

Philosophy of C. S. Lewis

PH 251 at Lewis House

May 2025

Dr. Derek King
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Lewis House
507 Columbia Ave.
MTWHF
9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
May 19 - 23

Lewis House Classes

Lewis House is a Christian study center by the University of Kentucky campus. Our partnership with Asbury University allows us to teach Asbury courses for UK students. A Lewis House class is an Asbury University course, but one offered in our building and with our staff.

The Instructors

Derek King is the scholar-in-residence at Lewis House and Part-Time Instructor in Philosophy at UK. He has a Ph.D. in Analytic and Exegetical Theology from the University of St Andrews. He has published books with Routledge and Oxford University Press, and an article on C. S. Lewis and the problem of divine hiddenness in *The Journal of Inklings Studies* (Edinburgh University).

This course features two guest lecturers.

Michael Peterson is Professor of Philosophy at Asbury Theological Seminary. In addition to several books and articles on philosophy, he authored *C. S. Lewis and the Christian Worldview* (Oxford) and an article in *C. S. Lewis as Philosopher*.

Devin Brown is the Professor of English at Asbury University. He has authored 10 books on C. S. Lewis, including *A Life Observed: A Spiritual Biography of C. S. Lewis* (Brazos) and *C. S. Lewis and the Moral Argument*.

Course Description

C. S. Lewis is perhaps most remembered for his fiction and Christian apologetics. But many overlook his contributions to philosophy. After receiving a First in Philosophy at Oxford University, his first teaching post was as Philosophy Tutor. He was the first President of the Oxford Socratic Club, a philosophy group that saw the participation of esteemed philosophers such as Elizabeth Anscombe, Isis Murdoch, Francis Copleston, Gilbert Ryle, and Michael Polanyi. He wrote many articles or books best classified as philosophy, and he remains of interest today to philosophies of science, culture, and religion.

This course is an introduction to the philosophy of C. S. Lewis: what he thought, why, and how that informs the way we see and experience the world. We'll explore topics like arguments for and against God's existence, the possibility of miracles, ethics, culture, and more.

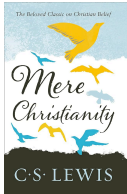
Course Style & Format

This course is a one-week intensive, meaning a lot of the work for a 3-hour credit course is condensed into only one-week. You can do some reading beforehand and one assignment is due after the week, but the taught component is exclusively that week. So the class meets Monday through Friday from 9 AM until 5 PM. But don't fret: that includes regular breaks (and a lunch break).

Reading for Class

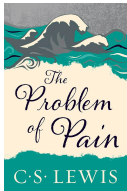
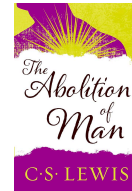
Because of the intensive format, reading for this class can be a challenge. You will receive your books on day one, but if you already own any of the books, feel free to start ahead of time. The class does require some outside of class reading (expect to read a bit each evening after a long day!) but we'll do some reading in class, too.

Reading List



Mere Christianity | Lewis' clear, but imaginative defense of Christianity. He starts with reasons to believe God exists, then moves to reasons for the Christian God, before concluding with what Christians believe and how Christians should act.

The Abolition of Man | Among Lewis' most prophetic works, *Abolition* is an insight into our culture and its subtler demons. This short, but illuminating, work holds a mirror to our cultural assumptions and reveals warts in surprising places.

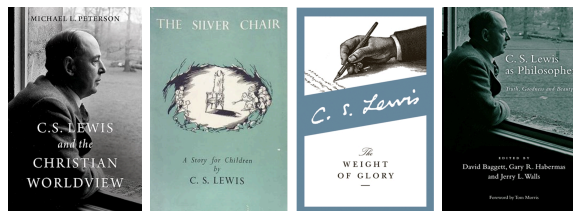


The Problem of Pain | In his characteristically engaging style, Lewis tackles the most difficult problem for theism: the problem of evil, pain, and suffering.

God in the Dock | This collection of essays includes most of Lewis' most iconic and most philosophical essays. He tackles many different and difficult questions in an accessible and thoughtful way.



