



Course: Cultivating Wisdom with CS Lewis

Meeting Time: T/TH 3:30 pm (EST)

Instructor: Mr. Casey McCall

Email: casey@ashlandlex.org

Office Hours: by appointment

Meeting Place: Zoom Classroom

Course Description

This course is designed for 9th–12th graders who want to dive deeply into C.S. Lewis’s more difficult writings. C.S. Lewis (1898–1963) is beloved today by Christians from all traditions due to his commitment to “mere Christianity” and his imaginative Christian engagement with culture through his fiction, essays, nonfiction works, poetry, and letters. Lewis was something of a “divine popularizer,” as he mined revelation and history for wisdom in order to make it accessible for contemporary audiences. Over half a century after his death, the Oxford educated writer, philosopher, and popular theologian still speaks through his many published works. If you would like to become more familiar with Lewis and his writings in order to grow in virtue and wisdom, this course is for you.

Students will be expected to read 30-50 pages per week and must be ready each week to engage in Socratic dialogue on the material read. This course seeks to gain wisdom from C.S. Lewis toward the goal of applying it in the real world.

Course Objectives

- Develop a familiarity with Lewis the person via biographical works and personal letters
- Develop historical awareness by noting Lewis’s context in order to better understand his writings
- Grow in recognition and love for truth, beauty, and goodness through thoughtful engagement with Lewis’s writings
- Expand vocabulary to include the language of virtue, wisdom, and philosophy toward the goal of moral formation
- Produce written works in the style of Lewis and present works to class

Required Texts:

1. Jacobs, Alan. *The Narnian: The Life and Imagination of C.S. Lewis*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005. 342 pp.
2. Lewis, C.S. *Out of the Silent Planet*. 160 pp.
3. Lewis, C.S. *The Abolition of Man*. 113 pp.
4. Lewis, C.S. *The Four Loves*. 141 pp.
5. Lewis, C.S. *The Problem of Pain*. 162 pp.
6. Lewis, C.S. *The Weight of Glory*. 192 pp. (only one essay out of this book)
7. Lewis, C.S. *Till We Have Faces*. 313 pp.

Course Schedule:

Weeks 1-7	<i>The Narnian</i>
Weeks 8-9	“Weight of Glory” Essay; Letters
Weeks 10-11	<i>The Abolition of Man</i>
Weeks 12-15	<i>The Problem of Pain</i>
Week 16	Short story presentations
Weeks 17-21	<i>The Four Loves</i>
Weeks 22-28	<i>Till We Have Faces</i>
Weeks 29-31	<i>Out of the Silent Planet</i>
Week 32	Essay presentations

Course Requirements:

Reading – Students will be asked to read 30-50 pages per week.

Reflections – Students will be given short writing assignments (usually at the beginning or end of class) in which they will answer a question posed by the teacher in one paragraph. For this, students may be asked to write a brief character sketch or summarize a main idea from a reading.

Short Story and Presentation – Students will craft a short story using themes from C.S. Lewis’s writings (1000-word limit).

Personal Reflection Essay – Students will write an advice letter to their imaginary future son or daughter, drawing from themes in Lewis’s writings. This letter will be 1000-1200 words.

Discussion Leading – At some point during the second semester, students will lead the discussion of the reading for the day.

Student Expectations:

Our classes will be live and highly interactive with students expected to interact with their instructor and peers and to participate in class discussions. Students are expected to attend classes with their videos turned on and to function as a full participant in each class, contributing to the class dynamic and success of the entire cohort. Students who do not turn on their videos during class will be removed from the Zoom classroom and marked absent.

Evaluation Procedures and Grading Criteria

Instructors will often assign the following grades based on students’ level of achievement: *magna cum laude* (with great praise), *cum laude* (with praise), *satis* (sufficient, satisfactory), and *non satis* (not sufficient). Ideally, every average student working diligently should do praiseworthy work (*cum laude*). Those who excel beyond this expectation will be the *magna cum laude* students. Students who do adequate but not praiseworthy work should be designated *satis*. *Non satis* means lacking sufficiency or adequacy. These assessments are not mere grading instruments but ways for both the student and the instructor to assess mastery. Students will receive written feedback on each essay.

If students need to complete a high school transcript with either a numeric or letter grade, please communicate with the instructor, and the school's normal process will be followed.

Academic Dishonesty

In the event that a concern arises regarding academic dishonesty, the instructor will follow the process outlined in the school handbook. It is important that students pursue their studies with integrity and honesty. The instructor will reserve final judgment on any suspected academic dishonesty until the facts of the matter are revealed and all appropriate authorities are contacted.

Contacting Me

Please feel free to email me with any questions or concerns you may have. I will **usually** respond within the 24-hour period but may not be able to respond before then. If there is an issue or concern that requires discussion of details, I'll be happy for us to set up a Zoom appointment to talk instead.

Technology

Each student will need a computer with webcam and a high-speed internet connection. Also, a headset is highly recommended for clear communication. Each student will create an account on Schoology, our learning management system. The instructor will post all media and any general communication on Schoology. Please be sure to adjust your settings so that you are notified when memos are posted to this group.