



NORTHWIND INSTITUTE

The Oxford Inklings

NI-RT-Oxford Inklings

Michael J. Christensen, Ph.D.

The Oxford Inklings

Faculty Mentor: Professor Michael J. Christensen, Ph.D.

Guest Lecturers: Drs. Malcolm Guite, Diana Glyer, Crystal Hurd

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Pure “Northernness” engulfed me: a vision of huge, clear spaces hanging above the Atlantic in the endless twilight of Northern summer, remoteness, severity...and almost at the same moment I knew that I had met this before, long, long ago....” --C.S. Lewis in Surprised by Joy

Nostalgia for the North--an eternal longing and romantic notion of an endless twilight of the summer stars--is a certain feeling the Inklings had in common. Symbolically, *northernness* is an orientation in life, a quality of character, an image and metaphor in theology and ministry, the first of the four Cardinal points of the circle of life to which all others are related. For C.S.

Lewis and the Oxford Inklings, the way to God lies to the *North*.

This introductory course in *Northwind Seminary’s Doctoral Program in Romantic Theology* seeks to capture the twilight notion of the North found in Norse mythology and Celtic spirituality, and embodied in the imaginative writings of the Oxford Inklings. In witnessing to primordial truths in the wisdom traditions and premodern Christianity, the legacy of the Inklings lives on in postmodern times, now in service to theology and ministry for the *neXtchurch*-- the “new thing” God is doing (Isa. 43:19), the next Re-formation, and fresh expressions of Ecclesia in the world.

Romantic Theology is a term coined by Charles Williams and carried out collaboratively with his friends--C. S. Lewis, JRR Tolkien, Owen Barfield, and others, in “our little literary club” known as the Inklings. In their shared vision and love of Greek and Norse mythology, Arthurian legends, Celtic sagas, and romantic poetry, they produced an enduring treasure of theological fantasies and spiritual writings reflecting the romantic spirit in theology. Through the portal of what Lewis called the “baptized imagination” as a trustworthy faculty for receiving Divine disclosures to be tested by scripture and reason, Romantic Theology was born. Through their example of friendship and writing projects, the Inklings inspired generations of Christians and people of goodwill to read and write with the “feeling intellect” of the heart, and not just with the discursive reasoning of the mind.

As a literary scholar and orthodox Christian, C. S. Lewis felt that “if the real theologians were doing their job” there would be no need for lay theologians like him. Lewis and his fellow Inklings championed the creative conjunction of *Logos* and *Mythos* (Reason and Story) to produce compelling works of theological fiction. *Mythopoeics*—the language of myth, metaphor, poetry and narrative—was their distinctive genre to point to religious experience and theological truths in aesthetic and concrete ways.

The Inklings met regularly in Oxford pubs and University rooms to read aloud to each other their works in progress in the 1930-50’s. As Lewis describes these twice-weekly meetings of friends: “*Those are the golden sessions...when our slippers are on, our feet spread out towards the blaze and our drinks at our elbow; when the whole world, and something beyond the world, opens itself to our minds as we talk...*” (*The Four Loves*)

This course on the fellowship and collaboration of the Oxford Inklings in producing a body of work which can be called Romantic Theology, requires the mastery of four main topics. After reading required texts, viewing guest lectures, and exploring digital resources, students will produce a (2,500-word) academic paper for each of two topics to discuss with their faculty mentor in four tutorial sessions. Periodic group discussions with faculty also will be scheduled.

Texts:

The Company They Keep: C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien as Writers in Community by Diana Glycer

https://www.amazon.com/Company-They-Keep-Tolkien-Community/dp/0873389913/ref=sr_1_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1453932233&sr=1-2

Essays Presented to Charles Williams, edited by C.S. Lewis

<https://www.amazon.com/Essays-Presented-Charles-Williams-Lewis/dp/0802811175>

The Fellowship: The Literary Lives of the Inklings by Philip Zaleski & Carol Zaleski

https://www.amazon.com/Fellowship-Literary-Inklings-Barfield-Williams/dp/0374536252/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=The+Fellowship%3A+The+Literary+Lives+of+the+Inklings+by+Philip+Zaleski+%26+Carol+Zaleski&qid=1592201829&sr=8-1

Romantic Religion by R.J. Reilly (for critique)

https://www.amazon.com/Romantic-Religion-Barfield-Williams-Tolkien/dp/1584200472/ref=sr_1_2?dchild=1&keywords=romantic+religion&qid=1597692998&sr=8-2

Recommended Texts:

The Inklings by Humphrey Carpenter

The Oxford Inklings: Lewis, Tolkien and their Circle by Colin Duriez

The Inklings of Oxford by Harry Lee Poe

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES:

This is a class offered in an online format. Online experiences include:

1. Assigned readings
2. Viewing digital resources
3. Video Conferencing
4. Online submission of Papers in the *.doc or *.docx file format

Statement on Learning and Physical Disabilities Northwind accepts students with learning and physical disabilities and provides reasonable accommodation to help them be successful.

