

PHL 251—Philosophy of C. S. Lewis

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Required Texts

- *C. S. Lewis Signature Classics*. ISBN: 978-0060653026., which contains several books you may purchase individually or in this set: (*Mere Christianity*, *Problem of Pain*, *Abolition of Man*, *Miracles*, *Great Divorce*).
- *The Four Loves*. ISBN: 978-0156329309.
- *Perelandra*. ISBN: 978-0743234917
- *Experiment in Criticism*. ISBN: 978-1107604728
- Other readings are available on Discovery: “Meditations on a Toolshed”, CS Lewis; “Weight of Glory”, CS Lewis, “Is Truth Objective?”, Peter Kreeft

Course Description and Learning Outcomes

This course is a study of the philosophical works of Lewis dealing with arguments for the existence of God based on human rationality, the problem of suffering, objective truth, and relation to popular culture. Includes viewing and discussion of pertinent videos.

In this course, we will read a wide selection of C. S. Lewis’s non-fiction works and two novels. Although Lewis was a philologist and not a philosopher by profession, much of his work deals with central issues in the philosophy of religion and his brilliant capacity to articulate central convictions of the Christian worldview has made him a spokesman for our faith. Further, a few of his arguments—notably those in *Miracles*—contribute genuinely new philosophical insights to the public square. We will have a chance this semester to read, evaluate, and critique both Lewis’s articulation of old truths and his account of new insights.

The expected learning outcomes for this course are:

- to learn an appreciation for Lewis’s contribution to the Western philosophical tradition.
- to understand the primary questions, terminology, and theories that present in Lewis’s philosophical milieu.

1. ???

- to learn to carefully read Lewis's texts with a critical eye. - to gain the capacity to communicate difficult philosophical thoughts in clear, concise prose.
- to connect the Lewis's writing with ones own faith.

Scope and Sequence

To accomplish these goals, each 2 week unit will consist of readings from Lewis (including short reading quizzes due online), 2 interactive lectures, 2 student presentations, and 2 focussed discussions, and a unit paper. There are term papers. There is no midterm or final.

Grading

The class work consists of three components: reading, participating, and writing. You will be graded on each component.

| Assignments | Percent of grade |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| Reading & Quizzes | 30% |
| Participation (talk, write, present) | 30% |
| Unit Papers | 40% |

I do not normally round. So an 89.5 is a "B."

| | |
|---|-----------|
| A | 99%-90% |
| B | 89%-80% |
| C | 79% - 70% |
| D | 69% - 60% |
| F | < 59% |

Your best bet for getting an 'A' is to (a) read carefully every week, (b) attend and participate in class through talking and/or writing, (c) study hard for the tests, and (d) write the Papers according to the given instructions.

Reading Tips

The primary work if this class (about 3 hours a week) will be reading and understanding these books. Read actively, read ahead, and try to understand the book. Reading tips are online.

Quizzes

Short reading quizzes will assess whether your eyeballs hit the page and whether you comprehended what you read. These will be completed on Discovery and will typically consist of a few multiple-choice questions

on the reading for the day. These quizzes are due before class on the day when the corresponding reading assignment is due. There is a time limit on these quizzes and they can only be taken once, so it is advisable that you complete them just as soon as you complete your reading. You will not have enough time to search the reading for the answers, but you may keep the reading assignment open to aid in the completion of the quiz. You will quickly find that you really must do the reading and do it quite carefully to do well on these quizzes.

Primarily, your goal is not just to read but to *understand*. Reflect on what you've read. Bring to class a question from the reading –focus on what confuses you.