Selections from other books provided.



Course Activities

Final grade calculated by adding points throughout the semester. Out of 1,000 possible points, 900 points and above = A; 800-899 = B; 700-799 = C; 600-699 = D; and 599 or below = F.

Reading and Participation | In-person attendance in class is mandatory. Because of the intensive format, no unexcused absences are permitted. However, if you must miss class for some reason, discuss with the instructor. The core of the class is the reading and there's a lot of reading for one week! To help us retain it, each day will include short, summary and reflection questions on the reading. Those written participation questions and your participation in class discussion is critical. **300 points.**

Short Essays | Two "short essays" will be administered during class on the days marked on the schedule. They are open-book, open-notes, and an opportunity for you to reflect on what you are learning. They should be handwritten, so you should bring a pen or pencil to class (Bluebooks will be provided to write in). A prompt will be provided in-class and you will have two hours to complete the question(s). There is no word or page limit, but the instructor will grade according to what is appropriate for a two hour timeframe. **300 points (150/Essay).**

Final Paper | The final paper is an in-depth exploration of a philosophical theme in Lewis. You will write on one topic from the list below. The final product should be between 1,600 and 2,000 words. The final paper is due Saturday, June 21, 2025, at 11:59 PM. You should submit a PDF to me via email. Prompt below. **400 points.**

Extra Credit (Optional) | Read *Till We Have Faces*, *The Great Divorce*, or *Perelandra* and reflect on philosophical themes in it. 800-1,000 words. **100 points.**

Class Schedule

Mere Christianity (MC); *God in the Dock* (GD); *Problem of Pain* (PP); *Abolition of Man* (AM); Supplied reading (PDF)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Pre-Class Assignment</i>	<i>In-Class Work</i>
Day 1 - Monday 5/19	Introduction to Lewis; On Thinking Well		<u>View</u> : <i>Shadlowlands</i> MC Preface; <i>On the Reading of Old Books</i> (GD); <i>Learning in War Time</i> (GD); <i>Meditation in a Toolshed</i> (GD)
Day 2 - Tuesday 5/20	God, Good, and Evil	MC Book 1; PP Ch. 1-2	<i>Weight of Glory</i> (PDF); MC Book 2, Ch. 2-3; PP Ch. 5-9; Excerpt from <i>C. S. Lewis as Philosopher</i>
Day 3 - Wednesday 5/21	Miracles, Science, & Naturalism	<i>Miracles</i> (GD); <i>Horrid Red Things</i> (GD)	<i>Religion & Science</i> (GD); <i>The Laws of Nature</i> (GD); Excerpt from <i>The Silver Chair</i> (PDF) <u>Short Essay #1</u>
Day 4 - Thursday 5/22	Christian Philosophy	MC Book 3, Ch. 5-12; <i>Myth Became Fact</i> (GD)	MC Book 4; <i>Is Theism Important?</i> (GD); Excerpt from <i>C. S. Lewis and the Christian Worldview</i> <u>Short Essay #2</u>
Day 5 - Friday 5/23	Philosophy & Culture	AM Ch. 1-2	AM Ch. 3; <i>We have no 'Right to Happiness'</i> (GD); <i>On the Transmission of Christianity</i> (GD); <i>De Descriptione Temporum</i> (PDF)

Final Paper Prompt

For all his enduring works, Lewis is increasingly known as a prophet of culture. The *Abolition of Man*, for example, seems only to be growing in popularity, for its incisive cultural analysis that is only growing in applicability.

In 1,600-2,000, write a cultural analysis of contemporary American life according to C. S. Lewis. Your analysis should include a summary of Lewis' views on culture, apart from whatever relevance they may have to our contemporary situation. But you should also turn to consider their relevance to the contemporary world. What points does Lewis make that are most relevant to our world today? Are there places you would depart from Lewis? And why?

As an academic paper, the format and bibliography should conform to [The Chicago Manual of Style](#). The final paper is due Saturday, June 21, 2025, at 11:59 PM. You should submit a PDF to me via email. **400 points**.