

Fantasy Literature in the Life of Modern Christendom

Mr. Allen Rushing

Yearlong Course (2023-2024)

Meets M/W from 12:30 p.m. to 1:45 p.m ET

ELIGIBLE STUDENT:

Grades 9th–12th graders welcome. *Students should be comfortable reading literature deeply, dialoguing philosophically, and writing thoughtful essays. Although this is not a writing or speaking course, the way we will be evaluating what we read and learn is through in depth dialogue and insightful writing.*

REQUIRED TEXTS:*

1. *The Complete Fairy Tales (Penguin Classics)* by George MacDonald
2. *Collected Works Volumes I (Ignatius Press)* by G. K. Chesterton
3. *The Silmarillion* by J. R. R. Tolkien
4. *Tree and Leaf* by J. R. R. Tolkien
5. *War in Heaven (Revised Eerdmans white cover paperback edition)* by Charles Williams
6. *That Hideous Strength* by C. S. Lewis
7. *The Fellowship: The Literary Lives of the Inklings* by Philip and Carol Zaleski

*Required texts are not included in the purchase of the course.

NOTE: While these are our primary texts, the teaching staff will be adapting and augmenting the curriculum as they see best for the learning objectives of the course. This includes adaptation of specific emphases and chapter/unit perusal. As such, students should also be prepared to regularly print PDF files supplied by the instructors. Students should know that while they are free to complete any activities from the book on their own time, we will not be completing every exercise and reading available in the textbook as a class.

COURSE SCHEDULE

ORIENTATION SESSION: The date and time of the student/parent orientation will depend on the particular section in which you are enrolled, but all orientation sessions will be scheduled during the week prior to the start of the class.

CLASS SESSION DATES: M/W 12:30-1:45 p.m. ET. You can consult the Scholé Academy academic calendar for details concerning scheduled, school-wide breaks.

OFFICE HOURS: The teacher is available outside of scheduled class times by appointment. During these “Office Hours” students may raise questions, seek assistance, or review class material. This can happen via Canvas or a meeting in the Zoom classroom.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This in depth look at fantasy literature and its role in the development of Christian thought will immerse students in the work of George MacDonald, G. K. Chesterton, J. R. R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, and C. S. Lewis. The course will focus on the importance and growth of the genre from ancient epic and medieval allegory to the rise of high fantasy in the 19th and 20th centuries, “baptizing students' imaginations” (C. S. Lewis in an introduction to the anthologized works of George MacDonald. See *Lilith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), introduction, xi.) in the deeply biblical metanarrative and themes these works are built upon and reflect.

COURSE MAP

Quarter 1	Foundations: The Pre-Inklings and Inklings
Quarter 2	“A Mythology for England” & the Modern Western World
Quarter 3	Darkness and Light
Quarter 4	<i>That Hideous Strength</i>

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SKILLS

Students enrolling in Scholé Academy’s *Fantasy Literature in the Life of Modern Christendom* will be expected to show development of Executive Function Skills throughout the year. Executive Function Skills speak to a set of qualities and skill sets students can develop and hone better to approach the courses, lectures, readings, and teachers they will encounter in their future academic coursework.

Scholé Academy commends five important skills which ought to be observed by students.

1. **An Engaged Student:** One who is willing to step into the arena of class discussion, ask questions, supply answers, and consider how the discussion at hand applies to oneself.
2. **Note Taking:** A student must be engaged with the class by taking notes on important and relevant content in an organized fashion. They should then independently consult those notes for assignments and in preparation for assessments. It is essential that all students acquire a notebook for use during the class, as this will keep them organized by subject.

3. **Attention to Detail & Preparedness:** These students are ones who consistently adhere to deadlines, submission requirements, adhere to style guides and codes, confirm technology is working prior to the start of class, are responsible to determine how to proceed after an absence, are responsible for consulting their course syllabus and adjusting as the class proceeds, etc.
4. **Critical Reflection:** These students are ones who receive feedback to their submissions, and then apply that feedback to future assignments rather than repeating mistakes. These students also glean information from the live class critiques of fellow students and learn from others what mistakes to avoid.
5. **Initiative/Maturity:** This student will be proactive in listening to the teacher's comments, assessing how they apply to his/her work, taking the initiative to schedule office hours with the teacher if necessary.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS IN ACTION

Students will be following the sequence of study contained in *Fantasy Literature in the Life of Modern Christendom*. **The primary goals for students is to have their imagination baptized by the truth, beauty, and goodness of the stories being told in class texts; that students will come to see Christ clearly in great works of fiction; and that they will understand these stories, their authors, and the worldviews presented by them in context, and be able to dialogue and discourse on these with wisdom and eloquence.**

During class time, students will be instructed on key portions of the texts, will be required to engage in extemporaneous writing and speaking activities, engage in a fruitful and relevant dialogue on the subject at hand, pose questions, and explain and justify their answers and solutions. They will be required to actively participate verbally and typographically in each class and to turn in required work assignments in a punctual manner.

The class is structured to be relational and conversational. Students are expected to arrive to class on time with all assigned material completed. The instructor will facilitate learning for the student, but the responsibility for staying up-to-date with classwork and assignments is ultimately the responsibility of the student.