Attendance

We need you here! Attendance is mandatory. 1 to 3 “Personal absences” are freebies — no points lost. You may use them for sickness, sports, or sleep. After that, absences require an excuse or you will lose points. After 3 personal absences, unexcused absences will cost 2% deduction from the semester grade *per absence*. 8 unexcused absences is a letter grade and 10 will cause you to fail the class.

| | |
|----|-------------------------|
| 1 | = -0 |
| 2 | = -0 |
| 3 | = -0 |
| 4 | = -2% |
| 5 | = -4% |
| 6 | = -6% |
| 7 | = -8% |
| 8 | = -10% (a letter grade) |
| 10 | = -50% |

Roll will be taken each class by marking a 3x5 card. You may check your absences at any time by requesting to see your card. (Being repeatedly or egregiously late, or leaving early without an excuse, will count as an absence.) I recommend you aim for perfect attendance to maximize your learning. You are paying for this education including this class, so why wouldn't you make the most of it?

Participation through dialogue/writing:

The primary competency of this class is philosophical dialogue. Hence, you must attend and participate. Class time is primarily focused on discussion of the material for which I expect you to be fully engaged.

We do dialogue for five main reasons: (1) You must take responsibility for your own learning. (2) We can actually get to know each other. (3) I learn best in discussion. (4) Most people learn (and retain) best in discussion. (5) Philosophy is dialogical.

You are responsible to talk in class. Even if you are confused, tired, or unmotivated, I expect you to make yourself participate and engage. Get out of your comfort zone into your growth zone. Come *prepared*. Read,

take notes, reflect, and come ready to share your viewpoint, defend it, listen to others' viewpoints, and critique theirs.

To earn participation points, you will voluntarily share your thoughts in discussion at least once per week, and/or respond when called upon. You are not required to write posts on the discussion board online. By default, everyone is an "external processor". "*Internal processors*": Some may wish to opt out of speaking in class and emphasize writing. To earn participation points, you will post class reflections online every week. You may elect to speak in class as well, and may be called upon.

Everyone starts at an 80% (B-) for the participation grade. You will move up or down depending on whether you pay attention and speak at least once per week. (I prohibit the use of electronic devices in class, although laptop users may request permission to sit in the front of class with their computers.) Other discussion ground rules are posted online.

Critical Reading Groups

Every student will present two "critical readings." These are days when you (or a group) summarize the assigned reading and presents your analysis. You then present your critical reading to the class. Instructions are posted online.

Unit Papers

Every 2 weeks, you will write a short unit paper reflecting on a major theme from that Unit's readings.

In addition, every student will write two Term Papers (midterm and finals week). These term Papers help you synthesize your own views after doing the readings and listening to lectures and participating in the discussions. Plagiarism – intentional or unintentional – will result in a a zero for the assignment, and jeopardizes your standing in the class. Instructions are posted online.

Extra Credit

Those who opt for extra credit may do so. Instructions are posted online.

Miscellany

1. **Bring your textbook** to every class.
2. **Participate.** Participation is your responsibility; I may or may not call on you. Challenge yourself!
3. **Stay focused.** Do not distract yourself with side conversations, texting, Facebook, or doing anything else in class. Take a short mental break or bathroom break if you need to, but come back. (If you have an important phone call or text, please step outside the class for a moment, then return.)
4. **No smart phones.** No other electronics, laptops, iPhones, or iPads, iPods, smartphones, etc. Unplug, listen and engage.

5. **Laptop/tablet users:** You must request permission, and if approved, sit in the front row.
6. **Be respectful of others:** Pay attention when a neighbor is talking. No teasing. Don't pack up early.
7. **Contact me.** Best method is to chat after class. I read every email but may not respond to every email. If you need a response, and I haven't responded within three (3) business days, email again with the subject "nudge". Please use keith.buhler@uky.edu rather than my Asbury email.
8. **Contact.** For short, quick questions, use Twitter (@_buhler)
9. **Email.** You are expected to have an active e-mail account that you check regularly, and to check Discovery "news". Section related announcements will be made on Discovery "news" and/or via e-mail (e.g. if I am sick, pointers for home work, change in due dates).
10. I can accommodate you: If you have a documented disability that might require academic accommodation, please make sure you are registered with the Academic Support Program. Contact Pam Downing (pamela.downing@asbury.edu / (859) 858-3511 x2283).
11. Make up work is not accepted after the due date, unless you obtain prior (email) permission.
12. **Plagiarism.** Do not plagiarize. Intentional or unintentional plagiarism will result in a zero for the assignment, and jeopardizes your standing in the class. Do not intentionally take anyone else's work nor provide your work to anyone else (under whatever auspices). Academic integrity, the embodiment of the moral and spiritual principles to which we adhere, is the essential basis of the Asbury University academic community. Cite your sources. See also the Asbury academic integrity appendix.
13. **Enjoy philosophy.** We are not merely solving abstract puzzles here, but digging deeply into human thinking in a way that could change your life forever. The more you and your fellows allow yourselves to acquire a "taste" for the material, the more inclined you will be to give it the real effort required to master it.

