

Honors Research Tutorials 2007-2011

Grace in the Early Church (Drs. Chris Bounds & David Riggs)

This course is part of an ongoing research project attempting to elucidate how early Christians understood the concept of “grace.” By the advent of Christianity, “grace” (*gratia*, χάρις) already had a long social and literary history. By interpreting the works of ancient Christian authors (second-to-fifth centuries) within the context of their socio-cultural settings, we hope to discern how such authors (and the Christian congregations within which they worshipped) understood and employed “grace” and the degree to which their adoption of the Christian faith may (or may not) have prompted them to invest this concept with new meanings — or at least new nuances. In groups, students will assess particular early Christian writings in order to document and evaluate significant passages related to “grace” and to highlight the most prominent and interesting characteristics and themes that emerge from these texts.

Singleness in Britain’s Long-Eighteenth Century, 1688 – 1714 (Dr. Lisa Toland)

In this research tutorial, we will explore the experiences of single men and women in elite English culture between 1688 and 1815 considering through sermons, memoirs, letters, etiquette manuals, and contemporary novels how attitudes towards singleness were learned and lived by young men and women. We will examine the gulf between the contemporary ideal of marriage and the real experiences of “spinsters” and “bachelors” as demonstrated through these primary sources. Were single women isolated within society? What role did single men have within their wider family without children or wives? How did daily educational or social experiences with their peers either support or challenge their singleness?

Narnians, Hobbits, Tesseractites, and Vampires: The Nature, Structure, and Function of Mythopoeic Literature (Dr. Charles Bressler)

In this research tutorial, we will examine the literary structure and the social function of mythopoeic literature through the literary canons of C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Madeline L’Engle, and Anne Rice. Through their texts, these authors construct a personal and collective mythology (their metanarrative) that supports and unifies their stories. By examining both the surface structure (the plot line) and the deep structure (the underlying interpretation) of multiple works of each author, we will establish a working definition of twentieth-century mythopoeic literature, including its formal literary history and structure. In addition, we will explore the following questions: What personal mythologies do the aforementioned authors develop in the deep structure of their texts? What elements of each author’s deep structure are particularly orthodox Christian in nature? Which historical or current literary theories can and should be applied to these authors’ texts? What is the place of such fiction in today’s academy?

The Religious and Social History of the 1960s (Dr. Todd Ream)

The 1960s proved to be a time of great upheaval. Institutions and forms of authority which were previously thought to be absolute in nature were challenged and, in some cases, overhauled. Some critics offer that these changes were indispensable for both the Church and society to come to terms with their true potential. Other critics contend that these changes were unnecessary and have thus irreparably harmed these arenas of our existence. By looking at both primary and secondary sources, we will evaluate these assessments of the 1960s and determine whether a third explanation of the religious and social history of the 1960s is necessary.

Justice unto All Peoples (Dr. Todd Ream)

The objective of this course is to help students think through how models of justice apply across various cultural groups. Readings concerning justice range from the ancient Greeks to our own modern or postmodern age. Complicating these understandings is the realization that we live in an era of globalization. Theories of justice must not only make sense within their particular culture of origin but must also speak across cultural lines. As the Body of Christ, the Christian Church is in a unique position to speak of justice and thus reconciliation and peace to all peoples. This course will focus on how the Church has or has not served as a bearer of justice to the native peoples of North America and Indiana in particular.

Wesley, Women, and Witness (Dr. Lisa Toland)

Through the multi-varied tapestries of personal narratives, letters, journals, sermons, treatises, and other primary texts, this course will examine the roles of both the female and male leaders found within the early Methodist and Holiness tradition of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. By critically examining the thoughts, passions, and beliefs of these leaders, we will unearth the rich social, political, and religious history upon which the Holiness tradition rests. Surprisingly, a number of these voices—both male and female alike—have simply disappeared. Our task will be to resurrect these voices, pondering how they attempted to serve faithfully the triune God as they individually and collectively struggled with their humanity.

The Northern Civil Rights Movement (Dr. Rusty Hawkins)

The American Civil Rights Movement conjures up distinctly southern images of police dogs and fire hoses, Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks, segregated lunch counters and white-only water fountains. But is there more to the story than these iconic pictures from Dixie? Was racism and discrimination really just a southern problem? This seminar will examine a different theater in the civil rights struggle: the American North. Students will research how African Americans above the Mason-Dixon Line struggled for freedom and equality in the middle decades of the twentieth century and in doing so will bring this long neglected history to light.

Problems in Narnia and Middle-Earth: Friendships, Love, and God (Dr. Charles Bressler)

What does it mean to be a friend? What does it mean to love someone? What is love itself? Is gender or can gender become a barrier in friendship? In love? In our relationship with God? Join us as we explore the concepts of friendship and love as we travel to Narnia and Middle-earth. Explore with us Aslan's and Iluvatar's vision of love as we examine friendships between hobbits, between hobbits and other species, between humans and immortal beings, between humans and Narnians, and between humans and God. Through such an examination we will unearth various and oftentimes

competing definitions of friendship and love, including how issues of gender sometimes cloud and sometimes enhance our relationships. In essence, we will be tackling and researching cutting edge scholarship in the canons of C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien, reading such works as *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Problem of Pain*, *The Weight of Glory*, *The Four Loves*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and a variety of scholarly essays authored by Lewis, Tolkien, and others. By the semester's end, each student will produce a scholarly essay on a current "problem" area in either Lewis or Tolkien scholarship.

From Bill Graham to Rob Bell: A History of Modern Evangelicalism in the United States (Dr. Rusty Hawkins)

Evangelicalism has been one of the most important social, cultural, political, and religious movements in American history over the past sixty years. Starting with neo-evangelicalism's rise out of fundamentalism in the 1950s and ending in the early years of the twenty-first century, this research tutorial will examine the birth, growth, and maturity of the evangelical movement in the American context. While primarily historical in its approach, the seminar will also incorporate sociological and theological elements as we examine how evangelicalism developed, what evangelicals believe, and where this movement seems to be heading.

God Talk: The Complexities of Calling God "Father" (Professor Amy Peeler)

Since the time that Jesus taught his disciples to do so, the Body of Christ has addressed God as Father. In recent decades, some pastors, scholars, and lay people have questioned the exclusivity and even the validity of this language. Is human language ever capable of correctly describing the majesty and mystery of God? What is the difference between naming the triune God and metaphorically describing the divine? How should Scripture and Tradition inform our theological language? What did "fatherhood" signify in the first-century Greco-Roman world? What are the theological and pastoral implications of using gendered language for God? How does the Christian canon appropriate and also modify those meanings of paternity? Since the time that Jesus taught his disciples to do so, the Body of Christ has addressed God as Father. In recent decades, some pastors, scholars, and lay people have questioned the exclusivity and even the validity of this language. Reading such texts as *The Promise of the Father*, *God as Father in Luke-Acts*, *Reimagining God: The Case for Scriptural Diversity*, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*, *Speaking the Christian God*, and *The Battle for the Trinity*, we will engage with and contribute to this important conversation in order to gain a better understanding of the God we serve and how we—even in our finitude—can call upon God's name.

Paleography (Dr. Lisa Toland)

Dr. Toland invites you to join her in reading, transcribing, dissecting, analyzing, categorizing and interpreting English wills written between 1550 and 1750. (Paleography is the study of old handwriting.) On research trips to the UK she has collected copies of wills from London and the northern county of Yorkshire. She needs your assistance in thinking about and comparing what these old documents tell us about the men and women that wrote them. In the Paleography Tutorial students will be introduced to the political, legal and social setting of England after the Reformation. They will be taught how to read court clerks' script and how to approach the interpretation of the wills. They will be given their own collections of original manuscript sources from specific English families to read and transcribe. Finally, as a class they and Dr. Toland will compare findings and offer some preliminary interpretations.

The Sacramental Imagination: Glimpses of God in Fiction (Dr. Charles Bressler)

The Inklings (or the Oxford Christians) were a group of academics, publishers, clergy, and other intellectuals who met weekly during the 1930s and 40s in various places throughout Oxford, England, to discuss their writings, their concepts of God, and the Church. As a result of their many conversations and debates, they devised a particular definition for the kind of fiction that they wrote, read, and enjoyed: mythopoeic. Such fiction, they believed, presents its readers with “a real though unfocused gleam of divine truth falling on the human imagination,” thus drawing a picture or image of that which is most often considered inexpressible. In this tutorial we will examine the mythic fiction of C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, G. K. Chesterton, Charles Williams, Flannery O’Connor, and Anne Rice, attesting to how their fiction shapes within them and us a sacramental imagination. Using these authors’ understanding of how mythopoeic fiction develops our imagination, we will tackle questions like these: What is our picture of God? How does God choose to operate in our lives? Must we choose between a Christianity based on philosophic propositions or a life of mystery and faith? What place does the Christian Church play in our lives and our understanding both of God and people? Must we all believe the same doctrines concerning God, heaven, hell, sin, sanctification—to name a few—to call ourselves Christians? Through a close examination of the fiction written by these authors, we will develop research projects that demonstrate our understanding of the sacramental imagination and what part it plays in our personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Religion, Race, and Resistance: The White Church’s Response to the Black Freedom Struggle 1950-1975 (Dr. Rusty Hawkins)

This research tutorial will grapple with the role that white evangelicals played in resisting the civil rights movement between 1950 and 1975. How did these white Christians justify their opposition to civil rights? How did this opposition change over time? And what are the ramifications for this opposition for the Church today? Exploring these questions will help bring this dark chapter in the Church’s past to light.