on WebCat. When you see <Web> on the syllabus, you should go to WebCat, and print out and read the required selection. Please bring the texts to class with you every day so we can refer to them actively in our discussion.

Perspective (P-4) Information
This course is a Perspectives course. The primary goals of the Perspectives courses are:
• To promote love of learning and to cultivate an active interest in the Liberal Studies;
• To build on the Core's foundation through practice and refinement of areas of academic emphasis;
• To provide students with a broadened world view and knowledge base;
• To provide experiences in the arts, humanities, and social sciences from which connections between disciplines can be revealed;
• To provide an introduction to the challenges of living in a global society;
• To create opportunities for reflection on values, and for discussing differences in values in a critical yet tolerant manner;
• To afford opportunities to make career or disciplinary choices.
• To improve the student’s critical analysis of arguments, oral communication, and moral reflection
• This course satisfies the P4 Perspective requirement of the Liberal Studies Program. In it, you will be exposed to landmark texts that embody the traditional Western heritage of humanity’s attempt to understand the human condition and that engage you in the exploration of the significance of human modes of being, thought, and values in your life. As in all Liberal Studies Perspective offerings, this course will emphasize reading, writing, and the use of information, as
Beyond the substantive philosophical goals of 1) developing an understanding of various thinkers’ responses to the complex issues described above and 2) developing your own positions in dialogue with those thinkers, I also hope that you will improve your 3) critical reading skills as well as both your 4) written and 5) oral communication abilities over the course of this semester, through the practice of reading, writing about, and discussing these complex philosophical texts. To do so, you will have to put in enough time and effort outside of class: it’s not enough to come to class and listen to the lectures, you’ve got to practice doing philosophy on your own.

This will be an extremely reading-intensive course. When we get to *The Lord of the Rings*, for example, we will be discussing approximately 60 pages of reading a day. Many of you are already familiar with a number of these texts; however, that is not an excuse not to spend the time (re-)reading and analyzing what is going on within them, at more than a superficial level. Analyzing the philosophical and theological implications of a text – even one of fantasy literature – is hard work: don’t fool yourself into believing that just because Tolkien and Lewis are easy to read, they’re not worthy of rigorous thought! Consequently, I expect that you will spend, at minimum, two hours outside of class preparing (reading, taking notes, analyzing the text, summarizing it in your own words, etc.), for every hour you spend in class. (Some students may find it necessary to spend significantly more than this!) As long as you are comfortable with this much reading, I believe that you will enjoy working through the philosophical and religious issues present in these wonderful works of imaginative literature.

**Course Policies and Expectations**

**Attendance:** If you aren’t here, you obviously can’t participate in the discussions, so excessive absences will be reflected in your participation grade. The **absolute maximum number of allowed absences for this class is 9** (i.e., 10 absences = automatic failure of this course). I take attendance at the beginning of virtually every class; entering the class late (after I have done so) will constitute ½ an absence. In general, “A”-range participation grades will not be awarded to students with 3+ absences.

**Preparation and Participation:** Since philosophy from Socrates on has been dialogue-oriented, and to help fulfill objective (5) above, students are expected to participate actively in class discussions. Some class days will be, of necessity, more lecture-oriented; others will be more centered on discussion or small-group activities. You should *always* feel free to ask questions in class. “Good” or “Satisfactory” (“B”- to “C”-range) participation grades may be earned by 1) consistent attendance and 2) answering questions when called on in class. Higher participation grades will be reserved for those who demonstrate that they have carefully read and actively reflected on the assigned reading, by (for example) raising questions and issues for discussion without my prompting. At the end of the term, I will also ask you to turn in a worksheet evaluating your own participation and preparation over the course of the semester. I weigh these self-evaluations heavily in assigning class participation grades. (This worksheet is available on WebCat.)

You are also responsible for all messages sent to your catamount.wcu.edu account and WebCat.

**In-class time:** You have a total of roughly 35 hours of in-class instructional time over the next 3.5 months. Sleeping, text messaging, talking on cell phones, using laptops for reasons besides note-taking, side conversations, and working on other class assignments or personal activities during class are all unacceptable uses of this time. I do not mind if you bring a drink, but I would prefer that you not eat or use tobacco products in this class. All of these activities tend to disrupt the concentration and focus of other students in the class; consequently, engaging in them will constitute grounds for my asking you to leave the class. Please silence your cell phone ringers before class begins.

**Attitude:** Philosophy and religion classes are natural places for dialogue. For any dialogue to work, however, all the participants must maintain an attitude of humility and openness, both to the text and to the interpretations and comments of others about the issue under discussion. (I will often refer to this attitude as a “hermeneutics of charity.”) This does not preclude critique of others’ positions: we will not be leaving behind our capacity for judgment. Here are a few other helpful rules of thumb for our class discussions:
• **Everyone** should be prepared to offer contributions on the reading for that day. If you can’t express something in your own words, you don’t have a good grasp of it yet. As this class is intended to improve your oral articulation, “I’m not good at talking in class” is no more valid an excuse not to speak than “I’m not good at papers” would be to avoid the written assignments.

