

Religion 495: "C.S. LEWIS" Independent Study

Instructor: Dr. Syed Rizwan Zamir

Thursdays 4:00-6:00 pm

Location: EU 104

Reading a major thinker systematically and closely offers rewards that are distinct from reading various writers on the same theme or subject. Having employed the latter approach for various classes in the past, this term we will turn to the former through a close and careful reading of selected seminal texts of a contemporary Christian public intellectual, C.S. Lewis. The study will involve close reading and interpretation of his writings, discovering intertextual connections in them, and exploration of various themes and issues raised by him. Selection of texts encompasses various genres, his letters, memoirs, fiction, essays and writings on certain topics.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the semester, the student would have:

1. Covered a significant section of C.S. Lewis's corpus;
2. Discerned how his various writings relate to one another and his influence as a thinker;
3. Learned what it means to read texts closely and carefully;
4. Furthered their skills to interpret texts and ability to engage others in discussion through a text;
5. Understood the distinction between "speaking from within the text" and "speaking to the text";
6. Learned how to "map" texts and how to formulate one's questions, thoughts and conclusions about it;
7. Done reflective thinking and writing;

NEW INTELLECTUAL PRACTICES:

I. Journal-Portfolio (40%)

- a. Creative writing (letters, memoirs, essays, fiction, drawings, etc)
- b. IRs (500-word Interpretive reflection on what Lewis is doing or saying) (see online). Everyone will do 2-3 over the course of the semester, and at least one student will present one each week.
- c. 13-pages in total of careful and engaging interpretive and reflective writing.

2. Teaching your favorite work and your reflections (30%)

- a. Introducing the Author & the Text through biographical research and sections of *Surprised By Joy*
- b. "Text Map";
- c. Formulating themes and questions for discussion
- d. Formulating personal "take-away" from the reading of the text; the connection of d) with a), b) and c) should be made obvious. In other words, it should be clear how one arrives at c) through a) & b) Your Conclusions

3. Participation, Preparation, and Discussion (30%)

- a. Careful reading of the text prior to the meeting. Each student not presenting an IR will give their "2-minute drill" of the text;

- b. Formulating themes and questions for discussion;
- c. Formulating personal “take-away” from the reading of the text

Note: Before April 15, each participant is expected to meet with me at least once to discuss the progress made on the Portfolio-Journal. You are also encouraged to consult me for your Teach-Present session.

MEETINGS & TEXTS:

Jan 17: Open-discuss/plan

Jan 24: *Surprised by Joy* pp. 1-100 (and watch *Shadowlands*)

Jan 31: *Mere Christianity*

Feb 8: *The Abolition of Man*

Feb 14: *The Great Divorce*

Feb 21: *The Screwtape Letters*

Feb 28: *Letters to Malcolm*

Mar 7: **Spring Break**

Mar 14: *The Four Loves* (Part I)

Mar 21: *The Four Loves* (Part II)

Mar 28: *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories* (Stories)

Apr 4: *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories* (Essays)

Apr 11: Medieval Essays/Discarded Image (Selections (Zamir)

Apr 18: Teach-Present: *The Weight of Glory* + *Surprised by Joy* (Mac) and *Present Concerns* + *Surprised by Joy* (Emily)

Apr 25: Teach-Present: *Problem of Pain* + *Surprised by Joy* (Jejun) and *A Grief Observed* + *Surprised by Joy* (Katie)

May 2: Portfolio due