



Life and Theology of C. S. Lewis
Wednesdays 11.00 a.m. - 12.50 p.m. (In person Only)
TH 3P1040/5P1020
Specializations (CC/CW/PS)

C. S. Lewis (1898-1963) was an Anglo-Irish literary scholar who taught at both Oxford and Cambridge Universities. He was also a novelist, essayist, man of letters, and lay theologian. A reluctant convert, first to theism, and then to Christianity, Lewis became a prominent apologist for the faith. This course will explore both his life and theology, as well as his enduring influence.

Instructor

The Rev'd Dr. Mark G. McKim
markgmckim@icloud.com

Course Goals and Objectives

By the completion of this course students should be able to:

Knowing: demonstrate a basic knowledge of the important events, people, and intellectual influences in the life of C. S. Lewis.

Being: indicate ways in which their study and reading of Lewis has influenced their own spiritual life.

Doing: identify and understand the major ideas in Lewis's theological thought and relate and apply these to contemporary church and society.

Grading System

Percent Grade	Letter Grade	Grade point (12 pts)	Grade point (4 pts)	Grade Guideline
90-100 85-89 80-84	A+ A A-	12 11 10	4.0 4.0 3.7	for work displaying mastery of the subject-matter, creativity and individualized integration of insights and their relationship
77-79 73-76 70-72	B+ B B-	9 8 7	3.3 3.0 2.7	for work displaying a good level of competence and comprehension
67-69 63-66 60-62	C+ C C-	6 5 4	2.3 2.0 1.7	for work which meets basic course requirements but demonstrates a low level of comprehension
57-59 53-56 50-52	D+ D D-	3 2 1	1.3 1.0 0.7	for work which falls below minimum standards
0-49	F	0	0	unsatisfactory work and/or failure to meet course requirements.

Course Requirements

- Participation

Students are expected to participate in class, through asking relevant and thoughtful questions, and involvement in any discussions. This includes being open about how, why, and in what way the course has impacted the student's own relationship to Christ. If a student does not so participate, his or her final mark will be reduced by one full letter grade (hence an A becomes a B). Please note that the content of specific books may form the basis of class lecture/discussions on the dates specified in the syllabus. You should have finished reading the books by these specified dates in order to participate; failure to do so by these dates may adversely affect your grade.

- Book Review 1 (20%)

Write a five to six page review of: C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

Your review should state clearly the thesis of the book *and* include your critique. A critique means explaining whether you agree or disagree with the thesis, and your reasons for agreement or disagreement. Part of your critique should include indicating whether and why or why not you think the thesis can speak to contemporary secular society.

Due Date: October 2

- Book Review 2 (20%)

Write a five to six page review of: *The Great Divorce*

Your review should state clearly the thesis of the book *and* include your critique. A critique means explaining whether you agree or disagree with the thesis, and your reasons for agreement or disagreement. Part of your critique should include indicating whether and why or why not you think the thesis can speak to contemporary secular society.

Due Date: November 6

- Take Home Essay Exam (60%)

On **November 20** a take home essay exam will be distributed in class. Students will choose two questions/subjects from those provided and write an essay style response of 8 - 10 pages to each question/subject. Students should plan their schedules in such a way as to allow adequate time during this period to complete this assignment.

Due Date: December 4

Required Texts (all written by C. S. Lewis)

(and dates by which students should have completed reading each)

<i>Mere Christianity</i>	October 1
<i>The Great Divorce</i>	November 5
<i>Miracles</i>	November 20
<i>The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe</i>	November 20
<i>The Last Battle</i>	November 20
<i>That Hideous Strength</i>	November 20

Bookstore

All required and recommended books for this class are available from the Hurlburt Family Bookstore located beside the entrance to the Nathaniel H. Parker Memorial Chapel of McMaster Divinity College. To purchase in advance, you may contact the bookstore manager, Bernice Quek, by phone at 416.620.2934 or 416.668.3434 (mobile); or by email at books@readon.ca. The Hurlburt Family Bookstore also carries other books and merchandise and is open throughout the academic year during posted hours.

