CH676: Tolkien and Lewis  
Semlink+  
Fall 2014  
September 8, 2014 – December 15, 2014

Instructor: Dr. Ryan Reeves

Contact Information: rreeves@gordonconwell.edu

Office Hours:  
Dr. Reeves will take questions regarding any aspect of the course inside the General Questions forum. If you have a question of a more personal nature, Dr. Reeves is available by email.

Course Description:  
The writings of Lewis and Tolkien shaped a critique of rationalistic materialism and the global wars of the early 20th century. Their writings continue to be sources of inspiration and deep thinking today, serving to influencing everything from apologetics to literature. The purpose of this course is to engage the writings and thinking in the writings of C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien to gain a better understanding of their views. The course will focus on the primary readings of both authors and will train the students in how to compare and contrast competing ideas between two thinkers who seem to have similar ideas.

Gordon-Conwell Mission:  
This course satisfies the following institutional learning objectives:

To maintain academic excellence in the highest tradition of Christian scholarship in the teaching of the biblical, historical and theological disciplines. (Article 2)

Course Learning Objectives:  
The primary goal of the course is to use the writings of Lewis and Tolkien to formulate and standardize the skills needed to do historical theology. The method applied in this course will be to explore the fictional writings of both Lewis and Tolkien and then use them as case studies for engaging crucially with the past. This class will achieve these goals through three key steps in the lectures:

1. Students will describe and learn to defend the various approaches to historical theology (e.g. biographical study or literary study).
   o Lectures will explore the various strategies used to study the past and it will provide students the tools to defend a balanced approach to historical research. Students will then learn how to present their views on the study of historical theology and how to articulate good methodology. The goal will be achieved also by teaching students how to think theologically about any subject, including sci-fi fiction.
2. Students will learn to **explain** and **assess** theological and literary themes in Lewis and Tolkien.
   - The professor will frequently model how to engage the writings of Lewis and Tolkien and will explain to students thematic approaches to a text. Students will then have opportunity to outline and describe their own theological engagement with the text (both to the professor and to other students) as they learn and apply these skills.

3. Students will gain skill in **comparing** and **contrasting** two thinkers whose writings are similar.
   - In this final goal, students will bring together the information they gleaned throughout the course and learn to compose a balanced articulation, not only of Lewis and Tolkien’s individual ideas, but also how these ideas compare to each other. Students will also be asked to apply their historical research theologically by offering their own critique of Lewis and Tolkien on the themes chosen for their paper.

**Lesson Topics:**
This course is 14 weeks long, with 13 lecture weeks and the final week set aside for writing the final paper. The first 13 weeks are divided into three modules of one week each, as follows:

**Module A: Laying the Foundation (5 weeks)**
   - Week 1: *The Literary World of Lewis and Tolkien*
   - Week 2: *The Context of Lewis and Tolkien*
   - Week 3: *Reading Fiction Theologically*
   - Week 4: *Reading Fiction Analytically*
   - Week 5: *The Stage is Set*

**Module B: J. R. R. Tolkien (4 weeks)**
   - Week 6: *The Life of Tolkien*
   - Week 7: *The Fantasy of Tolkien*
   - Week 8: *Themes in Tolkien*
   - Week 9: *Reading Allegorically*

**Module C: C. S. Lewis (4 weeks)**
   - Lesson 10: *The Life of Lewis*
   - Lesson 11: *Til We Have Faces*
   - Lesson 12: *The World of Narnia*
   - Lesson 13: *Themes and Contrasts*

**Module D: Tying it Together (1 week)**
   - Week 14: Tying it Together

**Pre-requisite Reading:**
The course is designed for those who have read little to none of the writings of Lewis or Tolkien (or who have not read them theologically). However, it will be assumed that the student has read *The Hobbit* in its entirety. This book is short and easy, so if students have not read *The Hobbit* before it is advised that they read this before the class.
**Required Materials:**

G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy.*

This book forms the foundational philosophy for our discussion of literature and the Christian faith, and it was a text that Lewis, Tolkien and the Inklings found inspirational. This book will not be part of the paper assignment, so the student can find any edition (e-book or print) that they wish to use. The e-book edition is often free.

Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (i.e. *Fellowship of the Ring, The Two Towers, and Return of the King*).

Any edition of these books will be fine, so long as they are not abridged and not audiobook. E-book editions (such as Kindle) are often inexpensive, though they can be difficult to take notes on. The key is to get an unabridged edition and read the entirety of the books (including the stories found in the appendices).

C. S. Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia* seven book set (i.e. *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe, Prince Caspian, The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, The Silver Chair, The Magician’s Nephew,* and *The Last Battle*).

Any edition of these books will be fine, so long as they are not abridged and not audiobook. Read the entirety of the books.

C. S. Lewis, *The Space Trilogy* (i.e. *Out of the Silent Planet, Perelandra,* and *That Hideous Strength*).

Any edition of these books will be fine, so long as they are not abridged and not audiobook. Read the entirety of the books.

C. S. Lewis, *Til We Have Faces.*

Any edition of this book will be fine, so long as it is not abridged and not audiobook. Read the entirety of the book.

**Course Requirements:**

Achievement of the course objectives will be measured through a variety of assignments and activities as described below. The following chart indicates how various course elements proportionately relate to the overall course grade. Students will be required to watch all the lectures and read each of the assigned books. There will also be a major comparative paper. The grade breakdown is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Assignment</th>
<th>% of grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Video Lectures</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal Analysis</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Forums</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative Paper</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Learning Activities:

Reading and Video Lectures
You will have lectures and readings assigned weekly. **You must view the lectures first before doing the reading,** as they will provide crucial context for you and alert you to things to be watchful for as you read. As the reading for this course is very heavy, you are strongly encouraged to view the lectures as early in the week as possible.

To receive credit for the reading and video lectures it is mandatory that students read all of the assigned books and watch all of the lectures for the course. The grade will be assessed on an 'all or nothing' basis: to get credit, students must complete the reading and lecture videos entirely.

*A reading report and video lectures report must be uploaded to the Assignments tool in Sakai by the last day of the course at 11:55 pm EST.* The proper forms for the reports may be downloaded from respective assignment in the Assignments tool or by navigating to the "Reports" folder inside the Resources tool. Microsoft Word and PDF formats are both available.

Journal Analyses
Students will complete each volume of the required reading and then write 400 - 800 words (about 1 - 2 pages in MS Word) summarizing, in prose, not outline form, the major themes, figures, and narrative developments in the book. For example, after reading *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe,* the student will write 1-2 pages on the major ideas presented in the book (e.g. atonement, sin) and how Lewis presents the material in narrative form. The journal, then, will form the backbone to your analysis for the paper (see below). The analysis must be substantive and focused on the theological dimensions of the books. There will not be a Journal Analysis required for Chesterton's *Orthodoxy.* These will be graded according to the Journal Analyses Rubric.

The journal analyses will be composed in the Blog Tool immediately after the book being analyzed is read. **Therefore these will usually be due by the end of the day on Sunday each week, though in some weeks you have more than one book to read and so you will therefore be required to compose more than one journal analysis.** As we are reading 14 fiction books in this class, by the end of the course you should have composed at least 14 journal analyses in the Blog Tool.

Discussion Forums
As you read, view/ listen, and learn, you must interact with other students through discussion forums, including a Seminar Forum towards the end of the course. Your participation in these forums will be graded on the basis of criteria described in the Discussion Forum Rubric available in the Resources tool.

Comparative Paper
The paper will be a comparative paper in which students will explore a theme (or themes) in the writings of Lewis and Tolkien. The paper will be 17+ pages (not including title page, works cited or other nonessential elements of the paper). The paper will be
required to be a fair analysis of both authors and a careful comparison of their ideas with supporting evidence from the primary source reading. This will be graded according to the Comparative Paper Rubric.

The paper must be uploaded to the Assignments tool in Sakai by last day of the course at 11:55 pm EST.

