

I. PHL 251—Philosophy of C. S. Lewis

Instructor: Keith Buhler

Email: keith.buhler@uky.edu

Twitter: keith_buhler

Web: www.keithbuhler.com / Discovery **Office Hours:** Mon 12-1, Kinlaw Library by Lewis Corner.

Required Texts

- *The Four Loves*. ISBN: 978-0156329309.
- *Perelandra*. ISBN: 978-0743234917
- *Experiment in Criticism*. ISBN: 978-1107604728
- C. S. Lewis Signature Classics. ISBN: 978-0060653026.
- The “Signature Classics” contains *Mere Christianity*, *Miracles*, *Great Divorce*, and others. You may purchase the “Signature Classics” set or these books individually.
- Other readings are available on Discovery.

Course Description and Learning Outcomes

From the Course Catalog: 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.
- 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.

Course Outline (online)

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

Grading:

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

Assignments P	Percent of grade
Reading & Quizzes	25%
Participation (talk, write, present)	25%
Unit tests	15%
Unit Papers (pass/fail)	35%

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

A	100–90%
B	89–80%
C	79–70%
D	69–60%
E	59–0%

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

- Read ahead.
- Read carefully. You will get faster, but start slow and careful.
- Try to read *and understand* the book. What is the main thesis? Is it true?
- Read actively: Take notes. Talk with each other before class.
- More tips available 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. Roll will be taken each class by marking individual 3x5 cards. You may check your absences at any time by requesting to see your card. (Being repeatedly or egregiously late will count as an absence.)

1 to 4 absences are freebies – whether “excused” or not they are all free —- no credit lost. After 5, each unexcused absence will cause bigger and bigger deductions from your participation grade. (8 is a full letter grade) You are paying for this education including this class, so why wouldn't you make the most of it?

Participation through dialogue/writing:

This is a dialogue-oriented class. Every person is responsible to participate. You are expected to participate once per week at minimum, either by writing or speaking or both. Everyone starts at an 80% for the discussion grade; you can move up from there or down, depending on whether you speak or write once per week, pay attention, and offer helpful contributions.

Class time is primarily focused on discussion of the material for which I expect you to be fully engaged. For this reason, I prohibit the use of electronic devices in class.

Speaking Emphasis: “External processors” emphasize talking. You will be on my “go to” team to talk in class (instead of posting reflections after class).

Writing Emphasis: “Internal processors” 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.

Come *prepared*. Read, take notes, reflect, and come ready to share your viewpoint, defend it, listen to others’ viewpoints, and critique theirs. More “Discussion Ground Rules” are posted online.

Critical Reading and Group Presentation

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 Tests

The first and third quarter tests will both comprise 15% of your grade and will mainly consist of factually oriented multiple choice questions concerning the reading (hint: it is a good idea to review past reading quizzes), but there will also be a handful of reflective short-answer questions.

Unit Papers:

Every student will write 2 Unit Papers. These Unit Papers help you synthesize your own views after doing the readings and listening to lectures and participating in the discussions. Instructions are posted online. Plagiarism – intentional or unintentional – will result in a zero for the assignment, and jeopardizes your standing in the class.

Extra Credit:

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

Miscellany:

1. **Bring your** textbook every day.
2. **Participate.** Challenge yourself to talk.

3. **No smartphones.** If you need to take a text message or phone call, step out, respond, and come back.
4. **Laptop/tablet users must sit in the front row.**
5. **Be respectful of others:** no teasing, and pay attention when a neighbor is talking. Don't pack up early. Don't come late. Don't talk while your neighbor is talking.
6. **Contact me.** Best method is to chat after class. I read every email but may not respond to every email. 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.
7. **Contact.** For short, quick questions, use Twitter (keith_buhler)
8. **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).
9. Disabilities can be accommodated if you are registered with the Disability Resource Center. See <http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/DisabilityResourceCenter/>
10. Plagiarism has been an issue. Even unintentional plagiarism earns a zero for the assignment and, in intentional or egregious cases, failing the course and receiving a permanent mark on your academic record. You'll submit your papers to SafeAssign on Blackboard to help avoid accidental plagiarism. Don't even think about stealing someone else's thought/work.
11. **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.