Tentative Class Lecture Schedule*

Subjects	Date
<i>I. Biographical Sketch of C. S. Lewis (1898 - 1963)</i>	September 11
A. Family Background	
B. Early Childhood	
C. The Discovery of "Joy"	
D. Excursus: Lewis Diaries and Letters	
E. Death of Flora Lewis (1908)	
F. Education in England	
1. Wynyard School	
2. Cherbourg and Malvern	
3. William Fitzpatrick, "The Great Knock"	
4. Oxford University	
G. World War I	
H. Lewis and Mrs. Moore	September 18
I. Return to Oxford (1919)	
1. Degrees Earned: 1920, 1922	
2. Appointment to Magdalen College	
J. Life in Oxford	
1. Friendships: Owen Barfield, Neville Coghill, J.R.R. Tolkien, Henry (Hugo) Dyson	
2. Conversion to Theism, then to Christianity	
3. The Kilns	
4. Pattern of Life	
5. The Inklings	
6. Lecturer and Literary Scholar	
7. World War II and the Emergence of Lewis as Apologist	
8. Life During the War Years (1939 - 1945)	
9. Post-War Oxford	
10. 1947 - 1949: Years of Exhaustion	

- 11. Marriage to Joy Davidman
- K. Appointment at Cambridge (1954), Living in Oxford
- L. Death of Joy Davidman (1960) and Lewis's Crisis of Faith
- M. Pattern of Life after Davidman's Death
- N. Declining Health and Death (1963)

II. *The Theology of C. S. Lewis*

September 25

- A. The Nature of Truth
- B. Scripture/Authority
 - 1. General Revelation
 - i. Nature
 - ii. Conscience/Natural Law/The "Tao"
 - iii. "Joy"
 - iv. Myths and Legends
 - 2. Special Revelation
 - i. Necessity of/Reasons for
 - ii. Relationship of Revelation to Scripture
 - iii. Lewis and Inerrancy
 - iv. Lewis on Scripture: Authoritative in Matters of Faith and Practice
 - v. Lewis on Reading Scripture Properly: **October 2**
 - a. Context, Grammar, Genre
 - b. Humility and Tradition
 - c. Genres
 - d. The Miraculous not automatically unhistorical
 - e. Author Intention
 - f. Carrier of God's Word
 - g. Progressive Revelation
- C. God **October 9**
 - 1. As Creator
 - i. Ex Nihilio
 - ii. Artist
 - iii. Majesty/Sovereignty

- iv. Distinction between Creator and Created
- iv. Lordship stemming from being Creator

2. As Omnipotent

3. As Truthful

4. As Good

5. As Holy

6. As Love

- i. Not the first or central part of revelation
- ii. God's love in relationship to himself
- iii. God's love in relationship to humanity
- iv. The nature of God's love: primal, gift-love, "tough"
- v. Experiencing God's love rightly and wrongly

7. As Trinity

October 23

- i. Definition
- ii. Lewis's Approaches to Describing
 - a. Mind
 - b. Experience
 - c. Imagination
 - d. In Narnia
 - e. In Science Fiction Trilogy

D. Jesus Christ

- 1. The Deity of Christ
- 2. What does "begotten" mean?
- 3. Lewis's arguments for the deity of Christ
 - i. The Trilemma
 - ii. Myth and Legend: "The Good Dreams God Sends to Humanity"
 - iii. Argument from Completion

E. Anthropology (Nature of Humanity)
and Harmartiology (Nature of Sin)

October 30

F. Soteriology (Doctrine of Salvation)

- 1. The Central Human Problem

2. Salvation
 3. Atonement
 - i. Lewis' Refusal to Accept only One Theory of Atonement
 - ii. Survey of Theories of the Atonement
 - a. Liberation/Freedom/Rescue
 - b. Sacrifice - St. Anselm (1033-1104)
 - c. Moral Influence - Peter Abelard (1097-1142)
 - d. Problems with Each of These Theories
 - e. Need for New Explanations of the Atonement
 - f. New Explanation: Power in Suffering Love - Paul Fiddes
 - g. New Explanation: Absorbing Evil - C. F. D. Moule
 - iii. The Atonement: Descriptions and Images in Lewis
 - iv. Human Response to the Atonement
 - v. The Atonement and Sanctification
 - vi. The Extent of the Atonement
- G. Eschatology (Doctrine of Last Things) **November 6**
1. Judgement
 2. Hell
 3. Heaven
 4. Christ's second Coming
 5. Purgatory
- H. Ecclesiology: The Church and Worship
1. "The Church" and the local church
 2. Worship
 3. Sacraments
- I. Spiritual Disciplines **November 13**
1. Reading Scripture
 2. Prayer
 3. Confession
 4. Eucharist/Holy Communion
- J. Other Themes and Subjects
1. The Great Divide: Old Western Man vs. Modern Man
 2. Faith in the Ordinary Person and Suspicion of Moral Elites