Course Outline

(Outline subject to revisions due to snow days, instructor sickness, academic conferences, etc.)

Week 1

M Aug-15 Syllabus Day What are realistic expectations for this class? What are ambitious goals?

W Aug-17 Meditations in a Toolshed What are the two ways of looking at things? What is the difference between looking at and looking along?

F Aug-19 Peter Kreeft, Truth Is truth objective?

Week 2

M Aug-22 Mere Christianity I: Morality and God Is the moral law objective? If so, what does it have to do with Christianity?

W Aug-24 MC II: Belief Lewis argues that, of the rival conceptions of God, only one fits the facts of morality and history. How does Jesus fit into this conception of God? What objections do you have to his argument?

F Aug-26 Discussion

Week 3

M Aug-29 MC III: Behavior What is "the great sin" and why is it unique? What is faith – or what are the

two kinds of faith?

W Aug-31 MC IV: Theology Is Christianity hard or easy? Why isn't it about becoming nice people?

F Sep-2 Discussion

Week 4

M Sep-5 No Class, Labor Day

W Sep-7 Four Loves, Introduction, Likings Why four kinds of love? Understand the distinction between "need-love" and "gift-love"? What characterizes "storge" love – empathy, familiarity, fondness? Are there any objections to this view?

F Sep-9 Four Loves, Affection

Week 5

M Sep-12 Four Loves, Friendship Why isn't friendship a need-love? Why do moderns "ignore" friendship love?

W Sep-14 Four Loves, Charity What characterizes Agape? Is all agape gift-love?

F Sep-16 Discussion

Week 6

M Sep-19 Problem of Pain, part I Why is pain, animal pain especially, a particular problem for Christians? What strategies does Lewis use to solve it?

W Sep-21 Problem of Pain, part II

F Sep-23 Discussion

Week 7

M Sep-26 Abolition of Man 1, 2 What is the "Tao"? Why does it matter for education.

W Sep-28 Abolition of Man 3 What is "man's conquest of nature"? What's the problem for the conquest when it comes to human nature? How can science solve the problem?

F Sep-30 Discussion / Paper Workshop

M Oct-3 (Film) 1st half

W Oct-5 (Film) 2nd half

F Oct-7 Midterm

M Oct-10 Miracles, part I What is NOT a miracle? How could one prove a miracle?

W Oct-12 Miracles, part II

F Oct-14 No Class, Fall Break

Week 9 M Oct-17 Miracles, part III What is the Grand Miracle and why does it matter? Any objections?

W Oct-19 Miracles, part IV

F Oct-21 Discussion

M Oct-24 Miracles, part V (chs. 12-14)

W Oct-26 Miracles, part VI (chs. 15-16)

F Oct-28 Discussion

M Oct-31 Experiment in Criticism ch. 1
W Nov-2 Experiment in Criticism, 3, 11, epilogue.
F Nov-4 Discussion
M Nov-7 Great Divorce chs. 1-7
W Nov-9 Great Divorce chs. 8-12 F Nov-11 Discussion
M Nov-14 Perelandra 1-3
W Nov-16 Perelandra 4-6
F Nov-18 Discussion
M Nov-21 Perelandra 7-9
W Nov-23 Perelandra 10-12
F Nov-25 Discussion
M Nov-28 Perelandra 13-15
W Nov-30 Perelandra 16-17
F Dec-2 Weight of Glory
M Dec-5 Solaryis (film) Final papers due
W Dec-7