Attendance Policy

This is a short-term intensive course.

You are required to participate in all class assignments and/or sessions.

Your attendance and punctuality will affect your grade in a positive or negative manner.

Grading Policy

The submission of materials does not guarantee a passing grade.

Papers are graded on the following:

- Use of Texts and Lecture
- Use of Course Materials
- Depth and Breadth of Learning
- Proper citation and footnotes using APA Style

Northwind Institute Grades on Pass / Fail

Academic Misconduct Policy

Northwind Seminary does not condone academic dishonesty in any form. When an act of academic dishonesty has occurred:

1. The instructor has the right to not accept the assignment or test in question and record a "zero" for the assignment or test, and/or require the student to redo the assignment (or test), or require the student to complete a substitute assignment or test.
2. The student may be dropped from the class and assigned a failing grade (F). A written recommendation from the instructor is required.
3. In cases of extreme or repeated incidents (two or more) of academic dishonesty, the student may be suspended from the Seminary.

The Academic Dean will notify the student as to the action taken. If the student believes there has been an erroneous accusation made, the student may appeal the action. The student must file a written appeal within 10 working days of notification. The President reviews all written appeals and his decision is final. The Student, Academic Dean and Instructor are informed via email of the action taken.

COURSE OUTLINE

Oxford-Style Tutorial feedback on Topic Papers and Book Discussions

Topic and Reading Assignments:

Certificate Students: One book: *The Fellowship* or *The Company They Keep*

Writing Assignments

Submit 2,500-word Topic papers that define the subject of your reading, demonstrate a competent understanding of the topic, and offer new insights on the subject.

For Non-degree Students: One Topic Paper on two topics

Faculty Mentor Conversations: Tutorial

Schedule a ZOOM Video Conversations with your assigned faculty mentor to discuss your Topic papers.

TOPICS:

Topic 1 Meet the Fellowship; profiles and texts, vision and values

*“My happiest hours are spent with three or four old friends in old clothes tramping together and putting up in small pubs – or else sitting up till the small hours in someone’s college rooms talking nonsense, poetry, theology, metaphysics over beer, tea, and pipes. There’s no sound I like better than adult male laughter.”--C.S. Lewis in *The Four Loves**

View: Clip from film *Shadowlands* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6S2X7ihtc68>

View: Clip from *National Geographic* feature on the Inklings:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZTXLE8Uobc>

Read *The Company They Keep* by Diana Glyer

View: Guest Lecture by Dr. Diana Glyer

View: Guest Lecture by Dr. Crystal Hurd on “The ‘all-male’ Inklings and Female Leaders”

Write a 2,500-word essay on one of the following subtopics:

1. Creative Collaboration: What principles and practices of Inklings’ collaboration can be applied to contemporary scholarship and literary criticism? To what effect?
2. Social Context: What were some of the socio-political contexts in England and Europe when the Inklings produced their works? To what extent did current events influence their writing? How might the Inklings be understood, assessed, and re-interpreted today in light of current political and religious sensitivities, contemporary feminism, and postmodern consciousness?
3. Critical Acclaim: Summarize their collaborative work in terms of literary criticism. How do they compare to other literary masters and romantic poets in British Literature?

Group Discussion with faculty: Sexism and Social Context of the Inklings

Topic 2 What is Romantic Theology?

“A romantic theologian does not mean one who is romantic about theology, but one who is theological about romance, one who considers the theological implications of those experiences which are called romantic.”—C.S. Lewis in *Essays Presented to Charles Williams*

Listen to: Book interview podcast with Philip Zaleski and Carol Zaleski

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0RMTdRzC9wY>

Read: *Essays Presented to Charles Williams*, edited by C.S. Lewis

Begin Reading: *The Fellowship*

Write a 2,500 word essay on one of the following subtopics:

1. What is meant by the “Romantic spirit in Theology”? Elaborate on the Term, Themes, Principles, and Outlines of Romantic Theology.
2. Identify and illustrate seven elements of Romantic Religion in the writings of one of the Inklings.
3. What are the distinctive roles of reason and imagination in Romantic consciousness, religious experience, and theological reflection?

Book Discussion with faculty: *Essays Presented to Charles Williams*

Topic 3 Theological Contributions

“Theology means ‘the science of God,’ and I think any [one] who wants to think about God at all would like to have the clearest and most accurate ideas about Him which are available.”--C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*

Review: one explicitly theological text of one of the Inklings

Listen to: Voice of C.S. Lewis on the mystery of time in his War-time ‘Broadcast Talks’ on the

BBC <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JHxs3gdtV8A>; and on *Agape* from his American radio talk on “The

Four Loves” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WReLIE08Dnc>

Read: *Romantic Religion* by R.J. Reilly

Write a 2,500 word essay on one of the following subtopics:

1. In what ways were the Inklings, as lay theologians, *premodern*, *modern* or *postmodern* in their theological reasoning?
2. Critique R. J. Reilly’s representation of the “romantic religion” of the Inklings in his book on the subject.
3. If Theology is “the science of God”, is Romantic Theology as exact as any other?

Book Discussion with faculty: *Romantic Religion* by R.J. Reilly

Topic 4 The Future of Romantic Theology

“The little knots of Friends who turn their backs on the ‘World’ are those who really transform it.”--C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*

Listen to: Malcolm Guite’s podcast on “The Inklings: Fantasists or Prophets?” (The Cambridge Lectures, Part One, 2011 with new introduction for Northwind Seminary, 2020)

https://www.podomatic.com/podcasts/malcolmguite/episodes/2011-10-05T14_25_19-07_00

Read: *The Fellowship* by Philip Zaleski & Carol Zaleski

Write a 2,500 word essay on one of the following subtopics:

1. The Inklings: Fantasists or Prophets?
2. Their Literature: New Genre or Passing Fad?
3. Their Legacy in Poetry, Philosophy, Theology, Film & Visual Arts
4. Romantic Theology in Postmodern Times for the *NeXtChurch*? **Book**

Discussion with Carol Zaleski and faculty: *The Fellowship*

New Book Network: <https://newbooksnetwork.com/carol-zaleski-the-fellowship-the-literary-lives-of-the-inklings-fsg-2016/>

Links to Digital Resources:

Voice of C.S. Lewis on the mystery of time in his War-time ‘Broadcast Talks’ on the BBC

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JHxs3gdtV8A>

Voice of C.S. Lewis on Eros and the other kinds of loves in his American radio talk on “The

Four Loves” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WReLIE08Dnc>

Malcolm Guite’s podcast on “The Inklings: Fantasists or Prophets?” (The Cambridge Lectures, Part One (2011) with new introduction for Northwind Seminary, 2020)

https://www.podomatic.com/podcasts/malcolmguite/episodes/2011-10-05T14_25_19-07_00

Diana Glycer on Collaboration of the Inklings (Presbyterian Heritage Center Lecture)

<https://youtu.be/9Ch0EJ8-fvM>

Crystal Hurd’s blog: www.CrystalHurd.com

Clip from *Shadowlands* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6S2X7ihtc68>

Clip from National Geographic feature on the Inklings:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZTXLE8Uobc>

Profile of the Oxford Inklings: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2loUswCfgoQ>

Interviews with Dr. Carol Zaleski on *The Fellowship*

New Book Network: <https://newbooksnetwork.com/carol-zaleski-the-fellowship-the-literary-lives-of-the-inklings-fsg-2016/>

[Late Night Live](#) with Phillip Adams

https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/latenightlive/the-other-oxford-group/6477394?fbclid=IwAR3im_L-gzkHstPdp11TjEWuXZR2c9xf18u_SqQ2cgl2D32q_prK10SyM2I
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0RMTdRzC9wYhttps://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/latenightlive/the-other-oxford-group/6477394?fbclid=IwAR1OKyاملR_e1b_u_Xse89Jiz7ypyaowUJJ0LGOh8dcTuTicnlsuFgR6Yc8

The John Batchelor Show:

<https://audioboom.com/posts/4420047-the-fellowship-the-literary-lives-of-the-inklings-j-r-r-tolkien-c-s-lewis-philip-caro?fbclid=IwAR0V3CN2zhcelRqLxHppXygbRO3XyWXgSvB5MRFLfXt8z0hBCNofcGArgSk>