3. The Attack on Modernity and the Poison Brewed in the West
4. The Critique of Scientism/Extreme Reductionism
5. The Importance of the Individual **November 20**

6. Government: Democracy and Monarchy
7. Shadowlands
8. The Role of Women
9. Miracles
 - i. Naturalists and Supernaturalists
 - ii. Red Herrings
 - iii. On Probability
 - iv. The Grand Miracle

10. Pain/Suffering

III. Major Influences in the Theology of C. S. Lewis **November 27**

- A. The Creative Reasoner/Romantic Intellectual/Romantic Rationalism
- B. The Celtic Form of C. S. Lewis's Faith

IV. Survey of Selected Writings of C. S. Lewis

- A. Autobiographical
 1. Surprised by Joy
 2. The Pilgrim's Regress
 3. A Grief Observed

- B. Science Fiction Trilogy
 1. Out of the Silent Planet
 2. Perelandra: Voyage to Venus
 3. That Hideous Strength

- C. Theological Fantasies
 1. The Screwtape Letters
 2. The Great Divorce

- D. The Psalter

V. Focus on *The Chronicles of Narnia* **December 4**

- A. What was Lewis trying to do?
- B. Chronological Order (in Narnian Time) for Reading the Narnia Books
- C. Preaching and Literature
- D. Major Theological Ideas in *The Chronicles of Narnia*
 - a. Retelling the Grand Christian Story
 - b. Aslan as the desire of every human being
 - c. Atonement
 - d. A Unifying Theme? Michael Ward's Theory
 - e. Disputed Sovereignty
- E. Examining Each of the Seven Narnia Books
 - a. *The Magician's Nephew*
 - b. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*
 - c. *The Horse and His Boy*
 - d. *Prince Caspian*
 - e. *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*
 - f. *The Silver Chair*
 - g. *The Last Battle*

December 11

VI. Concluding Assessment of Lewis

*Subject to adjustments in light of in-class discussions, time constraints, etc.

Written Assignments: Style

Written Assignments should:

- be typed, double-spaced, and use 12pt Times New Roman font, except for footnotes;
- use footnotes not end notes;
- generally conform to the McMaster Divinity College style guide.
(See: <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/>)

Late Assignment

Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date specified, unless otherwise indicated. Late assignments are reduced five percentage points for each day late. Late assignments *may* be accepted without penalty only in the case of an excuse deemed acceptable by the instructor (for examples: medical emergency, bereavement, serious illness).

Syllabus Ownership and Changes

This syllabus belongs to the instructor. He reserves the right to make major changes in it up to and including the beginning of the first day of class, and minor adjustments thereafter, if and as necessary.

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is not qualitatively different from other types of dishonesty. It consists of misrepresenting the ownership of written work by deception or by other fraudulent means. In an academic setting this may include any number of forms such as: copying or using unauthorized aids in tests, examinations; plagiarism, i.e., submitting work that is not one's own (regardless of the means of its production) but passing it off as if it is; submitting work for credit in a course for which credit is being or has already been given, unless the previously submitted work was presented as such to the instructor of the second course and has been deemed acceptable for credit by the instructor of that course; aiding and abetting another student's dishonesty; giving false information for the purposes of gaining admission or credit; giving false information for the purposes of obtaining deferred examinations or extension of deadlines; forging or falsifying

AODA

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the content of this course is intended to be accessible to all students who are enrolled in the course, including those with disabilities. If a student requires accommodation to participate fully in this course, that student is to contact SAS at McMaster University, who will then work directly with the McMaster Divinity College Registrar to negotiate reasonably appropriate accommodation for the student. The MDC Registrar will communicate with faculty regarding necessary accommodations. Please note that an accommodation is not retroactive and must be requested in advance to allow sufficient time for implementation.

Gender Inclusive Language

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all its publications. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected, but you will need to use gender-inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as, for example, the following: NRSVue (2022), TEV/GNB/GNT (1976), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), NIV(2011), and the CEB (2011).

Presence and Meaningful Participation

Presence and participation in this course are expected. Faculty know from many years of experience that a student's level of presence and participation in the course will impact how well she or he will score in the course. Although there are exceptions to this rule of thumb, low levels of presence and participation tend to translate to low grades; mediocre presence and participation tend to translate to mediocre grades; and high levels of presence and participation tend to translate to higher grades.