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## HUM459FYO The Great Works of J.R.R. Tolkien

### Syllabus Highlights

*“It’s like in the great stories, Mr. Frodo. The ones that really mattered. Full of darkness and danger they were. And sometimes you didn’t want to know the end... because how could the end be happy? How could the world go back to the way it was when so much bad had happened? But in the end, it’s only a passing thing...this shadow. Even darkness must pass.”*

Spring 2027  
Dr. Keith A. Mathison

### Course Description

An introduction to select great works of J.R.R. Tolkien.

### Learning Outcomes

This course is intended to bring students into constructive dialogue with one of the great authors of the twentieth century, J.R.R. Tolkien. At the end of this course of study, successful students will be able to:

1. Analyze the development of Tolkien’s literary output within its historical and cultural context of the twentieth century. This will be achieved through lectures and discussion.
2. Explain how good fantasy literature can help us see the true, the good, and the beautiful again with new eyes. This will be achieved through lectures and discussion.
3. Explain the ways in which Tolkien “absorbed” certain Christian elements (e.g. divine providence) into his legends. This will be achieved through lectures and in-class evaluations of Tolkien’s books.
4. Understand and explain the most significant themes found within Tolkien’s legends (e.g. power, war, death, friendship, virtue, etc.). This will be achieved through lectures and in-class evaluations of Tolkien’s books.

### Textbooks

1. Tolkien, J. R. R., *The Hobbit or There and Back Again* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1966). ISBN: 978-0547928227.
2. Tolkien, J. R. R., *The Lord of the Rings* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2004). ISBN: 978-0618640157.
3. Tolkien, J. R. R., *The Silmarillion*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2001). ISBN: 978-0544338012.
4. Tolkien, J. R. R., *Tales from the Perilous Realm* (New York: Harper Collins, 2009). ISBN: 978-0358652960.
5. Tolkien, J. R. R., *Tree and Leaf: Including Mythopoeia* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001). ISBN: 978-0007105045.
6. Tyler, J. E. A., *The Complete Tolkien Companion* (New York: Macmillan, 2012). ISBN: 978-1250023551.

### Course Requirements

1. Attend and participate in class.



2. Complete all weekly reading assignments.
3. Submit weekly reading response worksheets.
4. Complete the Tolkien on Film written project. This project is approximately 1000–1500 words.

\*This abbreviated syllabus is subject to revision. A complete syllabus will be provided on the first day of class.