

WALSH UNIVERSITY
School *for* Professional Studies

THEO 100
Catholic Imagine Human Quest

FIRST NIGHT'S ASSIGNMENT ON PAGE 5

THEO 100
Catholic Imagination and The Human Quest
Walsh University SPS Program

Course Description

This course examines the human quest for meaning through the study of Tolkien's fantasy epic, *The Lord of the Rings* and the Bible. It explores key concerns of human living such as creation, redemption, death, evil, suffering, morality, etc, as reflected in both the Bible and used in Tolkien's key work. Students then will learn, then, how the *Lord of the Rings*, while fiction, is fraught with a Christian, even specifically Catholic, worldview, as Tolkien himself intended, when he said of his trilogy, that it is a "fundamentally religious and Catholic work." The purpose of the course is to introduce students to: what makes *The Lord of the Rings* a classic; the idea of theology as an enterprise in meaning; foundational theological categories; the major ideas of both the Old (Hebrew Bible) and New Testaments and their influence in the Western Christian tradition.

Course Objectives

- Students will gain an appreciation for the dynamics involved in living the virtuous life for the individual within communities. A close study of virtues within the *Lord of the Rings*, Scripture, and the ideas of Kohlberg will aid in this objective.
- Students will gain familiarity with the study of theology, its primary methods, questions, and themes, and the distinctively Catholic notions of creation, sin, redemption, sacramental vision, and tradition.
- Students will consider what our experience is of being human in a complex world, and what it means to live a Christian way of life.
- By means of reflective essays, students will be able to analyze the moral and spiritual journeys in both the *Lord of the Rings* and Scripture, and further integrate these ideas about moral development into their own personal quest for God, meaning, and vocation.
- Students will acquire a basic knowledge of the history and literature of the Bible.

Required Texts

- Lane, Dermot A. *The Experience of God: An Invitation to Do Theology*. New York: Paulist Press, 2005 (Revised Edition)
- Wood, Ralph C. *The Gospel According to Tolkien: Visions of the Kingdom in Middle-earth*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003.
- Bible. Any Translation, though preferably NAB (New American Bible) or NRSV (New Revised Standard Version) - Recommended – The Catholic Study Bible, 2nd edition, 2006.
Free on-line Bible can be used for the reading assignments.

Course Requirements

- Class Participation (100 points) -
Full participation is required to complete the class. Participation includes actively listening to the instructor as well as to other classmates, engaging in class discussions, asking questions when clarification is needed, having the homework and reading assignments completed on time and sharing personal wisdom and insight with the class.
- Reflection Papers (5 papers for a total of 150 points) -
Short reflection papers will be due throughout the class sessions. See the schedule of class assignments and the Personal Reflection Paper Sheet for details. The task of the student will be to relate a certain theme from Lord of the Rings, the Bible, or the textbook reading to his/her personal life. Each reflection paper should be no more than one page long. Please make sure the paper is free from grammatical errors.
- Presenting a chapter from one textbook (125 points) -
This is an informal presentation over the material of one chapter from one of the two textbooks. Students will sign up for a chapter on the first night of class. Presentations should be between five minutes and ten minutes and should cover the basic outline of the chapter and some things the presenter learned that was new and interesting. The presenter should also come up with three discussion questions for the class covering material that was found to be confusing, points disagreed with, or concepts that were thought to be very important by the presenter.
- Lord of the Rings Movie Study Guide (175 points) -
Answer each of the questions from the movie study guide completely. These questions will require a paragraph or two each to be completed. These questions will be discussed in class, so come prepared!
- Midterm and Final Tests (100 points each for a total of 200 points) -
Two short tests will be given on the content of the Rausch and Bible readings to ensure the key concepts are being learned. These tests will include True/False, Fill in the Blank, Short Answer, and Essay questions. They will be no more than one hour in length.
- Final Paper (250 points) -
The final paper will be an in depth research analysis of one particular theme that was discussed in the class. The study will trace how that theme is dealt with in the Lord of the Rings as well as in the Bible. In addition, the student will be responsible for further researching the theme from a theology standpoint, as well as relating the theme to his/her own personal life. More detailed instructions will be given out later.

All assignments listed above must be completed in full in order to pass the class! Late assignments will be reduced by 20% per week they are late (10% in they are turned in before the next class via email).

All written assignments should be typed, double spaced with one inch margins, and should include your name, the class name, and the date of the class they are due in the upper left hand corner.

Grading and Grade Scale

Grades will be given according to a system of points. Each assignment is worth a certain number of points (see Course Requirements above). Points will be given based on how well each assignment was completed in reference to the directions for the assignment. There are a total of 1000 possible points in the class. The grade Scale will be as follows:

A 94-100% (935-1000 points)	C 74-76% (735-764 points)
A- 90-93% (895-934 points)	C- 70-73% (695-734 points)
B+ 87-89% (865-894 points)	D+ 67-69% (665-694 points)
B 84-86% (835-864 points)	D 64-66% (635-664 points)
B- 80-83% (795-834 points)	D- 60-63% (595-634 points)
C+ 77-79% (765-794 points)	F Below 60% (594 points & below)

Attendance Policy

Because there are only eight class sessions, attendance at each session is mandatory. If a missed class cannot be avoided, please let me know as soon as possible and talk to me about the makeup assignment in addition to the assignment(s) that are due for that class session. **If three class sessions are missed, the class should be dropped by the student.** Make-up assignments will consist of writing a character study of one person from Lord of the Rings and comparing and contrasting that person to one of the figures from the Bible, as well as experiences from the student's personal life. This make-up assignment would be 3-4 pages in length.

