

## **English/Religious Studies**

### **C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, and the Inklings ~ Jonathan Thorndike**

*LD (Lower Division 100-200)/ UD (Upper Division 300-400)*

*3 credit hours*

This course will study the British fantasy writers C. S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and their friends known as "the Inklings," a group of mostly Christian writers (one notable exception was Owen Barfield) who gathered in the 1930s and 1940s in Lewis' rooms at Magdalen College or at the Eagle and Child pub in Oxford to read and discuss their work. Tolkien described the name of the Inklings as "a pleasantly ingenious pun suggesting people with vague or half-formed intimations and ideas plus those who dabble in ink." Besides Lewis and Tolkien, the group included at various times Hugo Dyson, Lord David Cecil, Nevill Coghill, Jim Dundas-Grant, Adam Fox, Colin Hardie, R. B. McCallum, Tom Stevens, Charles Wrenn, Humphrey Havard, Gervase Matthews, J. A. W. Bennett, John Wain, Charles Williams, Owen Barfield, and Warren Lewis. According to Warren, "when about half a dozen or so had arrived, tea would be produced, and then when pipes were well alight Jack [Lewis] would say, 'Well, has nobody got anything to read us???' The Inklings are interesting today because they were so prolific, and their works echo some of the great themes of mid-20th century Europe including fears over the rise of totalitarianism, concern with new scientific advancements, the loss of traditional religious values, and perceived threats to the old traditions of church, crown, and the natural world. There is no doubt that the recent success of Hollywood versions of *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and now *The Hobbit* have brought a new generation of young readers to the classic books by Lewis, Tolkien, and their friends in the writers' group known as the Inklings.

Can the course be taken to fulfill major and minor requirements? YES

Can the course be taken to fulfill general elective credits? YES

Are there prerequisites for this course?

One semester Freshman Composition or First Year Seminar

#### Assessment Methods:

Tests/Quizzes 20%: I will give several quizzes as well as final exam.

Journals 30%: Students are required to write a daily journal that will be a combination of reading response and reflection about experiences while traveling.

Short Essays 10%: I will ask students to write short essays on topics related to the reading, a short essay about each major text, and a short essay about one historical site related to C. S. Lewis and the Inklings.

Individual Presentations 10%: Students will be required to research one historical site, write an essay about this place, and present the information when the group is touring that place associated with C. S. Lewis and the Inklings.

Summative Essay 30%: Students will write a summative 5-page reflective essay about “C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, and the Modern World.” This essay is due on the last day of class as a final exam. Students will present essays to the class at an assigned time (about 15 minutes in length). They will be evaluated on the quality of the essay, not on the presentation style. I will ask students to focus on a specific theme among the topics suggested in class and to avoid topics that are impossibly broad. Students will choose a theme that allows them to discuss the influence Lewis and Tolkien on the 20th century. Why have two such theologically conservative people have such a profound influence on modern culture? Students will make references to the biography by Colin Duriez, the books by Lewis and Tolkien, their research on one member of the Inklings, and their own observations and reflections on people and places in England that are culled from their journals. Students might find informal information in London such as items from newspapers or brochures that they may use in their evaluation of the impact of C. S. Lewis, Tolkien, and the Inklings.

For the Upper Division course, I will require that students read another critical study or scholarly work on Lewis, Tolkien, or one member of the Inklings as well as write an additional 2,000-word essay.