Students who have not submitted their homework to the appropriate Canvas assignment folder by the end of the day it was due will receive a late grade, losing a letter grade per each day it is late (1 day late = impossible to make an A, 99-90, 2 days late = impossible to make a B, 89-80, 3 days late = impossible to make a C, 79-70, 4 days late = failed assignment grade).

All assignments will be due in the appropriate Canvas Assignment folder by the end of each day it was due (11:59 pm). Students will submit their work by copying and pasting in a provided text box, uploading it into the Canvas folder as a docx file, or occasionally scanning in a completed

document or by submitting an uploaded document file. **Photographs of completed assignments will not be accepted as they are incredibly difficult to read.**

STUDENT GRADING AND EVALUATION

While pursuing *Fantasy Literature* through Scholé Academy will be “restful” and enjoyable, we also recognize the need to provide grades for students who will be using this course as part of their prepared college transcript. It is important to integrate the theoretical and the practical to achieve both restful learning and excellent academic performance. Earning a specific grade should not overshadow achievement goals for mastery of this discipline. Attaining a mastery of the subject is its own reward, though the teacher will assign the following grades to your student’s 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 receive *magna cum laude* for their efforts. Work which demonstrates minimal but sufficient mastery will be designated *satis*. *Non satis* designates work that demonstrates insufficient mastery; a student with a consistently *non satis* grade will not be recommended for continuation to the next level of *Writing and Rhetoric*. Additionally, we will provide a transcript with a traditional percentage grade to the requesting parent at quarterly intervals. All students will receive both a Scholé evaluation and a percentage grade at the end of the year.

STUDENT EVALUATION: MASTERY PORTRAIT

This description is the academic goal post of each *Fantasy Literature* student for the school year.

At the end of this course, the Cum Laude student will know the major biblical themes and story of each literary work and author studied; will be able to write and discourse knowledgably about the works, authors, their import, and impact; and will have a better and fuller understanding of The Story (that is, the Bible) by their immersion in these reflective stories.

STUDENT EVALUATION: ASSIGNMENTS, TYPES & WEIGHTS

The teacher will communicate with students regarding assignment feedback and grading through Canvas. The teacher will provide students with more detailed information and access to the *Fantasy Literature* course page.

Students’ grades will have the following weight (out of 100):

1. Weekly Dialogue: 30
2. Weekly Reflection Papers: 30
3. Major Papers: 40

The incremental nature of the assessments is in place to ensure that students are continually reviewing previous material.

Typically Speaking:

- magna cum laude is the grade range of 94% or above.
- cum laude is the grade range of 85-93%
- satis is the grade range of 75-84%
- non satis is any grade lower than a 75%

This reflects the student's mastery and ability to move on to the next level.

Students and their parents will receive quarterly feedback from their teachers in the form of a quarterly update.

STUDENT EVALUATION: ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students will often write minor and major papers privately at home. Students are on their honor to abide by Scholé Academy's Learning Philosophy which assumes the personal cultivation of Student Virtues described in the Student Parent Handbook. **We ask that parents oversee their student's production of written works to assure student academic integrity.**

Specifically, cheating and plagiarism are punishable offenses. Copying the work of other students is prohibited and proper citation of all sources is essential.

THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM:

We will be using the free online "virtual classroom" software provided by Zoom. The live, interactive nature of our courses is foundational and we require cameras to be on during all class sessions. The virtual classroom will provide students with interactive audio and an interactive whiteboard in which texts, diagrams, video and other media can be displayed and analyzed. We will provide students with a link (via email) that will enable students to join the virtual classroom. Courses will be managed through our learning management system, Canvas.

Specific information regarding the technology used by Scholé Academy (including required technology) can be found by visiting the [Technology in the Classroom](#) section of the Student Parent Handbook.

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR

Allen Rushing has always loved story, and that love only grew when, at the age of 14, the Lord saved him. Since then he has joyfully studied the truth, beauty, and goodness of The Story found in Scripture and reflected in the great works, from Dante's *Divine Comedy* to Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. One of the delights of The Story is taking the time to delve deeply into it,



which is why the “restful” philosophy of Scholé is so appealing to Allen. One of the reasons such an approach is natural for him is because of the way he was homeschooled K-12 in the Classical Christian educational tradition. Allen was able to expand on this solid spiritual and educational foundation through his undergraduate degree in Classics with a History focus; in the process of earning this degree, he enjoyed taking classes in Classical Latin, Koine Greek, Literature, Philosophy, and Theology. While in graduate school, he was able to broaden his historical knowledge base, gaining a greater understanding of Western civilization as a whole and focusing particularly on the periods of the Greco-Roman world, Late Antiquity, medieval period, twentieth century world history, the World Wars, and the Cold War. Since graduate school, Allen has taught the humanities from a biblical worldview. Some of Allen’s favorite ways of enjoying the adventure upon which the Lord has set him are reading, writing, building his house, climbing trees, playing ping pong, and spending time with his wife and two children.
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Please note: While this syllabus addresses details specific to this course, it is not extensive. Parents should also read the Student Parent Handbook located on scholeacademy.com and be familiar with the ideas, policies, and procedures outlined.