Grading Policy
The reading and lecture report will be graded on an "all or nothing" basis. As these components of the course together make up a fifth of the overall course grade (20%, see chart above), you are highly encouraged to finish them in their entirety. The Journal Analysis, Forums, and Comparative Paper assignments will be graded according to the criteria set forth in their respective grading rubrics. All grading rubrics can be found in the Grading Rubrics folder inside the Resources tool in Sakai.

Grading Scale
Grading Scale (point values and definitions of letter grades can be found in the "Grading Scale" section of the Gordon-Conwell Student Handbook):

A=4.0; A-=3.7; B+=3.3; B=3.0; B-=2.7; C+=2.3; C=2.0; C-=1.7; D+=1.3; D=1.0; D-=0.7; F=0.0

"A" means "conspicuous excellence;" "B" means "exceeding the minimum;" "C" means "satisfactory" work; "D" means "passing" but "unsatisfactory;" and "F" means "course has been failed."

Course Policies:

Instructor Feedback
I will attempt to respond to questions or messages within 24-48 hours, excluding Sundays. I will also do my best to provide feedback on assignments within one week of submission and post grades on Sakai within 1 week of submission. The exception to this will be the paper, which I will provide more extensive feedback on, and which may take up to 6 weeks to grade entirely for the course.

Document Formatting and Submission
Assignments must be submitted electronically by posting on the Sakai site. Hard-copies will not be accepted. The Journal Analysis and Final Paper must be in MS-Word format (.doc or .docx). Assignments should be double spaced with 1" margins on all sides of each page, and should be printed in Times New Roman 12 point type. Citations must be in Turabian format. Any failure to use these formatting or citation rules will result in grade reduction of half a letter grade for minor errors (e.g. wrong margins) or a full grade for major errors (e.g. wrong citations).

Late Work
All late work will be penalized the equivalent of one letter grade per week beyond the due date, unless arrangements are made ahead of time. Extenuating circumstances will be considered as appropriate. Work turned in later than Monday, December 15th, will normally require that an extension be approved by the Seminary. If you anticipate a problem, contact me as soon as possible.
Netiquette
Gordon-Conwell does not tolerate disruptive or disrespectful behavior in the online communications in any course. Students should review the netiquette policy in the Student Handbook and this website: http://www.albion.com/netiquette.

Additional Seminary Policies

Academic Standards
Cheating and plagiarism are considered serious breaches of personal and academic integrity. Cheating involves, but is not necessarily limited to, the use of unauthorized sources of information during an examination or the submission of the same (or substantially same) work for credit in two or more courses without the knowledge and consent of the instructors. Plagiarism involves the use of another person’s distinctive ideas or words, whether published or unpublished, and representing them as one’s own instead of giving proper credit to the source. Plagiarism can also involve over dependence on other source material for the scope and substance of one’s writing. Such breaches in academic standards often result in a failing grade as well as other corrective measures. For more information, please consult the Student Handbook.

ADA Policy
The seminary complies with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act. A student with a qualifying and authenticated disability who is in need of accommodations, should petition the seminary in accordance with the stated guidelines in the Student Handbook.

Extension Policy
Arrangements for submission of late work at a date on or before the “last day to submit written work”, as noted on the seminary’s Academic Calendar, are made between the student and professor. Formal petition to the Registration Office is not required at this time. This includes arrangements for the rescheduling of final exams.

However, course work (reading and written) to be submitted after the publicized calendar due date, must be approved by the Registration Office. An extension form, available online, must be submitted to the Registration Office prior to the “last day to submit written work.” Requests received after this date will either be denied or incur additional penalty. For a full discussion of this policy, please consult the Student Handbook.

Grades
Grades are posted on line within twenty-four hours of receipt from the professor. Students are expected to check their CAMS student portal in order to access posted grades. Those individuals who need an official grade report issued to a third party, should put their request in writing to the Registration Office. Faculty have six weeks from the course work due date to submit a final grade. Note that the final grade posted in Sakai is not official; the official final grade will be posted in the CAMS student portal.

Contacting the Semlink Office
email: semlink@gordonconwell.edu
phone: 978-646-4144 (office hours only)
Office hours: 9:00 am - 12:00 pm and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday.