theGreatBooks.com

WorldviewAcademy

Ancient Medieval Reformation Modern

Explore our Curriculum:




the great books .com

Applying the Christian worldview to the great conversation

No man is an island...

and no Christian educator should feel marooned when approaching the Great Books. This site provides Christians with a free, detailed recommended reading list for high school students, as well as more than 70 discussion guides to help you teach the Humanities in accord with the Christian worldview.

Free Discussion Guide

Latest News:

January 4, 2016

Any Questions About Implementing Our Curriculum?

Feel free to ask them via email. Just send a note to Jeff Baldwin at jbaldwin at worldview dot org!

- Course Curriculum
- Course Exams
- Essays
- Our Mission
- About Us
- Schedule
- Worldview Reading List
- A/V Resources
- Crucial History (Dates)
- Additional Reading

WorldviewAcademy

Other Homeschool Resources

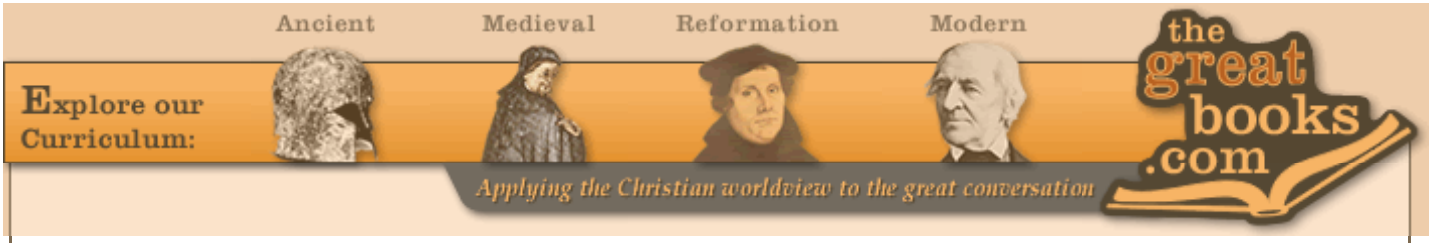
Greenleaf Press

Cornerstone curriculum

Site by ES.

theGreatBooks.com

WorldviewAcademy



Curriculum Introduction

TheGreatBooks.com is designed to help Christian educators use the classical model to help each high school student own his or her faith as a total worldview.

If educators equip students in the grammar and logic stages, in high school these students will be ready to dive in to the great conversation. But where to begin? Most recommended reading lists say that your student should read Aristotle—but when? And what part of Aristotle's massive body of work? Are certain translations preferable?

These questions led Worldview Academy to create TheGreatBooks.com. The core of this website is our four-year recommended reading list, beginning with ancient civilization in 9th grade and culminating with modern civilization in 12th grade. Each epoch's list is designed for a good reader to complete the work in 36 weeks.

It goes without saying that these are merely recommendations. The point is not to coerce all Christian educators to adopt one specific reading program, but rather to empower Christian educators by setting up a standard that they may adapt to their own students' needs. Begin with this list but don't end with it. Use it as a launching point for considering exactly what is a must-read for your student, and what can wait.

This list should make the educator's life easier in other ways, as well. You may find out more about specific great books by reading our reviews. You may order the recommended editions directly from this site. And now you may order specific Christian discussion guides for each work. Getting ready to teach Shakespeare? Click on Othello in the Reformation reading list and order both the book and study guide at a discount.

This is not a rigid curriculum that demands total commitment from you, the educator. Browse and think. Use our opinions and choices to spark discussion with your students, and to challenge yourself to think more deeply about what really matters. Apply your Christian faith to the great conversation! It's time again for Christians to take the lead in education.

Begin exploring our curriculum:

- Ancient
- Medieval
- Reformation & Enlightenment
- Modernity

Course Curriculum
Course Exams
Essays
Our Mission
About Us
Schedule
Worldview Reading List
A/V Resources
Crucial History (Dates)
Additional Reading

WorldviewAcademy

Other Homeschool Resources

Greenleaf Press

Cornerstone curriculum

Site by ES.

Ancient Course - 9th Grade

This recommended reading list is based on two assumptions: first, that the class meets twice a week, with more time to read and prepare available for the first discussion than the second. Secondly, this course assumes two 18-week semesters. Educators may tailor these recommendations to fit their own schedules.

Because our mission is to apply the Christian worldview to the great conversation, we begin each year by assigning books designed to encourage students to better understand and apply the Christian worldview. These first few weeks establish an important foundation for students, reminding them that they are responsible for taking every thought captive for Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Required Resources

1. Aeneid, The*
2. Antigone
3. Basic Works of Aristotle, The*
4. Bhagavad Gita*
5. Compact Guide to World Religions, The
6. Creation and Change
7. Darwin on Trial
8. Early Christian Writings
9. Epic of Gilgamesh, The
10. Everlasting Man, The
11. Foxe's Book of Martyrs
12. Greek Way, The
13. How to be Your Own Selfish Pig
14. Iliad*
15. Journey of the Magi
16. Julius Caesar*
17. Mythology*
18. Odyssey*
19. Oedipus Rex*
20. On the Incarnation*
21. Perelandra
22. Republic, The*
23. Roman Way, The
24. Roots of American Order
25. Simple Tools for Brain Surgery
26. Sophie's World*
27. Tao Teh Ching*
28. Turning Points
29. What the Buddha Taught*
30. Works and Days
31. Worldview Academy Lecture Series - Worldviews

* = Study Guide available

Reading List

Week 1

- Worldview Academy Lecture Series - Worldviews.
  -watch "Introduction to Worldviews" lecture
- How to be Your Own Selfish Pig by Susan Schaeffer-McCauley
  -read chapters 1-4

Week 2

Course Curriculum
Course Exams
Essays
Our Mission
About Us
Schedule
Worldview Reading List
A/V Resources
Crucial History (Dates)
Additional Reading

Links to other courses:

- Medieval
- Reformation & Enlightenment
- Modernity

- **How to be Your Own Selfish Pig** by Susan Schaeffer-McCauley
  -read chapters 5-12
- **The Compact Guide to World Religions** by Dean Halverson, ed.
  -read "Overview"

Week 3

- **The Compact Guide to World Religions** Dean Halverson, ed.
  -read "How Can We Know the Bible is the Word of God?"
- **"Simple Tools for Brain Surgery"** by Bill Jack
  -watch entire video

Week 4

- **Darwin on Trial** by Phillip Johnson.
  -read chapter 8
- **Perelandra** by C.S. Lewis
  -read chapters 1-4

Week 5

- **Perelandra** by C.S. Lewis.
  -read chapters 5-12
- **Perelandra** by C.S. Lewis.
  -read chapters 13-17

Week 6

- **Creation and Change** by Douglas Kelly.
  -read chapters 5-6
- **The Epic of Gilgamesh**.
  -read chapter 5

Week 7

- **The Everlasting Man** by G.K. Chesterton
  -read chapters 1-2
- **The Compact Guide to World Religions** by Dean Halverson.
  -read chapter titled "Hinduism"

Week 8

- **Bhagavad Gita**, translated by Franklin Edgerton.
  -read pages 1-60
- **Bhagavad Gita**, translated by Franklin Edgerton.
  -read pages 61-91

Week 9

- **Mythology** by Edith Hamilton.
  -read chapters 1, 3, 5, 7, 11
- **Mythology** by Edith Hamilton.
  -read chapters 13-14 and Part 7

Week 10

- **Works and Days** by Hesiod.
- **Sophie's World** by Jostein Gaarder.
  -read pages 1-27 and pages 41-55

Week 11

- **The Greek Way** by Edith Hamilton.
  -read chapters 1-4 and 15-16

- **Iliad** by Homer.
  -read Books 1-2

Week 12

- **Iliad** by Homer.
  -read Books 3-7
- **Iliad** by Homer.
  -read Books 8-10

Week 13

- **Iliad** by Homer.
  -read Books 11-15
- **Iliad** by Homer.
  -read Books 16-18

Week 14

- **Iliad** by Homer.
  -read Books 19-24
- **Odyssey** by Homer.
  -read Books 1-3

Week 15

- **Odyssey** by Homer.
  -readBooks 4-8
- **Odyssey** by Homer.
  -readBooks 9-10

Week 16

- **Odyssey** by Homer.
  -readBooks 11-15
- **Odyssey** by Homer.
  -readBooks 16-18

Week 17

- **Odyssey** by Homer.
  -readBooks 19-24
- **The Compact Guide to World Religions** by Dean Halverson.
  -read chapter titled " Taoism"

Week 18

- **Tao Teh Ching** trans. by John C.H. Wu
- **FINAL EXAM**

Week 19

- **What the Buddha Taught** by Walpola Rahula.
  -read all chapters except chapter 8
- **The Compact Guide to World Religions** by Dean Halverson.
  -read chapter titled " Buddhism"

Week 20

- **Oedipus Rex** by Sophocles.
- **Antigone** by Sophocles.

Week 21

- **Sophie's World** by Jostein Gaarder.
  -read Pages 56-93 and 104-139 in

- **The Republic** by Plato.
  -read Book 1

Week 22

- **The Republic** by Plato.
  -read Books 2-3
- **The Republic** by Plato.
  -read Book 4

Week 23

- **The Republic** by Plato.
  -read Books 5-6
- **The Republic** by Plato.
  -read Book 7

Week 24

- **The Republic** by Plato.
  -read Books 8-10
- **The Basic Works of Aristotle**, ed. Richard McKeon.
  -read Book 1 in his Metaphysics

Week 25

- **The Basic Works of Aristotle**, ed. Richard McKeon.
  -read Book 12 in his Metaphysics and Books 2-3 in Nicomachean Ethics
- **The Basic Works of Aristotle**, ed. Richard McKeon.
  -read Books 4 and 8-10 in Nicomachean Ethics

Week 26

- **The Basic Works of Aristotle**, ed. Richard McKeon.
  -read Books 2 and 7 in Politics
- **The Roman Way** by Edith Hamilton.
  -read chapters 5-6

Week 27

- **Julius Caesar** by William Shakespeare.
  -read Acts 1-3
- **Julius Caesar** by William Shakespeare.
  -read Acts 4-5 in Julius Caesar

Week 28

- **The Roman Way** by Edith Hamilton.
  -read chapters 8-11
- **The Aeneid** by Virgil.
  -read Book 1

Week 29

- **The Aeneid** by Virgil.
  -readBooks 2-4
- **The Aeneid** by Virgil.
  -readBook 5

Week 30

- **The Aeneid** by Virgil.
  -readBooks 6-8

- The Aeneid by Virgil.
  -readBook 9

Week 31

- The Aeneid by Virgil.
  -readBooks 10-12
- "Journey of the Magi" by T.S. Eliot

Week 32

- The Gospel of John
- Early Christian Writings.
  -read Ignatius's Epistle to the Romans

Week 33

- Foxe's Book of Martyrs by John Foxe.
  -read chapters 1-2
- Turning Points by Mark Noll.
  -read chapter 1

Week 34

- On the Incarnation by Athanasius.
  -read Introduction, Life, and chapters 1-5
- On the Incarnation by Athanasius.
  -read chapters 6-9

Week 35

- Turning Points by Mark Noll.
  -read chapter 2
- Roots of American Order by Russell Kirk.
  -read chapter 1

Week 36

- Roots of American Order by Russell Kirk.
  -read chapters 2-3
- **FINAL EXAM**

Medieval Course

This recommended reading list is based on two assumptions: first, that the class meets twice a week, with more time to read and prepare available for the first discussion than the second. Secondly, this course assumes two 18-week semesters. Educators may tailor these recommendations to fit their own schedules.

Because our mission is to apply the Christian worldview to the great conversation, we begin each year by assigning books designed to encourage students to better understand and apply the Christian worldview. These first few weeks establish an important foundation for students, reminding them that they are responsible for taking every thought captive for Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Required Resources

1. Aquinas: The Dumb Ox*
2. Art of Courtly Love, The
3. Beowulf*
4. Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics, The
5. Canterbury Tales
6. City of God*
7. Compact Guide to World Religions, The
8. Deadliest Monster, The
9. Discarded Image, The
10. Essential Erasmus
11. Everyman's Talmud*
12. Foxe's Book of Martyrs
13. How the Irish Saved Civilization*
14. Imitation of Christ, The*
15. Inferno, The*
16. Koran
17. Le Morte Darthur
18. Magna Charta, The
19. Medieval Philosophy
20. Murder in the Cathedral*
21. Pastoral Care*
22. Piers Plowman*
23. Prince, The*
24. Roots of American Order
25. Selected Writings*
26. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*
27. Song of Roland, The*
28. St. Benedict's Rule for Monasteries*
29. Turning Points
30. Utopia*

* = Study Guide available

Reading List

Week 1

- The Deadliest Monster by J.F. Baldwin.
  -read Prologue and chapter 1
- The Deadliest Monster by J.F. Baldwin.
  -read chapter 2

Week 2

Course Curriculum
Course Exams
Essays
Our Mission
About Us
Schedule
Worldview Reading List
A/V Resources
Crucial History (Dates)
Additional Reading

Links to other courses:

- Ancient
- Reformation & Enlightenment
- Modernity

- **The Deadliest Monster** by J.F. Baldwin.
  -read chapters 3-4
- **The Deadliest Monster** by J.F. Baldwin.
  -read chapter 6

Week 3

- **Roots of American Order** by Russell Kirk.
  -read chapter 5
- **City of God** by Augustine.
  -read book I:1-14, Book V:8-16

Week 4

- **City of God** by Augustine.
  -read book VIII:3-14, boo.k XII:1-4, book XIV:1-6
- **City of God** by Augustine.
  -read book XIX:14-22, book XXI:13f

Week 5

- **How the Irish Saved Civilization** by Thomas Cahill.
  -read introduction and chapters 1-2
- **How the Irish Saved Civilization** by Thomas Cahill.
  -read chapters 4 and 6

Week 6

- **Everyman's Talmud**, ed. Abraham Cohen.
  -read introduction and chapter 1
- **Everyman's Talmud**, ed. Abraham Cohen.
  -read chapter 3

Week 7

- **Everyman's Talmud**, ed. Abraham Cohen.
  -read chapter 4: 1, 4-5 and ch. 7 and ch. 11:1
- **St. Benedict's Rule for Monasteries** by St. Benedict.
  -read chapters 1-19

Week 8

- **St. Benedict's Rule for Monasteries** by St. Benedict.
  -read chapters 20-73
- **Turning Points** by Mark Noll.
  -read chapter 4

Week 9

- **The Koran**, trans. A.J. Arberry.
  -read "The Cow," "Mary," "Prostration"
- **The Koran**, trans. A.J. Arberry.
  -read "Sad," "The Kingdom," and "The Darkening"

Week 10

- **Compact Guide to World Religions**, ed. Dean Halverson.
  -read "Islam"
- **"Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics"** by J.R.R. Tolkien.

Week 11

- **Beowulf**, trans. E. Talbot Donaldson.
  -read pp. 1-32

- **Beowulf**, trans. E. Talbot Donaldson.
  -read pp. 33-55

Week 12

- **Pastoral Care** by Gregory the Great.
  -read part I and part III: prologue - chapter 14
- **Pastoral Care** by Gregory the Great .
  -read part III: chapter 15-22

Week 13

- **Pastoral Care** by Gregory the Great.
  -read part III: chapter 23-27 and part IV
- **The Discarded Image** by C.S. Lewis.
  -read chapter 1

Week 14

- **Turning Points** by Mark Noll.
  -read chapter 5
- **The Song of Roland**, trans. Dorothy Sayers.
  -read her introduction

Week 15

- **The Song of Roland**, trans. Dorothy Sayers.
  -read parts 1-137
- **The Song of Roland**, trans. Dorothy Sayers.
  -read parts 138-188

Week 16

- **The Song of Roland**, trans. Dorothy Sayers.
  -read parts 189-291
- **Turning Points** by Mark Noll.
  -read chapter 6

Week 17

- **Medieval Philosophy**, ed. John Wippel.
  -read St. Anselm excerpt pages 153-162
- **Medieval Philosophy**, ed. John Wippel.
  -read St. Anselm excerpt pages 163-174

Week 18

- **Roots of American Order** by Russell Kirk.
  -read chapter 6
- **FINAL EXAM**

Week 19

- **Murder in the Cathedral** by T.S. Eliot.
  -read part 1
- **Murder in the Cathedral** by T.S. Eliot.
  -read part 2

Week 20

- **The Magna Charta** by James Daugherty.
  -read pp. 1-80

- **The Magna Charta** by James Daugherty.
  -read pp. 81-133

Week 21

- **Aquinas: The Dumb Ox** by G.K. Chesterton.
  -read chapters 1-3
- **Aquinas: The Dumb Ox** by G.K. Chesterton.
  -read chapters 4 and 7

Week 22

- **Selected Writings** by Thomas Aquinas.
  -read introduction and chapter 6
- **Selected Writings** by Thomas Aquinas.
  -read Article 5 of chapter 10

Week 23

- **The Art of Courtly Love** by Andreas Capellanus
- **The Inferno** by Dante, trans. Robert Pinsky.
  -read cantos 1-10

Week 24

- **The Inferno** by Dante, trans. Robert Pinsky.
  -read cantos 11-27
- **The Inferno** by Dante, trans. Robert Pinsky.
  -read cantos 28-34

Week 25

- **Sir Gawain and the Green Knight**, trans. J.R.R. Tolkien.
  -read parts 1-64
- **Sir Gawain and the Green Knight**, trans. J.R.R. Tolkien.
  -read parts 65-101

Week 26

- **Foxe's Book of Martyrs** by John Foxe.
  -read chapters 3-4
- **Piers Plowman** by William Langland, trans. E. Talbot Donaldson.
  -read introduction, prologue and passus 1-2

Week 27

- **Piers Plowman** by William Langland, trans. E. Talbot Donaldson.
  -read passus 3-10
- **Piers Plowman** by William Langland, trans. E. Talbot Donaldson.
  -read passus 11-13

Week 28

- **Piers Plowman** by William Langland, trans. E. Talbot Donaldson.
  -read passus 14-20
- **Canterbury Tales** by Geoffrey Chaucer, trans. David Wrigh.
  -read intro and prologue

Week 29

- **Canterbury Tales** by Geoffrey Chaucer, trans. David Wright.
  -read "Knight" and "Nun's Priest" tales
- **Canterbury Tales** by Geoffrey Chaucer, trans. David Wright .
  -read "Oxford Scholar's" and "Pardoner's" tales, "Parson's Prologue" and "Retraction"

Week 30

- **The Imitation of Christ** by Thomas a Kempis, ed. Harold Gardiner.
  -read intro and books 1-2
- **The Imitation of Christ** by Thomas a Kempis, ed. Harold Gardiner.
  -read book 3:1-13 and book 4:1-5

Week 31

- **Le Morte Darthur** by Thomas Malory.
  -read, book 1:1-6, 25 and 27; book 3:1-2; book 4:1; book 6:1,3,10-13,16-18
- **Le Morte Darthur** by Thomas Malory.
  -read book 9:1-9; book 11:1-9; book 12:4-10; book 13:4-8, 20

Week 32

- **Le Morte Darthur** by Thomas Malory.
  -read book 18:1-7 and all of books 20-21
- **The Prince** by Machiavelli, trans. C.E. Detmold .
  -read introduction and chapters 1-6

Week 33

- **The Prince** by Machiavelli, trans. C.E. Detmold .
  -read chapters 7-26
- **Utopia** by Thomas More.
  -read introduction, More to Giles, book 1 to p. 23

Week 34

- **Utopia** by Thomas More.
  -read pages 24-84
- **Utopia** by Thomas More.
  -read pages 85-111

Week 35

- **Essential Erasmus** by by John P. Dolan.
  - read "Praise of Folly" pages
- **Essential Erasmus** by by John P. Dolan.
  -read "Praise of Folly" pages

Week 36

- **Essential Erasmus** by by John P. Dolan.
  -read "Inquiry Concerning Faith"
- **FINAL EXAM**

Reformation & Enlightenment - 11th Grade

This recommended reading list is based on two assumptions: first, that the class meets twice a week, with more time to read and prepare available for the first discussion than the second. Secondly, this course assumes two 18-week semesters. Educators may tailor these recommendations to fit their own schedules.

Because our mission is to apply the Christian worldview to the great conversation, we begin each year by assigning books designed to encourage students to better understand and apply the Christian worldview. These first few weeks establish an important foundation for students, reminding them that they are responsible for taking every thought captive for Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Required Resources

1. A Modest Proposal and Other Satirical Works
2. Against Slavery: An Abolitionist Reader
3. Autobiography and Other Writings, The *
4. Canons of the Synod of Dordt
5. Causes of the American Discontents
6. Common Sense *
7. Compact Guide to World Religions, The
8. Complete Works of John Donne *
9. Concerning Christian Liberty *
10. Doctor Faustus *
11. Don Quijote *
12. Early American Poetry *
13. Essay on Criticism *
14. Federalist Papers *
15. How Now Shall We Live?
16. Institutes of the Christian Religion, The *
17. Lend Me Your Ears
18. Letters Concerning the English Nation
19. Leviathan *
20. Life and Diary of David Brainerd, The *
21. Meditations on First Philosophy *
22. Mercy of Pocahontas, The
23. New Atlantis *
24. Of Plymouth Plantation *
25. Othello *
26. Paradise Lost *
27. Pensees *
28. Pepys Diary
29. Political Writings of John Locke *
30. Preface to Paradise Lost
31. Protestant Reformation: Major Documents, The *
32. Reformation, The
33. Roots of American Order
34. Social Contract, The *
35. To Honour God: the Spirituality of Oliver Cromwell
36. Turning Points
37. Worldview Academy Lecture Series - Apologetics

* = Study Guide available

Reading List

Week 1

Course Curriculum
Course Exams
Essays
Our Mission
About Us
Schedule
Worldview Reading List
A/V Resources
Crucial History (Dates)
Additional Reading

Links to other courses:

- Ancient
- Medieval
- Modernity

- **How Now Shall We Live?** by Chuck Colson and Nancy Pearcey
  -read chapters 22-24 and 26-32

Week 2

- **The Compact Guide to World Religions** ed. by Dean Halverson.
  -read chapter titled "secularism"
- **Worldview Academy Lecture Series - Apologetics**.
  -watch and discuss "Blind Faith" lecture

Week 3

- **The Reformation** by Owen Chadwick.
  -read chapter two "Luther"
- **Lend Me Your Ears** ed. William Safire
  -read Luther's speech at Diet of Worms

Week 4

- **"Concerning Christian Liberty"** by Martin Luther
- **Turning Points** by Mark Noll.
  -read chapter 7

Week 5

- **The Reformation** by Owen Chadwick.
  -read chapter 3 titled "Calvin"
- **The Protestant Reformation: Major Documents**, ed. by Lewis Spitz.
  -read Zwingli's "First Zurich Disputation"

Week 6

- **The Institutes of the Christian Religion** by John Calvin.
  -read pages 57-102
- **The Institutes of the Christian Religion** by John Calvin.
  -read pages 173-177, 213-227, 260-264

Week 7

- **The Reformation** by Owen Chadwick.
  -read chapter 4 titled"The Reformation in England to 1559"
- **Turning Points** by Mark Noll.
  -read chapter 8

Week 8

- **Roots of American Order** by Russell Kirk.
  -read chapter 7
- **The Reformation** by Owen Chadwick.
  -read chapter 5 titled "The Growth of Reformed Protestantism"

Week 9

- **Turning Points** by Mark Noll.
  -read Chapter 9
- **Doctor Faustus** by Christopher Marlowe.
  -read scenes 1-8

Week 10

- **Presentations**

Week 11

- **Doctor Faustus** by Christopher Marlowe.
  -read scenes 9 and following.
- **Othello** by William Shakespeare.
  -read Act 1

Week 12

- **Othello** by William Shakespeare.
  -read Acts 2-3
- **Othello** by William Shakespeare.
  -read Acts 4ff

Week 13

- **Thanksgiving Break**

Week 14

- **Don Quijote** by Miguel de Cervantes.
  -read Prologue through Chapter 17,
- **Don Quijote** by Miguel de Cervantes.
  -read Chapter 18 through 23

Week 15

- **Don Quijote** by Miguel de Cervantes.
  -read Chapter 24 through 33
- **Don Quijote** by Miguel de Cervantes.
  -read Chapter 34 through end of Book 1

Week 16

- **"The Mercy of Pocahontas"** by John Smith
- **"Of Plymouth Plantation"** by William Bradford

Week 17

- **New Atlantis** by Francis Bacon
- **Canons of the Synod of Dordt**

Week 18

- **FINAL EXAM**

Week 19

- Orientation
- **Complete Works of John Donne**.
  -read"Song," "The Indifferent," "Community," "The Cross," Holy Sonnets 1-6, 9-11, 14 & 19

Week 20

- **Complete Works of John Donne**.
  -read "That Women Ought to Paint," "Christmas Sermon 1621," and "Meditation XVII"
- **Meditations on First Philosophy** by Rene Descartes.
  -read Meditation 1

Week 21

- **Meditations on First Philosophy** by Rene Descartes.
  -read: Meditation 2
- **Early American Poetry** by Jane Donahue Eberwein.
  -read Poems by Ann Bradstreet "The Prologue," "Before the Birth of One of Her Children," "Contemplations"

Week 22

- **Early American Poetry** by Jane Donahue Eberwein.
  -read Poems by Edward Taylor "Prologue," Meditations 1 and 32
- **Leviathan** by Thomas Hobbes.
  -read MacPherson's introduction, pages 30-45

Week 23

- **Leviathan** by Thomas Hobbes.
  -read chapters 10-13

- **Pensees** by Blaise Pascal.
  -read Book 1 (Sections 1-17)

Week 24

- **Pensees** by Blaise Pascal.
  -read Book 1 (Sections 26-27), Book 2 (Sections 1-11)
- **Pensees** by Blaise Pascal.
  -read Book 2 (Sections 20-31)

Week 25

- **Roots of American Order** by Russell Kirk.
  -read chapters 8
- **To Honour God: the Spirituality of Oliver Cromwell**.
  -read chapter 21-29

Week 26

- **Political Writings of John Locke**.
  -read Second Treatise of Government, Chapters 1-2, 4-5, 7
- **Political Writings of John Locke**.
  -read Second Treatise of Government, Chapters 8-11

Week 27

- **Preface to Paradise Lost** by C. S. Lewis.
  -read Chapters 1-7, 13
- **Paradise Lost** by John Milton.
  -read Books 1-2

Week 28

- **Paradise Lost** by John Milton.
  -read Books 3-6
- **Paradise Lost** by John Milton.
  -read Books 7-8

Week 29

- **Paradise Lost** by John Milton.
  -read Books 9-12
- **Pepys Diary** by Samuel Pepys.
  -read The Great Fire

Week 30

- **Essay on Criticism** by Alexander Pope.
- **A Modest Proposal and Other Writings by Jonathan Swift**.
  -read "An Argument Against Abolishing Christianity in England"

Week 31

- **Letters Concerning the English Nation**.
  -read "On the Pensees"
- **Lend Me Your Ears**, ed. by William Safire
  -readJohn Wesley's "April 29, 1739 Sermon"
  Also **The Life and Diary of David Brainerd**.
  -read Biography of Jonathan Edwards

Week 32

- **The Life and Diary of David Brainerd**.
  -read pages 119-134 of Diary, and Journal Part 1
- **Against Slavery: An Abolitionist Reader** by Mason Lowance
  -read Essays by John Woolman:"Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes" and "A Plea for the Poor"

Week 33

- **The Social Contract** by Jean-Jacques Rousseau.
  -read Books 1-2

- **The Social Contract** by Jean-Jacques Rousseau.
  -read Book 3

Week 34

- **"Causes of the American Discontents"** by Benjamin Franklin
- **Lend Me Your Ears**, ed. by William Safire.
  -read"Liberty of Death" Speech by Patrick Henry
  Also **Lend Me Your Ears**, ed. by William Safire.
  -read John Witherspoon's sermon: "The Dominion of Providence Over the Passions of Men"

Week 35

- **Common Sense** by Thomas Paine.
  -read pages 1-100
- **Federalist Papers**.
  -read 10, 51

Week 36

- **The Autobiography and Other Writings** by Benjamin Franklin.
  -read pages 85-108
- **FINAL EXAM**

Modernity Course

This recommended reading list is based on two assumptions: first, that the class meets twice a week, with more time to read and prepare available for the first discussion than the second. Secondly, this course assumes two 18-week semesters. Educators may tailor these recommendations to fit their own schedules.

Because our mission is to apply the Christian worldview to the great conversation, we begin each year by assigning books designed to encourage students to better understand and apply the Christian worldview. These first few weeks establish an important foundation for students, reminding them that they are responsible for taking every thought captive for Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Required Resources

1. A History of the American People
2. A Kierkegaard Anthology*
3. Amusing Ourselves to Death
4. Basic Writings of Nietzsche*
5. Billy Budd*
6. Book of Mormon, The
7. Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee
8. Candles Behind the Wall
9. Civil Disobedience and Other Essays*
10. Classic Mystery Stories*
11. Compact Guide to World Religions, The
12. Cost of Discipleship, The*
13. Death of Ivan Ilych, The*
14. Democracy in America*
15. Emerson's Prose and Poetry*
16. Essential Works of Lenin*
17. Existentialism and Human Emotions*
18. Gambler, The*
19. God Who is There, The
20. God's Politician: William Wilberforce's Struggle*
21. Grand Illusions
22. Gulag Archipelago: 1918-1956, The
23. Hard Times*
24. Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation
25. Letter from Birmingham Jail
26. Life of Johnson*
27. Man Who Was Thursday, The*
28. Man's Search for Meaning*
29. Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*
30. Natural Theology
31. Origin of Species
32. Philosophy: Basic Readings
33. Plague, The
34. Poor Man's Earl, The
35. Reasoning from the Scriptures with the Mormons
36. Rime of the Ancient Mariner and Other Poems*
37. Robespierre: Selected Speeches*
38. Screwtape Letters, The
39. Shantung Compound: The Story of Men and Women Under Pressure
40. Shelley's Poetry and Prose*
41. Transcript of the Scopes Monkey Trial
42. Turning Points
43. Understanding the Times
44. Up from Slavery*

* = Study Guide available

Reading List

Course Curriculum
Course Exams
Essays
Our Mission
About Us
Schedule
Worldview Reading List
A/V Resources
Crucial History (Dates)
Additional Reading

Links to other courses:

- Ancient
- Medieval
- Reformation & Enlightenment

Week 1

- **The God Who is There** by Francis Schaeffer.
- **Compact Guide to World Religions** by Dean Halverson.
  -read " Marxism" chapter

Week 2

- **Understanding the Times** by David A. Noebel.
  -read the "Conclusion"
- **Compact Guide to World Religions** by Dean Halverson.
  -read "New Age" chapter

Week 3

- **Life of Johnson** by James Boswell.
  -read pp. 864-953
- **Life of Johnson** by James Boswell.
  -read pp. 1374-1402

Week 4

- **Robespierre: Selected Speeches**
  "Against Capital Punishment" (May 30, 1791)
  "Against Granting the King a Trial" (Dec. 3, 1792)
  "If God did not Exist" (Nov. 21, 1793)
  "Defence of Terrorism" (Feb. 5, 1794)
  "At the Festival of the Supreme Being" (June 8, 1794)
  "Last Speech" (July 26, 1794)
- **Turning Points** by Mark Noll.
  -read Chapter 11

Week 5

- **Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation** by Jeremy Bentham.
  -read chapters 1-4, 10 (sections 2-4), 13
- **Philosophy: Basic Readings** by Nigel Warburton.
  -read Immanuel Kant, excerpted in chapter 11

Week 6

- **Natural Theology** by William Paley.
  -read chapters 1-2
- **Rime of the Ancient Mariner and Other Poems** by Samuel Taylor Coleridge.
  -read "Rime of the Ancient Mariner"

Week 7

- **God's Politician** by Garth Lean.
  -read the Introduction and chapters 1 & 5
- **God's Politician** by Garth Lean.
  -read chapters 7-9 and chapter 18

Week 8

- **Shelley's Poetry and Prose** by Percy Shelley.
  -read Author's Introduction and "Prometheus Unbound" Act I
- **Shelley's Poetry and Prose** by Percy Shelley.
  -read "Prometheus Unbound" Act III

Week 9

- **Democracy in America** by Alexis de Tocqueville.
  -read the Author's Introduction, Volume One: part one: 2-4, part two: 6-7
- **Democracy in America** by Alexis de Tocqueville.
  -read Volume Two: part one: 1,2,5,6 and 8

Week 10

- **Democracy in America**.
  -read Volume Two: part two: 1,2,4; part three: 3, 8-12
- **Classic Mystery Stories** by Edgar Allen Poe.
  -read the short story: "The Murders in the Rue Morgue"

Week 11

- **Book of Mormon** by Joseph Smith.
  -read Introduction, 3 Nephi: 11, 15, 27, 28
- **Reasoning from the Scriptures with the Mormons** by Ron Rhodes.
  -read chapter one-p. 43, pp. 87-90, ch. 6 and ch. 14

Week 12

- **Emerson's Prose and Poetry** by Ralph Waldo Emerson.
  -read "The Over Soul"
- **Emerson's Prose and Poetry** by Ralph Waldo Emerson.
  -read "Circles" and "Brahman"

Week 13

- **Civil Disobedience and Other Essays** by Henry David Thoreau.
  -read " Civil Disobedience"
- **Civil Disobedience and Other Essays** by Henry David Thoreau.
  -read "Life Without Principle"

Week 14

- **The Death of Ivan Ilych** by Leo Tolstoy.
- **The Poor Man's Earl** by John Polluck.

Week 15

- **Hard Times** by Charles Dickens.
  -read Book One: chapters 1-9
- **Hard Times** by Charles Dickens.
  -read the rest of Book One through Book Two: chapter 5

Week 16

- **Hard Times** by Charles Dickens.
  -read rest of Book Two
- **Hard Times** by Charles Dickens.
  -read Book Three

Week 17

- **Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass** by Frederick Douglass.
  -read chapters 1-10
- **Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass** by Frederick Douglass.
  -read chapter 11 through the Appendix

Week 18

- **A History of the American People** by Paul Johnson.
  -read Part Four
- **FINAL EXAM**

Week 19

- **Origin of Species** by Charles Darwin.
  -read Introduction and chapter 14
- **The Gambler** by Fyodor Dostoyevsky.
  -read chapters 1-8

Week 20

- **The Gambler** by Fyodor Dostoyevsky.
  -read the rest of *The Gambler*
- **A Kierkegaard Anthology** ed. Robert Bretall.
  -read the editor's Introduction and *Training in Christianity*

Week 21

- **A Kierkegaard Anthology** ed. Robert Bretall.
  -read "The Unchangeableness of God"
- **Billy Budd** by Herman Melville.
  -read chapters 1-11

Week 22

- **Billy Budd** by Herman Melville.
  -read chapters 11 to the end of book
- **Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee** by Dee Brown.
  -read chapters 1-2

Week 23

- **Basic Writings of Nietzsche**.
  -read *Beyond Good and Evil* the Preface, Part 1 except # 20-22, and all of Part 3
- **Basic Writings of Nietzsche**.
  - read *Beyond Good and Evil* Part 7 #219-221, 225-231, and Part 9 #257-260, 265

Week 24

- **Up from Slavery** by Booker T. Washington.
  -read chapters 1-6
- **Up from Slavery** by Booker T. Washington.
  -read chapters 7-10

Week 25

- **Grand Illusions** by George Grant.
  -read chapters 4 and 6
- **The Man Who Was Thursday** by G.K. Chesterton.
  -read chapters 1-4

Week 26

- **The Man Who Was Thursday** by G.K. Chesterton.
  -read chapters 5-11
- **The Man Who Was Thursday** by G.K. Chesterton.
  -read the rest of book

Week 27

- **Essential Works of Lenin**, ed. Henry Christman.
  -read *The State and Revolution* chapters 1 and 5 in
- **Transcript of the Scopes Monkey Trial**.

Week 28

- **The Plague** by Albert Camus.
- **Existentialism and Human Emotions** by Jean Paul Sartre.
  -read essay "Existentialism"

Week 29

- **The Cost of Discipleship** by Dietrich Bonhoeffer.
  -read Part I
- **Man's Search for Meaning** by Viktor Frankl.
  -read pp. 21-64

Week 30

- **Man's Search for Meaning** by Viktor Frankl.
  -read rest of Part I
- **Shantung Compound: The Story of Men and Women Under Pressure** by Langdon Gilkey .
  -read chapters 1-3

Week 31

- **Shantung Compound: The Story of Men and Women Under Pressure** by Langdon Gilkey .
  -read chapters 4-8
- **Shantung Compound: The Story of Men and Women Under Pressure** by Langdon Gilkey .
  -read rest of book

Week 32

- **The Screwtape Letters** by C.S. Lewis.
  -read chapters 1-21
- **The Screwtape Letters** by C.S. Lewis.
  -read the rest of book

Week 33

- **The Gulag Archipelago: 1918-1956** by Alexander Solzhenitsyn.
  -read vol. 1, chapters 1-2
- **The Gulag Archipelago: 1918-1956** by Alexander Solzhenitsyn.
  -read chapters 3-4

Week 34

- "**Letter from the Birmingham Jail**" by Martin Luther King, Jr.
- **Amusing Ourselves to Death** by Neil Postman.
  -read chapters 1-3

Week 35

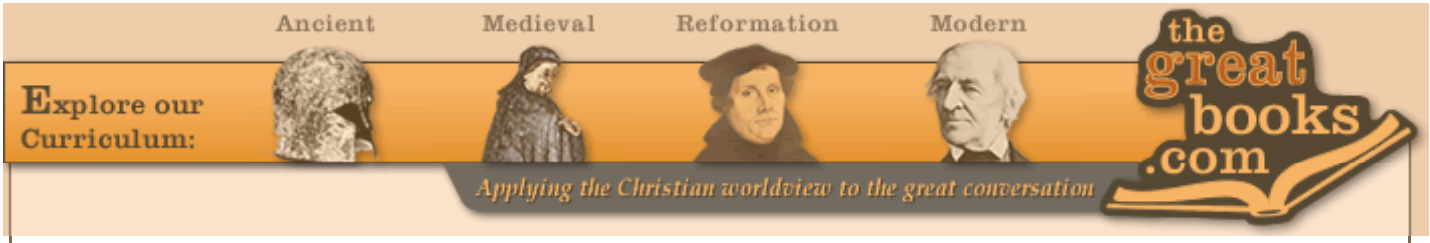
- **Amusing Ourselves to Death** by Neil Postman.
  -read chapters 4- 7
- **Amusing Ourselves to Death** by Neil Postman.
  -read the rest of book

Week 36

- **Candles Behind the Wall** by Barbara von der Heydt
  -read Introduction, chapters 8 and 9
- **FINAL EXAM**

theGreatBooks.com

Worldview Academy



Course Exams

This page provides the midterm and final exam for each school year. Each exam is worth 60 points. Educators have our permission to reproduce these exams, and to tailor them for their specific course.

Ancient Course - 9th Grade Exams

- Midterm
- Final

Medieval Course - 10th Grade Exams

- Midterm
- Final

Reformation Course - 11th Grade Exams

- Midterm
- Final

Modern Course - 12th Grade Exams

- Midterm
- Final

- Course Curriculum
- Course Exams
- Essays
- Our Mission
- About Us
- Schedule
- Worldview Reading List
- A/V Resources
- Crucial History (Dates)
- Additional Reading

Worldview Academy

Other Homeschool Resources

Greenleaf Press

Cornerstone curriculum

Site by ES.

Ancient Civilization Midterm Exam

1. What are the two questions you must answer to form the foundation for your worldview?

(4 points)

2. List the four basic categories of worldviews.

(4)

3.. Define worldview:

(2)

4. Name an atheistic worldview.

(2)

5. To whom does Hesiod address his *Works and Days*, and why?

(3)

6. List two things about the flood account in *The Epic of Gilgamesh* that differ from the flood account in Genesis.

(2)

7. What is the single-most unique belief in the Buddhist worldview?

(4)

8. What caused the Trojan War? Be specific.

(3)

9. Why might your answers to questions about the age of the earth ultimately hinge on your epistemology?

(4)

10. What is the theme of the first two chapters of Chesterton's *The Everlasting Man*?

(4)

11. How does the god Brahman differ from the God of the Bible?

(6)

12. In what way is the ethics of the *Tao te Ching* biblical? In what way is the ethics of the *Tao* unbiblical?

(6)

13. What aspect of Odysseus's behavior is lauded by the ancient Greeks but condemned by scripture? Cite examples.

(6)

14. On a separate sheet of paper, answer the following question: What is the theme of the *Iliad*? Support your answer. Is this theme biblical? Why or why not?

(10)

Ancient Civilization Final Exam

1. List the four basic categories of worldviews.

(4 points)

2. In *Oedipus Rex*, Queen Jocasta concludes that "Chance rules our lives." Does Sophocles want you to agree with her conclusion? Why or why not?

(4)

3. The author of *Sophie's World* claims that the only thing a philosopher needs is a sense of wonder, but actually a philosopher also needs faith. List three things that a philosopher must accept on faith.

(3)

4. Both Plato and Aristotle exalted reason, but they focused on different aspects of reality. Contrast Plato's focus with Aristotle's.

(4)

5. What is the Golden Mean?

(3)

6. What government invented ostracism, and what does it mean?

(3)

7. According to Russell Kirk, the Roman concept that had the most significant impact on American government is the concept of "natural law." Who championed this concept, and what does it mean?

(3)

8. In Virgil's conception of the underworld, whom do you encounter immediately after crossing the river Styx and drugging Cerberus?

(2)

9. List three rhetorical techniques used successfully by Mark Antony in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*.

(3)

10. How does Foxe use the epitaphs in the catacombs to demonstrate the difference that Christ's resurrection made to the ancient world?

(3)

11. How does Ignatius believe he can become an "intelligible utterance of God"? What is he asking the Roman Christians to do?

(4)

12. When did Jerusalem fall? Where did the Zealots retreat to?

(2)

13. What is meant by the phrase *Athanasius contra mundum*? Describe the heresy to which Athanasius is responding.

(4)

13. On a separate sheet of paper, tell me how Plato uses his Cave story to illustrate his philosophy. (Hint: Don't tell me the story again—just tell me *how* the elements in the story explain idealism.)

(8)

14. On a separate sheet of paper, answer the following question: What is the theme of the *Aeneid*? Support your answer. Is this theme biblical? Why or why not?

(10)

Medieval Civilization Midterm Exam

1. If man is basically good, whose fault is it when man misbehaves?

(2 points)

2. What is the worldview of author Mark Noll?

(2)

3. Translate the word *Islam*.

(2)

4. What is the name of Benedict's most famous monastery, and when was it founded?

(2)

5. What was the Edict of Milan?

(2)

6. Who wrote the Koran, and when did he die?

(2)

7. What is the Vulgate, and who is responsible for it?

(2)

8. What is the Incarnation? List one heresy that contradicts the Incarnation, and explain the heresy.

(2)

9. List one recommendation Benedict makes in his *Rule* with which you disagree. Use scripture to defend your answer. Be specific!

(5)

10. What is the theme of Le Morte D'Arthur? Defend your choice.

(8)

11. List the Five Pillars of Islam:

(5)

12. Explain the White Martyrdom. Be sure to discuss the martyrdoms that preceded it.

(8)

13. Who are modern orthodox Jews more like, Pharisees or Sadducees? Why did this one sect triumph over the other?

(8)

13. On a separate sheet of paper, explain why Cicero argued that God doesn't exist. Then describe Augustine's response to Cicero.

(10)

Medieval Civilization Final Exam

1. Who is murdered in *Murder in the Cathedral*, and what is his profession?

(2 points)

2. Why did Gregory the Great write *Pastoral Care*?

(3)

3. What does C.S. Lewis say is the biggest difference between the way we view books and the way people tended to view books in the Middle Ages?

(3)

4. List two of Roger Bacon's "four chief obstacles to grasping truth."

(2)

5. Who compiled the Magna Carta, and what was his profession?

(2)

6. Provide one specific example from *The Imitation of Christ* that indicates that Thomas a Kempis blended Gnosticism with his faith.

(2)

7. What is the central theme of *The Prince*?

(2)

8. Briefly describe Anselm's ontological argument for the existence of God.

(5)

9. What is the theme of the *Song of Roland*? Defend your choice.

(8)

10. Who guides Dante through hell, purgatory and heaven? Why does he choose these people to be his guides?

(5)

11. How does Beowulf differ from the pagan ideal of the hero? Compare and contrast. Then explain why Beowulf conforms more closely to the biblical ideal.

(8)

12. List and discuss two ways that *Piers Plowman* prepared the way for the Reformation. Then list and discuss two elements of the poem that contradict Protestant doctrine.

(8)

13. (Answer on a separate sheet of paper) Do you believe that Thomas More intended his description of Utopia to be a satire, a desirable goal, or an unattainable ideal? Cite examples and defend your answer.

(10)

The Reformation Midterm Exam

1. What does Deism say about the nature of man and the nature of God?

(2 points)

2. How is Francis Bacon similar to the apostle Thomas? What does Jesus think of this mindset?

(3)

3. Identify three forerunners of the Reformation.

(3)

5. About 90% of the King James Version of the Bible relies on the specific translation of what Reformer?

(2)

6. What was the result of Ulrich Zwingli's First Disputation?

(2)

7. Who ruled England when it broke with the Roman Catholic Church, and in what year did this break occur?

(2)

8. How does Miguel Cervantes distance himself from his book *Don Quijote*?

(2)

9. List five of the most significant theological concepts championed by Reformers.

(5)

10. What is the worldview of *Doctor Faustus*? Be sure to defend your choice.

(8)

11. What is meant by the idea that Iago engages in "motive-hunting" in *Othello*? Be sure to list four motives suggested by Iago.

(5)

12. List four chivalric ideals mocked by Miguel Cervantes. Explain how each ideal is unbiblical, referencing scripture wherever possible.

(8)

13. Identify the theme of Martin Luther's *On Christian Liberty*. Explain what he meant by this theme (hint: make sure you reference justification and sanctification).

(8)

13. (Answer on a separate sheet of paper) Explain John Calvin's concept of "total depravity." How does this view differ from the view of Thomas Aquinas? Why might Aquinas's view undermine the authority of scripture?

(10)

The Reformation Final Exam

1. What is your best reason for asserting that Ben Franklin wasn't a Christian?

(2 points)

2. What is the Jefferson Bible? How does this reflect the ideas of the Enlightenment?

(3)

3. Identify three key pioneers of the Enlightenment.

(3)

5. What "thought experiment" does Descartes use to get rid of all the things he thinks he knows for certain but doesn't really? What's the one thing he finds that he thinks he can know for certain?

(4)

6. Name one of the first two men to argue for religious freedom as a fundamental right (Hint: Don't say John Foxe).

(2)

7. Compare Locke's view with Hobbes's view of man in a state of nature.

(4)

9. List five "causes of American discontent" enumerated by Franklin.

(5)

10. What is unique about David Brainerd's method of evangelizing Native Americans? Why might this approach be more biblical than, say, Billy Graham's method?

(6)

11. List some of the indications in *Paradise Lost* that Adam and Eve had "begun to fall" before they ate the fruit.

(5)

12. Who or what should be sovereign in the political structure, according to Rousseau in *The Social Contract*? How does he define this sovereign? What is the problem with this sort of sovereign, from a Christian perspective?

(8)

13. What was Thomas Paine's worldview? How does he contradict his worldview in *Common Sense*? How does Paine recommend Americans should remind themselves that America's political system and laws are based on scripture?

(8)

13. (Answer on a separate sheet of paper) Explain Pascal's Wager. Why does this part of *Pensees* NOT reflect Pascal's epistemology? Why is his discussion of the "plank experiment" a much better reflection of his epistemology? (10)

Modernity Midterm Exam

1. Name a worldview that was invented in the 19th century.

(2 points)

2. Name three Enlightenment thinkers.

(3)

3. Briefly outline William Paley's teleological argument.

(3)

5. Why would a Christian object to certain ideas of the modern Romantic movement? Be as specific as possible.

(4)

6. Define utilitarianism.

(2)

7. Defend William Wilberforce's decision to first work to abolish the slave trade, instead of trying to free all the slaves immediately.

(4)

9. Explain Immanuel Kant's concept of the "categorical imperative," and explain why deists would be most likely to embrace this system.

(5)

10. Why does Coleridge fail to provide a reason for the ancient mariner killing the albatross? Why does Coleridge initially have the crew congratulate the mariner for killing the bird? How is the mariner initially rescued from his inability to even pray?

(6)

11. Describe the most significant way the Christian view of civil disobedience differs from the view espoused by Henry David Thoreau. Why is Thoreau's version ultimately impractical?

(5)

12. Why does Edgar Allan Poe spend so much time in his *Murders in the Rue Morgue* discussing the difference between playing chess and playing checkers? Which sort of person does he prefer? Why might the Christian agree with him in his choice?

(8)

13. Identify the theme of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*. Cite examples from the work to defend your choice of theme. Is it biblical? Why or why not?

(8)

13. (Answer on a separate sheet of paper) What does Alexis de Tocqueville think is the "fundamental fact" about America? What about his background caused him to be suspicious of this fact? Why, then, did he spend so much time studying America? And what part of the Christian worldview did he clearly misunderstand? (10)

Modernity Final Exam

1. Name the founder of Planned Parenthood.

(2 points)

2. List the three forerunners of Existentialism.

(3)

3. Define the concept "will to power." Who popularized this idea?

(3)

4. What was the October Revolution?

(2)

5. Who does Billy Budd represent, and how does Melville's story about him call into question God's mercy and justice?

(5)

6. What does Kierkegaard mean by the "ultimate concern"? In what sense does this make truth subjective? How can Christianity, which is grounded on an objective historical event, be subjective?

(8)

7. Articulate the theme of *The Death of Ivan Ilych*. Is it biblical or unbiblical? Defend your answer.

(8)

8. Who better represents the biblical response to slavery and racism, Booker T. Washington or Frederick Douglass? Be sure to cite examples from their lives and writings to support your argument.

(6)

9. Define "cheap grace" and "costly grace." How does Bonhoeffer use Peter to illustrate the difference?

(8)

10. What sort of government will necessarily exist in a socialist country, according to Lenin? How will this type of government be established?

(2)

11. What's the central question Chesterton tries to answer in *The Man Who Was Thursday*? How does Chesterton rely on a specific book in the Bible to find most of his answer? Be sure to name the book and list at least two scenes from the biblical book that Chesterton re-creates.

(8)

12. In Dickens's novel *Hard Times*, he provides the reader with many clues about his theme (including the titles of the three books, the dedication, and the places where the story begins and ends). Spell out how the three aforementioned clues clearly indicate his theme (and feel free to reference other clues as well).

(5)

Essays

Aesthetic Relativism at Harvard

by Jeff Baldwin

Ready for some less-than-shocking news? Harvard University does not provide a particularly rigorous education.

What you've suspected for a long time has been confirmed, and not by someone preaching sour grapes because they couldn't get into an ivy league school. *The Atlantic Monthly* recently featured an article entitled "The Truth About Harvard" written by alumnus Ross Douthat. Douthat cheerfully describes "the overall ease and lack of seriousness in Harvard's undergraduate academic culture." (more…)

Iron Sharpening Iron: Why the Socratic Method Matters So Much

by Jeff Baldwin

Man is inherently sinful. Why does the Socratic method matter so much? See the above. Man is inherently sinful.

The specific sin I have in mind here is sloth, a sin with which I am well acquainted. Even after trusting Christ at age thirteen, I have been guilty of a great deal of laziness, especially in the classroom. To understand why I'm crazy about the Socratic method, you have to time-travel with me, back to those halcyon days in the public schools . . . (more…)

Why Christians Should Avoid Great Books Like the Plague

by Jeff Baldwin

Recently, some evangelicals have embraced a dangerous fad: great books. Those who have the Greatest Book, the Bible, waste their time and brain cells on merely great books, expecting to engage in a "great conversation" with Christians and non-Christians alike. (more…)

Course Curriculum
Course Exams
Essays
Our Mission
About Us
Schedule
Worldview Reading List
A/V Resources
Crucial History (Dates)
Additional Reading

Essays

Aesthetic Relativism at Harvard

by Jeff Baldwin

Ready for some less-than-shocking news? Harvard University does not provide a particularly rigorous education.

What you've suspected for a long time has been confirmed, and not by someone preaching sour grapes because they couldn't get into an ivy league school. *The Atlantic Monthly* recently featured an article entitled **"The Truth About Harvard"** written by alumnus Ross Douthat. Douthat cheerfully describes "the overall ease and lack of seriousness in Harvard's undergraduate academic culture."

He begins by relating an older story about grade inflation (90% of the class of 2001 had a grade-point average of B- or higher). One of Harvard's more conservative professors —I have no idea what Harvard considers "conservative"—caused quite a stir in 2001 when he announced that each student who enrolled in his course would receive two grades: one measuring the actual quality of his work, and then an "ironic" grade that was turned in to the administration. Only the student would know whether or not he deserved the grade that showed up on his report card!

After making his point, this professor backed down on his policy—but the horse was out of the barn. Though it presumably takes academic excellence to get accepted by Harvard, academic excellence is not necessarily expected once you're in.

How has such an august institution fallen so far? The answer, Douthat hints, has to do with relativism.

To use the phrase "great books" is to suggest that there is a standard by which all books may be measured. Christians do not feel particularly nervous when they hear this —they are accustomed to measuring moral actions against the unchanging standard of the character of God. Christians believe in absolutes, recognizing that moral relativism will always be untenable because God reveals part of His moral law to all men through their consciences (Romans 2:14-15). Everyone knows that murder is wrong, and will be wrong 500 years from now. No amount of relativist rhetoric can change that.

But campuses that have embraced moral relativism have necessarily embraced aesthetic relativism as well. If God is not the Source and Standard of truth or goodness, then neither is He the Source and Standard of beauty. When judging the beauty or the skillfulness of a particular work, we are left only with changeable humans holding up different yardsticks. "Beauty," as the cliché goes, "is in the eye of the beholder."

The Christian should respond by pointing out that "beholder" ought to be capitalized. There is only one Beholder Who matters: God. Throw out God, and you can no longer

Course Curriculum
Course Exams
Essays
Our Mission
About Us
Schedule
Worldview Reading List
A/V Resources
Crucial History (Dates)
Additional Reading

know whether or not a roadkill possum is more beautiful than Mount Harvard (the highest mountain in Colorado, as if you didn't know).

This is precisely Harvard University's problem today. "As in a great library ravaged by a hurricane," writes Douthat, "the essential elements of a liberal arts education lie scattered everywhere at Harvard, waiting to be picked up. But little guidance is given on how to proceed with that task." To suggest what books are worthy of your contemplation implies certain knowledge about the standard for excellence in literature—something the Harvard professor abandoned a long time ago.

Thus, Douthat says, Harvard rejected the idea of a "Great Books" program and instead in 1978 created the Core Curriculum, which was designed to help undergraduates receive a liberal arts education. Unfortunately, the Core is largely viewed as a failure; it was described in the student newspaper as a "stifling and stagnant attempt" at education.

The reason for this failure, and the failure of Harvard's undergraduate programs in general, is the simple fact that Harvard forgot that an excellent education is a discriminating education. A history class could, in theory, spend a semester examining the history of the Pet Rock—but if there is a fixed standard (if you can discriminate), then you know that there are more important events in history. Likewise, a literature professor might choose to teach an entire course about Archie and Jughead, but the discriminating professor should admit that some books are better written and more profound.

Absent a belief in a fixed standard grounded in the character of God, Harvard provides Core classes that would be better described as "fringe." To wit: "Tel Aviv: Urban Culture in Another Zion," or "Women Writers in Imperial China: How to Escape from the Feminine Voice," or "The Cuban Revolution: 1956-71: A Self Debate."

Some of those titles may sound interesting to you. But none of them deal with the Great Conversation—the most eloquent, most profound dialogue pitting great mind against great mind. The Great Conversation is the soul of a liberal arts education.

Those last two sentences would make the Harvard professor bristle. How do you *know* what is most profound? How can you measure eloquence or excellence?

In a relativist world, those questions are unanswerable. But if Christianity is true, then the Christian knows—like a brother—the Fount of all wisdom and all knowledge, Jesus Christ (Colossians 2:2-3). Christians may always pursue excellence in academics. The world is quickly talking itself out of the possibility of excellence.

Essays

Iron Sharpening Iron: Why the Socratic Method Matters So Much

by Jeff Baldwin

Man is inherently sinful. Why does the Socratic method matter so much? See the above. Man is inherently sinful.

The specific sin I have in mind here is sloth, a sin with which I am well acquainted. Even after trusting Christ at age thirteen, I have been guilty of a great deal of laziness, especially in the classroom. To understand why I'm crazy about the Socratic method, you have to time-travel with me, back to those halcyon days in the public schools . . .

In high school, I was sure that education was a game. You jumped through all the hoops, you earned the right grades, and eventually they would give you a piece of paper. That piece of paper impressed your potential employer, he hired you, and you entered the "real world." Because I figured I would have to survive in the real world one day, I played the game.

If you could write reasonably well, the game was simple. Teachers blathered about this or that, but eventually they would break down and tell you the things you needed to memorize for the test. After wasting a great deal of time eating pizza and horsing around with your friends, you would settle down around midnight to "cram," shoving just enough facts into your brain that could be vomited back out the next day on the test. Once purged of these facts, you would never need them again—unless the teacher was so wicked that they believed in a comprehensive final, which called for more cramming and vomiting later on.

Still, all that "work" never seriously interfered with my free time. Some teachers also assigned essays, it was true, but those were actually easier. Instead of having to memorize, I just had to find a few useful facts in a textbook or a magazine and weave an argument around those facts. I didn't have to believe what I wrote, and the logic could be very weak. The essay just needed to flow and to attribute the facts to the right sources. Such an essay, in my experience, was an automatic "A."

I graduated at the top of my class and selected a Christian college with a fairly strong academic reputation. And there I found that the game had hardly changed at all. Yes, the essays were longer and some of the facts I had to memorize seemed more complex, but it was still a matter of jumping through a few hoops. Except college offered one significant bonus: my parents weren't around to wake me in the morning! I could sleep through much of the blathering and still not miss a test—the part of the education that really counted.

Which brings me to my college calculus class. I had no business taking calculus—I was an English major with very little interest in English, let alone math. I should have taken

Course Curriculum
Course Exams
Essays
Our Mission
About Us
Schedule
Worldview Reading List
A/V Resources
Crucial History (Dates)
Additional Reading

the “math for poets” class and coasted even more. Maybe I thought calculus would look good on that piece of paper I would hand to my future employer.

In any case, I followed a straightforward strategy throughout the semester. Each calculus class that did not include a test allowed me to work on my serve at the beach volleyball court. Any homework assigned that day could be puzzled out late some night and then turned in the next class period by Jordan, my responsible roommate. On the day of a calculus test, I would get a panicky look in my eyes and track down Jordan and say something desperate like, “You’ve got to teach me chapter nine in the next twenty minutes or I’m going to fail!” Now comes the really inexplicable part: Jordan would take pity on me and teach me—so well, in fact, that I understood what I needed to know and could remember it just long enough to spit it out on the test. Following this system, as difficult as this is to believe, I earned an “A” in college calculus! And I can say with all honesty today that I don’t even know what calculus is.

I suppose the happy ending to this story would read something like this: Jordan went on to study education, and today he has been recognized six separate times as “teacher of the year.” But Jordan sells home security systems, and the sorry truth is that I have a transcript that clearly states that I have mastered college calculus. Which is a lie.

I did not receive an education in high school, and I did not receive an education in college—for the simple reason that no one “receives” an education once they hit their teenage years. At that stage, you either earn an education or you coast, jumping through hoops and waiting for the game to end.

In my sinfulness—and this is not cute and it is not funny, it is sin—I squandered the mind with which I’d been entrusted. Instead of taking God seriously and seeking to love Him with my mind (Mark 12:30) so that I could experience the great joy of being “transformed by the renewing of [my] mind” (Romans 12:2), I viewed education as a secular pursuit and was as lazy as I could get away with being.

This is the tendency of every student. None of us like self-discipline; our sinful nature prefers mindlessness to the effort required to “take every thought captive for Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). And this is why the Socratic method matters so much.

If the classical model is true, then the trivium indicates that a sea-change should occur around the time we turn thirteen. In the first stage of the trivium, the grammar stage, students are a lot like sponges—that is, they receive an education. We begin by being good at memorization, and teachers are right to pour certain facts—the multiplication table, for example—into our brains. The grammar stage is the time when you absorb the vocabulary and the facts that form the foundation for the disciplines you will later master. A classroom based on the lecture format generally works well at the grammar stage. The teacher introduces vocabulary and facts, and the students learn to parrot what the teacher teaches. A good foundation is established.

But ultimately we want to train up human beings, not parrots. Although the passive approach to education is challenging at the grammar stage, it invites laziness in the logic and rhetoric stages. Students need only parrot in the grammar stage, but as we become adults we need to learn to learn for ourselves. In essence, that’s what education is. “For the sole true end of education is simply this” writes Dorothy Sayers: “to teach men how to learn for themselves; and whatever instruction fails to do this is effort spent in vain.” The best minds are not the minds that have absorbed the most facts—the best minds are the minds that can identify and own truth, incorporating that truth into their lives.

What’s being said here is not radical. Any Christian parent, given a moment’s reflection, would agree that the ultimate purpose of education is to train the student to own his Christian faith for himself—that is, to think and live like Jesus Christ.

This requires, then, a move from being a passive learner to an active learner. As we’ve seen, I managed to waste both my secondary and my college education refusing to take an active part in my education. You certainly can receive a diploma living this way—and I would argue that most educational programs encourage this sort of mindset—but you’re never going to put on the mind of Christ “learning” this way. Faith isn’t something that’s just absorbed and then vomited back on a test—real faith will influence all that we are, and manifest itself in a different sort of life—“the good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart” (Luke 6:45a). As Dietrich Bonhoeffer says,

Peter's trust in Christ did not allow him to say he believed Christ and continue tending his nets—Christ's call on his life required faith and obedience. For Bonhoeffer, faith and obedience are inextricably linked (sounds like they are for God, too, in James 2:14-24 and elsewhere). Faith isn't truly faith until it's put into practice. Another way of saying this is that education is part and parcel of sanctification—we can't be like Christ until we put on the mind of Christ, and that requires discipline.

So how does the student begin to put on the mind of Christ? Ultimately, of course, this is the work of the Holy Spirit. But if we want to be used by the Spirit to help a student learn this discipline, we must begin by helping him put aside his sinful desire to be lazy, to sit passively, and to receive education like a sponge. In short, we must use the Socratic method, and use it in such a way that it strikes terror into the student's heart.

Most public speakers learn sooner or later that the only way they can know if their audience is paying attention is by listening to the questions they ask. Many in your audience will look at you benignly and nod when you raise your voice or pound the podium, but you can't be sure they're thinking about what you're saying until they respond to what you've said. In the same way, Socratic method requires response from your students—to what you say, to what their classmates say, to what the author in question says, and most importantly, to what God says.

Ideally, the Socratic classroom would consist of twelve or fewer students sitting in a circle, guided in a discussion by their wise and kindly teacher. The students would come to class having read the homework assignment (say, "Life Without Principle" by Henry David Thoreau), having researched Thoreau and his influences, and—gasp—having thought about Thoreau's arguments. The wise and kindly teacher would allow the students a great deal of latitude in their discussion, even allowing them to champion indefensible positions, but would eventually point them back to the Bible, and how Christ would have us view the arguments of Thoreau. The students would be persuaded by their teacher, and they would leave with a richer understanding of how Christ speaks to vocation and efficiency, and how Thoreau has influenced the great conversation.

Such a classroom teaches the student to learn for himself—to think biblically about big ideas, and to defend the biblical position in a winsome and persuasive way. It strengthens the student's faith by helping him to understand how important concepts and epochs fit within the framework of the Christian worldview. In short, it teaches the student to own his faith.

But such an ideal isn't achieved without a lot of work. As you might have guessed, what goes around really did come around in my own life, and one day I found myself teaching twelve high school students who still wanted to cling to their grammar stage ways. They said they wanted to learn, of course, but what they meant was that they wanted me to do all the work. They wanted me to start spouting out wisdom, and then they would absorb the very best wisdom (like sponges) and later spit it back out on a test. They wanted what I wanted when I was a student: to be lazy.

And just as my flesh drags its feet when I try to break the habit of sin, my students wanted to drag their feet. It seemed like the first two years of school were spent repeating variations of the following dialog:

Student A: "So, who influenced Thoreau anyway?"
Me: "Self-learn!"
Student B: "But what does the Bible say about civil disobedience?"
Me: "Self-learn!"
Students (in chorus): "You're really mean."
Me (turning red and bellowing): "We've already established that! Self-learn!!"

It got to be quite a joke around the school. Students learned to yell "self-learn!" at the appropriate times, even before I could yell it. But eventually they realized that they were no longer merely sponges or parrots, and that their grades and their sanity depended upon making the switch to becoming active learners.

Until they made the switch, there were many uncomfortable moments. One of the best things about the Socratic method is that it doesn't allow any student to hide. Did you forget to do the reading? Did you do the reading but spend most of your time thinking about who will be voted off the island on the latest episode of Survivor? Can you

distinguish between Thoreau and Rousseau, or tell me why Thoreau's name should always come to mind when you hear the name Gandhi? If not, these things will become painfully obvious as we discuss the assignment.