• On the flip side, one or two people should not dominate the discussion every day. This is unhelpful to you as well as others in the class. It does not give you the chance to hear different opinions and interpretations that might be helpful to your own developing thoughts, and it also does not allow others in the class to work on their own articulation. Do not be offended if I ask you to allow some of your colleagues to participate more on a particular day.

• **Philosophical claims, not persons,** should be the object of assessment, discussion, and criticism. “Ad hominem” attacks are uniformly unhelpful, only serve to silence legitimate discussions, and should be avoided in genuine dialogues.

**Completion of Assignments:** All assignments should be completed by you and turned in on time. **NOTE:**

- If you must miss class, it is **your responsibility** to make other arrangements for turning in work due on that day, to get class notes from another student in the class, to find out if any assignments have been made for the next class, and to turn those in on time.
- Departmental policy dictates that late assignments will be docked **one full grade for each calendar day late (including weekends)** unless you have made prior arrangements with me. Assignments will not be accepted **more than a week after their due date (= zero).**
- **As the point of a philosophy course is for you to learn to think for yourself, (taking credit for someone else’s words or ideas) constitutes grounds for failure of this class.**
- **ALL assignments must be turned in to receive a passing grade for the course.**

In short, then, you should be present, on time, and prepared to discuss the material for each class session with a charitable attitude, having carefully read and thought about it before class; and complete all assignments by their due date and on your own (unless instructed otherwise).

**Course Assessment**

Final grades for the course will be calculated as follows:

1) In-class Midterm Examination: 15%
2) Comprehensive Final Examination: 25%
3) Quizzes/Homework: 15% (I will, on occasion, give short quizzes or homework assignments to determine how well you are reading the texts. If I find that quizzing is unnecessary, item (4) will increase to 30%.)
4) Class Preparation and Participation: 15% (Neglecting to bring your book or printed copy of the material from the website to class will constitute a participation grade of zero for that day.)
5) a) Non-majors: Three Short Papers (**minimum 1200 words each**): 30% total.
   b) Majors: i) Choice of **Two Out of Three** Short Papers (**minimum 1200 words each**): 15% total, AND
      ii) Research Paper (**minimum 3000 words**); Annotated Bibliography; and Abstract: 15%.

I adhere to the grading policies found in the Western Carolina University Undergraduate Studies Catalog. Please refer to it for the official policies regarding the awarding of grades on written work. Final grades of “A” are, as defined there, reserved not merely for satisfactorily completing all requirements for the class, but for “Excellent” work over the course of the semester.

**The numerical grading scale for the course is as follows:**

A+ =97+;  A =93-96;  A- =90-92;  B+ =87-89;  B =83-86;  B- =80-82;  C+ =77-79;  C =73-76;  C- =70-72;  D+ =67-69;  D =63-66;  D- =60-62;  F =<60.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** Western Carolina University is committed to providing equal educational opportunities for students with documented disabilities. Students who require disability services or reasonable accommodations must identify themselves as having a disability and provide current diagnostic documentation to Disability Services. All information is confidential. Please contact Disability Services for more information at (828) 227-2716 or 144 Killian Annex.
**Tentative Schedule of Readings and Class Discussion Topics:**
(Ss as subject to change: it is your responsibility to make sure you know what the reading is for each class.)

**Jan 12** General Introduction. Course overview and brief biographical introduction to C.S. Lewis.
**Jan 14** C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Preface/Forward (vii-xx); Book I (“Right and Wrong as a Clue to the Meaning of the Universe”), Chapters 1-3 (3-20). The human sense of the moral law.
**Jan 16** *Mere Christianity*, Book I, Chapters 4-5; and Book II (“What Christians Believe”), Chapters 1-2 (21-46). Behind the moral law: the Christian God and alternative notions.

**Jan 19** Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday: No Class

**Jan 26** *Mere Christianity*, Book III, Chapters 5-8 (94-128). Love and Sex; Forgiveness; Pride.
**Jan 28** *Mere Christianity*, Book IV (“Beyond Personality: or First Steps in the Doctrine of the Trinity”), Chapters 1-3 (153-171). God as Trinity. Time and Eternity.

***WRITING A GOOD PHILOSOPHY PAPER***

**Feb 2** *Mere Christianity*, Book IV, Chapters 4-7 (172-194). Becoming Christ-like.


***Short Paper #1 (Ecumenical Christianity) Due***


**Feb 23** *Perelandra*, chapters 15-17 (157-190). Resurrection. Disaster averted. The eschaton.

***Short Paper #2 (Perelandra and/or Screwtape) Due***


**Feb 28-Mar 8 Spring Break: No Class. [Try to get as far into *LotR* as you can!]!!**

**Mar 11** *Silmarillion* selections: the fall of the Noldor (chapters 7-9); Beren and Lúthien (chapter 19) <Web>.
**Mar 13** ***Midterm Examination***


*** Annotated Bibliography (majors only) Due ***


Apr 8-12 Easter Break: No Class (Wednesday-Friday).

***Courseval opens April 12***


***Self-evaluation Due; Courseval closes April 26***


*** Short Paper #3 (Lord of the Rings) Due***

Apr 29 Catch-up day.

May 1 Review for Final Examination.

*** Research Papers Due (majors only) ***

May 4 (Mon), 3:00-5:30 pm Final Examination.