Academic Integrity

– Do your own work! No cheating or plagiarism is allowed whatsoever on reflection papers, tests and especially research papers. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating may result in a failing test or paper and may result in failing of the course.

“Walsh University believes in the desirability of a small university that promotes academic excellence, a diverse community, and close student-teacher interaction. The University provides its students a higher education that fosters critical thinking, effective communication, spiritual growth, and personal, professional, and cultural development. Walsh University encourages individuals to act in accordance with reason guided by the example and teachings of Jesus Christ.” - “The Philosophy and Mission” Walsh University '06-'07 Catalog

Schedule of Class Assignments

Reading and writing assignments are due at the beginning of the class they are listed under. See Course Requirement (above) for instructions on how to complete the written assignments.

Session 1 – Read Introduction and Chapter 1 from Lane.

Write Reflection Paper on What is Theology?

***SEE PAGE 5 FOR FULL ASSIGNMENT**

Session 2 - Read Chapters 2 & 3 from Lane.

Read Genesis 12, 13, 15, 17, 27-29; Exodus 1-5, 11-14; Deuteronomy 5, 6, 11:22-28.

Write Reflection Paper #2 (See Sheet for Questions to answer).

Begin Watching Lord of the Rings Movies One (Fellowship of the Ring), Two (Two Towers), and Three (Return of the King). Work on the Movie Study Guide.

Session 3 - Continue watching Lord of the Rings Movies and working on the Study Guide.

Read Joshua 2, 3, 5-7, 24; Hebrews 1-4:13; Genesis 1-4, 6-9, 11:1-9.

Session 4 – Read Introduction and Chapter 1 from Wood.

Read Mark 1-9; Romans 4-6, 8, Matthew 5-7.

Write Reflection Paper #3 (See Sheet for Questions to answer).

Midterm test

Session 5 – Read Chapters 2 & 3 from Wood.

Read Genesis 37, 39-45; Jonah 1-4.

Write Reflection Paper #4 (See Sheet for Questions to answer).

Session 6 – Read Chapters 4 & 5 from Wood.

Read Mark 10-16; Exodus 20:1-17, John 13; 1 Samuel 16-18; 2 Samuel 7, 11-12.

Movie Study Guide Questions Due.

Session 7 – Work on Final Paper

Read Hosea 1-3, 11; Job 1, 2, 38, 42:1-6; John 14-17; Galatians 1-6.

Read Lord of the Rings: Return of the King pg. 952-1008 (Book 6, Ch. VI-IX).

Write Reflection Paper #5 (See Sheet for Questions to answer).

Session 8 – *Final Paper Due & Final Test*

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Please have the following selection read from The Experience of God: An Invitation to Do Theology and the written assignment completed by the beginning of the first class session. The written assignment should be typed, double spaced with one inch margins, and should include your name, the class name, and the date of the class they are due in the upper left hand corner.

– Personal Reflection Paper – Keeping your own personal experience in mind, answer the following questions in essay form. Please complete this assignment before the following reading assignment from Lane. This reflection paper should be no more than one page long. Please make sure the paper is free from grammatical errors. This assignment is worth 30 points.

- What is Theology?
- Who is God?
- What is God's role in the world today?

– Read from The Experience of God: An Invitation to Do Theology, by Dermot Lane, the introduction and Chapter 1.

In addition to bringing the textbooks, please bring a Bible to class. You may bring any translation that you have, but the NAB (New American Bible) or NRSV (New Revised Standard Version) would be preferred. If you cannot get a bible and would like to buy one, The Catholic Study Bible would be a good choice. If you do not have one and would rather not purchase one, free texts of the Bible are available on-line for the necessary reading. This will be covered in the first class session.

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Questions for Reflection Papers

Keeping your own personal experience in mind, each reflection paper should answer the questions in essay form. The reflection papers should be no more than one page long. Please make sure the papers are free from grammatical errors. The assignments are worth 30 points each.

Personal Reflection Paper #1 –

- What is Theology?
- Who is God?
- What is God's role in the world today?

Personal Reflection Paper #2 -

- Create a list of important questions that you think all humans must answer in life.
- Pick the five most important questions and briefly state in essay form why you picked these five, and state how you would answer them at this point in your life.

Personal Reflection Paper #3 -

- Why is there evil in the world?
- What leads people to made bad or evil decisions (reflect on Cain and Abel, LOTR characters, or your own personal experience)?
- Relfect on the character of Gollum/Smeagol. Is it possible for people to repent of their bad and evil ways and become good again? Is Conversion possible? Why not or how so?

Personal Reflection Paper #4 -

- Pick a theme from the list that will be provided.
- What is your personal view of the topic?
- How is that theme portrayed in LOTR?
- What does LOTR teach about this topic?
- How does the bible or things discussed in class enlighten this topic?

Personal Reflection Paper #5 -

- Reflect on the ending of the story found in the Third LOTR book.
- How had the Hobbits changed since they left the Shire?
- How did they use what they had experienced/learned in regaining the Shire?
- Why do you think it was important to Tolkien to have the Hobbits return to the Shire to save it? Or, what is lost from the overall story because of the fact that the original ending was cut out of the movie?

DO NOT WORK AHEAD ON YOUR REFLECTION PAPERS. THEY SHOULD BE DONE JUST PRECEDING THE CLASS THEY ARE DUE SO THAT MATERIAL FROM CLASS MAY BE INCORPORATED.