In the passive mode, a student really only has to use his mind about 10-20 hours per semester. As long as you study for the test and then work hard to recall as you take the test, you can check out for most of the rest of the educational process. Unless the classroom is Socratic.

If it is, it requires constant mental engagement—not just during the class time (which is usually a little longer than traditional classes, preferably between an hour and a half to two hours)—but also as the student reads and researches. In fact, the Socratic method encourages engagement any time you bump into a fellow student. Did you understand what Thoreau was saying there? I know the teacher's going to ask about it. Do you think it's biblical to spend a year living in a cabin by a lake, not doing much of anything? Or should you always be working at maximum efficiency?

The active learner is constantly engaged in the learning process. He can't stop thinking about what he's studying, or talking about it with his friends. Such engagement doesn't happen magically—it happens because the student gradually learns the habits of an active learner, in the Socratic classroom.

To further foster students learning this self-discipline, I strongly recommend grading their participation, and making it an especially weighty part of their overall grade (participation counted for close to 40% of the overall grade in the Humanities classes I taught). This, too, will ruffle feathers. Students and parents alike will be quick to play the "subjective card," pointing out that no perfectly objective standard exists for grading participation. But that's not entirely true. When I ask little Johnny what he knows about Thoreau, and he blushes red and says, "Nothing," I can be quite certain that his participation in our Thoreau discussion was sub-par. Conversely, when little Susie's hand is constantly up and she makes several good observations about Thoreau's arguments, I can safely describe her participation as dazzling. Thus, students could earn one of three participation grades each day in my class: incomplete (objective), complete (somewhat subjective, but you have to be awfully quick on your feet to earn a "complete" when you deserve an "incomplete"), and dazzling (somewhat subjective, but as with art, my students know it when they see it).

Such a standard isn't perfect, and students will occasionally differ with you about the grade they earn for a particular class. But as the classes accumulate, the cream rises and the lazy sink—and as they sink they experience the awful sinking feeling we all feel when we stand on a stage unprepared. It's no fun admitting day after day that you haven't invested the time and the thought to jump into a discussion and make a contribution. Eventually it begins to look like it might be worthwhile to invest that work and be saved the embarrassment.

Call it "tough love" or whatever the newest catch-phrase for that sort of thing is. Whatever you call it, I certainly needed a dose of it in my school years. Remember how your meanest teacher also turned out to be your favorite teacher? There's a strange correlation there. It may seem kind to protect an unprepared backpacker's self-esteem by allowing him to set out alone on a 40-mile jaunt through the Rockies in October, but in reality nothing could be more unkind. In the same way, it may seem kind to allow a passive learner to remain a passive learner—but his ignorance will invite consequences just as deadly as the consequences faced by the clueless backpacker. This is not hyperbole. Paul admonishes us in Colossians 2:6-7: "So, then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness." In the following verse, Paul tells us what can happen if we ignore this self-discipline: men may take "you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ." If we're not thinking like Christ, we'll be thinking like men—worldly men. There is no in-between.

I'm not arguing here that you should belittle your students or yell at them (although I think yelling is vastly underrated). Encourage your students like crazy—but also spur them on. Iron sharpens iron; butter doesn't sharpen butter. If you're not expecting more from your students and more from yourself every day, you have no business teaching. The goal is to be like Jesus. Good education always keeps this goal in view, and doesn't treat sloth as something to be accommodated. As we begin our journey up the

mountain, we invite the student to come along. But we don't pretend we've reached the top just because they (or we) get tired or discouraged. Grant each student the dignity he has before God; he or she is a responsible creation who, through the power of the Holy Spirit, has the capacity for so much more.

If it seems like I've been pounding the pulpit up to this point, you're right. It's hard for me not to type this essay in ALL CAPITAL LETTERS. This stuff really matters. And it's true. I had the chance to fully taste the fruit last year, primarily in my tenth grade Humanities class. Finally, after four years of pushing and pulling and lots of iron filings on the floor, my students settled in and self-learned. What a pleasure! Many times, as my students were making connections from one great thinker or concept to another, I would find myself thinking, "If a parent walked into this classroom right now, they would think that this discussion has been scripted for their benefit. The students sound so informed and engaged, and are thinking so biblically, that it has to be staged. But it's not!" The students really were thinking that well. They were beginning to understand that the Word of God is relevant to all of history and to each of their lives, and they were trying to live their lives informed by their Christian faith. It was an honor to teach them.

The Socratic method isn't the holy grail. It won't work for students with severe learning disabilities, and it can certainly be abused. But if you use it judiciously, the Socratic method encourages young teens to transition from passive learners to active learners. It requires them to own their Christian faith and apply it to the great conversation.

To reap these benefits, keep certain things in mind as you apply the Socratic method:

(1) The Socratic classroom is the worst kind of classroom absent God's fixed standard. Some discussions aren't worth your time—if you put a Yankees fan and a Red Sox fan in the same room, for example, there will be plenty said but not much progress made. Both fans are passionate about their team, and both think the other person's opinions are unwarranted. But no minds will be changed, and no one will be closer to the truth. In the same way, many people can have many opinions about various elements of the great conversation, but if the discussion is merely an airing of opinions, there's no good reason for any person to change his mind. The only hope for fruitful discussion rests squarely on the fact that there is a fixed standard that exists apart from man and his changeable opinions, and that this standard may be applied to the great conversation. Students may still verbalize opinions and take unbiblical positions—but in the end all such stances will be compared back to scripture. Rather than depending upon the shifting sands of human passions, the Socratic classroom must stand upon the rock of God's revealed truth.

(2) Teachers should look for opportunities to play devil's advocate. Students, especially high school students, often see only one side of an issue and thus view even the most slipshod arguments as irrefutable. Thinking well involves thinking subtly—being able to see not just two possible positions but all the nuances that ultimately must be accounted for if one is to adopt the right position. The best way to encourage this sort of thinking is to force students to defend their hasty generalizations, in the process showing them that their simplistic positions do not take into account all the difficulties of the question. Sunday School answers are not acceptable! There are great mysteries afoot—the Incarnation, the Trinity, marriage—and to deal with them superficially is to trivialize the most profound events. When a student says something sloppy like, "Everyone knows that gambling is wrong," it's easy for the teacher to see the next course of action: "Oh, really? I'm a Christian and I play poker. Am I sinning?"

(3) Closely related to the tactic of playing devil's advocate is the strategy of pushing students to follow their claims to the logical conclusion. In a discussion of Manifest Destiny, I once had a student suggest that America—presumably because it is a "Christian nation"—has the right to seek out and claim natural resources, even on foreign soil. I was a bit taken aback, but I had the sense to ask if that meant that it would be appropriate for the U.S. to invade Canada if we ran out of oil and Canada still had some. The student loudly asserted that this was right and appropriate! Such a position is indefensible, of course, and eventually—after some ribbing from her classmates—this student acknowledged her position to be unbiblical.

(4) I know I've said it, but I'll say it again: grade participation! The assumption undergirding the Socratic method is that students will remain lazy, passive learners unless you force them to prepare well and think hard. The only way to consistently hold students accountable is to grade their participation day in and day out. Take it from a

lazy student who figured out many ways to fake it: you can't fake excellent preparation in a small Socratic classroom.

(5) Diagram ideas and record facts on the whiteboard during the discussion. One of the dangers of the Socratic method is that students will become so caught up in the discussion that they will forget to take notes. Diagramming concepts, or even listing basic facts about the life of the author, will help students remember to jot down what they're hearing. In addition, visual learners will have an easier time following the discussion and keeping the most important ideas in view. I can't tell you how many times my students would say, "Ooh! It's like the pendulum—draw the pendulum!" when our discussion touched on Romanticism versus Realism. A long time ago I had drawn a pendulum to point out that Christianity balanced the over-reactions of Romanticism and Realism, and now my students used that picture as shorthand for holding intricate concepts in their minds.

(6) Include some standard questions in every discussion. The best way to circumvent any charges that grading participation is subjective is to constantly rely on a few stock questions, especially at the beginning of each discussion. A student may legitimately complain that they were unaware that the discussion of *Don Quijote*, for example, would hinge so dramatically on the invention of the modern sense of humor. It's difficult to prepare for every turn that every discussion of a great book might take. But students may not legitimately complain (oh, they'll still complain) that they were unaware that you would ask them what they knew about Miguel Cervantes. Students should come to expect that every discussion will at least include the following questions: What do you know about the author? Why would you argue that the book is well-written (or poorly written)? What was happening in history around the time the book was written? Who influenced the author? Whom did the author influence? These questions provide each student with direction for their research, and will—not coincidentally—help them to discover the import of the work in question if they pursue their research diligently.

(7) Another way to help your students succeed is to require them to complete a standard worksheet for every reading. My reading assignment worksheet includes the following sections: identify one statement with which you agree and one with which you disagree (defending your positions), list any biblical references, and identify the worldview of the reading. Requiring students to complete this worksheet helps them learn to keep certain questions and concerns at the forefront of their thoughts when wrestling with a great work. It's no good reading *Paradise Lost* while you're wondering who won Monday Night Football—you need to dialog with the poem, asking questions and constantly comparing themes and sub-themes with scripture. A worksheet helps students learn this discipline.

(8) Never lose sight of the central ideas. When I prepared to lead a discussion of *Don Quijote*, I was so overwhelmed by the scope of the work that I typed out a record 19 pages of questions and target answers (a very bad sign). While *Don Quijote* certainly merits a discussion that detailed—I could easily imagine spending a semester teaching the work—reality dictated that we only had about four class periods to discuss it. Instead of scattering my focus across much of the smorgasbord that is *Don Quijote*, I should have picked my battles, choosing to focus only on the most central themes and ideas. As counter-intuitive as it seems, any classes I led where I had prepared more than eight type-written pages of Q&A drifted. Some works are too vast to keep all the issues they raise in view. Better to major on the majors and ignore the minor questions altogether.

(9) Make connections but avoid rabbit trails. This is a closely-related corollary to the last rule, and it obviously references a thin line. When does a connection become a rabbit-trail? It's crucial to point out that Thoreau bought into Rousseau's concept of the "noble savage," but is it also crucial to point out that Thoreau supported John Brown's murderous protest against slavery? In both cases, I would argue that these are valid connections to make—which probably points to my own mindset: I'm willing to risk going down a few rabbit trails to help my students see just how inter-connected all of the great conversation is, and just how crucial a Christian worldview is for properly understanding the great conversation. The theme of Mark Twain's *The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg* has almost nothing to do with gambling, but if my students haven't yet thought through the biblical position on gambling I'm willing to pursue that connection until we reach general consensus. It may technically be a rabbit trail, but it is also—to my mind—profitable. The only connections I studiously avoid are the

unprofitable ones: anecdotes about a student's pet cat, for example, or conspiracy theories involving Masons. Some rabbit trails are painfully obvious.

(10) Avoid discussing secondary doctrine. While discussions of secondary doctrine should never be categorized with anecdotes about the family cat, such discussions must be viewed as rarely fruitful within the context of the Socratic classroom. In school, it's best to focus on what we can know: whether Gregory the Great's view of marriage is biblical or not, or if Thomas Jefferson was a Deist. Instead of bogging down in debates about biblical concepts that are not clearly defined (should baptism be administered in infancy or to adult believers?), we should focus on the many doctrines to which scripture speaks definitively: the Incarnation, the Resurrection, the saving power of Christ's work on the cross, to name a few. There is a time and place to discuss secondary doctrine, but the focus of a Humanities class is to help students apply their Christian faith to the great conversation—that is, to help them master what they can know about reality, rather than endlessly wrangle over the unknowable.

(11) Teach students how to identify themes and worldviews. In order to identify the worldview of a particular work, a student must first identify the central message—the theme—of the work. If the theme is biblical, then the worldview of the work is Christian. If the theme is unbiblical, then the student faces the additional task of determining which non-Christian worldview most closely aligns itself with that theme. The real trick is to help the student learn how to identify and articulate the theme. Most students make two common mistakes when they consider a literary work: they think in very vague generalities, and they think any reference to the Christian faith implies that the work has a biblical worldview. In the first essay he wrote for my class, one of my ninth grade students described the theme of one book as "good versus evil." Can't guess the book he read? That's the point. Well-crafted themes are as unique as the book they represent. Students need to learn this, and quickly. Probably the most important step toward helping your student come to grips with this is to demand that they express their themes in a complete sentence (or two complete sentences). This demand helps the student think in more specific terms, and encourages them to move away from plot description and toward the foundational assumptions of the work.

In addition, there are at least two exercises that help students get better at identifying and articulating themes. First, in an effort to help students identify the central tension that drives the plot in a work of fiction, I've taught them the concept of a story arc. The beauty of the story arc is that it reminds students to focus on the climactic moment of tension in a fictional work and then notice how the author chose to resolve that tension (whether or not the author intended the resolution to be satisfactory should also be considered). This in turn helps students to focus on what the author wants them to focus on: the key problem that he highlights and dissects. The author's analysis powerfully impacts his theme.

The second tactic that I've found to be helpful involves brainstorming about the key concepts. After completing a discussion of a reading, students should take time to verbalize the ideas emphasized by the work. A brainstorming session about Poe's "Murder in the Rue Morgue," for example, would include phrases like "chess vs. checkers." "intuition vs. the analytical mind," "prototypical detective," "the anti-Sherlock," "gothic setting," "the murderer as sub-human," and "the big picture trumps specific clues." Once students list all the ideas the author emphasizes, it becomes relatively easy to synthesize these concepts into a coherent theme. With Poe, your theme would probably sound something like, "The truly great critical mind transcends the narrow consciousness of purely analytical minds like Sherlock Holmes, focusing instead on the big picture and relying on more mysterious mental processes to arrive at the truth." Your theme doesn't have to include all the concepts mentioned in your brainstorming session; but it should integrate the most significant ones.

(12) Capitalize on this unique opportunity to encourage students to manifest the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Students often will disagree, and discussions can get heated. There's certainly nothing wrong with being passionate about your beliefs—but passion should never result in unkindness, and discussions should never be exercises in vanity. Bad attitudes become pretty transparent in a semester full of discussion, affording the teacher the opportunity to demand practical application of scripture every day. Students should view your class as intensely practical—first, because history demonstrates again and again that ideas matter a great deal because ideas have consequences; second, because the Socratic classroom is a training ground for getting

along with diverse people who may often disagree with you. What better forum to learn to be kind, loving, gentle and patient?

(13) This has been implied throughout, but it must be consciously embraced: the Socratic teacher almost never provides answers. The lazy student doesn't really want to wrestle with a problem and God's Word and work out the truth—he wants someone to tell him. Again and again, you'll be tempted by questions (and demands) from students about the right answer. Although it's flattering to be exalted as the wise and all-knowing one, resist the temptation and make the students self-learn. As long as you're willing to volunteer answers when the going gets tough, students will learn that they don't really need to knuckle down. But if they find that you really are mean—that you really do expect them to self-learn—then they'll gradually face up to the fact that they must roll up their sleeves and think hard. This is the turning point! Students need to own their faith, and they can't do that as long as someone else rushes in to help them apply that faith. The move from drinking milk to eating solid food (to use Paul's terms in 1 Corinthians 3:1-2) depends on weaning the spiritual babies.

That's all there is to it (audible groan). I know, I know, the transition to a Socratic classroom sounds daunting—but it's really only the paradigm-shift itself that is hard. Once you've thrown out the old fondness for a passive educational process, and adopted a consistent classroom policy, the rest will follow.

The only thing that will haunt you after the paradigm-shift is the constant sense of working without a net, and as far as I know that feeling never goes away. No amount of preparation can ensure that you are ready for every issue a student will broach, or every twist that a discussion will take. That's the really scary part! But I imagine stuntmen never really shake free of the adrenaline rush that comes with their soaring falls—and why should a teacher have any less fun?

Essays

Why Christians Should Avoid Great Books Like the Plague

by Jeff Baldwin

Recently, some evangelicals have embraced a dangerous fad: great books. Those who have the Greatest Book, the Bible, waste their time and brain cells on merely great books, expecting to engage in a "great conversation" with Christians and non-Christians alike.

Like the recent worldview fad embraced by some evangelicals, this great books fad seems to forget where Christianity belongs: in church. Christian worldview advocates not only encourage students to question the modern American interpretation of separation of church and state, but to carry their faith into dangerous places, like the public schools or the theater. In some of the most radical circles, Christians are being taught that they can even think biblically about biology or art!!

This is cause for alarm. Students who feel this way about the Christian faith might try to shape public policy based on biblical principles, or expect others to be good stewards of their time on every day, instead of the Sabbath.

Only recently, I met a Christian student who was teaching film appreciation at a secular school! Can you imagine? This student was standing with both feet right in the middle of the world, teaching from a perspective that was not of the world. I think, though, that I set him right when I asked him about 2 Corinthians 10:5. How could he be taking every thought captive for Christ when some of his thoughts were about movies?

Likewise, how could any Christian ever hope to think like a Christian while reading men like Plato, Homer, Athanasius, Augustine, Dante, Machiavelli, or Erasmus? These men don't even have two names! Sure, Augustine may occasionally reference scripture, but that just proves my point: Why read quotes from the Bible when you can read the Bible itself?

I've listened to these "great books experts" talk—just because I wanted to see the temptations facing our young people, mind you—and I can promise you that they are sheep in wolves' clothes. It sounds good initially when they talk about the sovereignty of God, but then they make the incredibly illogical leap to conclude that this means He rules over all of His creation and speaks to every discipline. I've even heard them say—brace yourself—that all truth is God's truth. You read that right! They seem to think that pagans like Homer or Aristotle might actually stumble on truth, just because they have a conscience. And they also teach that anyone can raise good questions!

The next thing you know, these so-called Christians will be saying that all beauty is God's beauty, too. As if a pagan like Robert Frost could write beautiful poetry, or a

Course Curriculum
Course Exams
Essays
Our Mission
About Us
Schedule
Worldview Reading List
A/V Resources
Crucial History (Dates)
Additional Reading

homosexual like Oscar Wilde could write an elegant play. Don't they see that Christians are writing the most beautiful books and filming the most stunning movies today?

Sometimes these great books advocates will talk about "ideas having consequences." What on earth can they mean by that? Ideas exist only in the ivory tower, as do most of these quote-unquote academics. I've never seen an idea put out a fire or build a hospital—people do that! And not the sort of people who just sit around and read and chat for a living. It takes work to have consequences, not vague ideas. Did our founding fathers sit around and read and write about ideas? No! They fought for their rights and built a great nation.

The only time I was heartened by any of the rhetoric of the worldview/great books fringe was when I attended a Bill Jack lecture and heard him challenge his students to obey Romans 12:2 and "be transformed by the removing of their minds." But I was shocked and appalled by what followed: the students laughed, and Mr. Jack laughed with them and launched into a tirade about "renewal." Renewal? I suppose that tree-hugger recycles too.

The bottom line, of course, is that Christianity is not something to be hauled along with you wherever you go. When I attend a science lecture, I leave my faith at the door. Faith and science are two different things! When I walk my dog, I don't try to make it all spiritual by praying or admiring God's creation—I'm walking my dog. I can pray when I get to church, or after I've paid my money for the big prayer meeting.

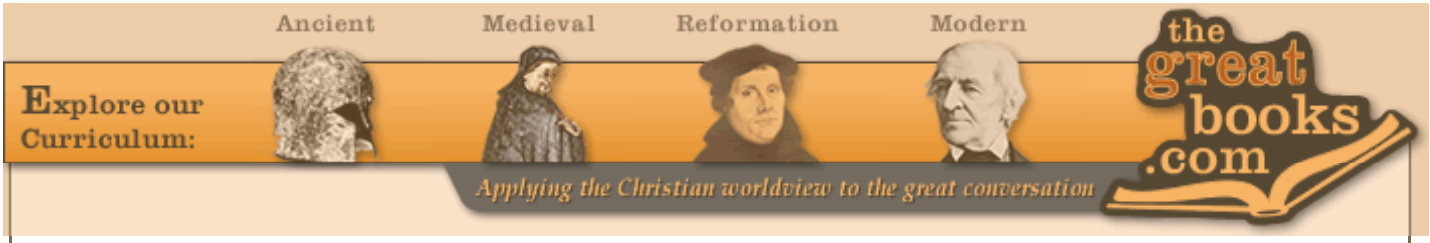
You certainly never caught Jesus reading a great book. He's busy doing spiritual things like giving sermons and teaching His disciples how to pray. He didn't have time to worry about secular things like how people should care for the poor or spend their money. Are we smarter than Christ? Do we think we should do things He never did, like surfing the internet or using a cell phone?

Nor am I a fan of airing our dirty laundry. Christians have had their differences over the years—I admit it—but we don't have to advertise it all around the world. When some guy named Luther gets huffy about the church needing a little bit more money and then finding a creative way to raise that money, that's a disagreement that shouldn't go beyond the four walls of the church. Nailing indictments to the church door! What good can come from that? And yet many of these so-called great books lists, including TheGreatBooks.com (which is probably the worst—a nefarious, underhanded, slipshod hack job without a veneer of respectability), forces students to read not only Luther but other trouble-makers like Calvin and Wingli, or Zingli—no, Zwingli.

Zwingli! I doubt he's even an American.

theGreatBooks.com

WorldviewAcademy



Our Mission

The Christian worldview is the best lens through which to see reality—in fact, it's the only lens that brings the world we live in into accurate focus. Bringing this worldview to bear on the humanities (history, art, literature and philosophy) gives us greater insight into them than any rival perspective. This is why the best education available is a Christian education.

Our goal is to make a complete, fully-supported curriculum available for the humanities—a curriculum that guides you each step of the way...

But how does a student get a Christian education in a world where so many circumstances seem to conspire against it? This is the question that led Jeff Baldwin to found TheGreatBooks.com. Working with his friend, J. Mark Bertrand, who shares his interest in making the humanities accessible to Christian teachers and learners, Jeff has launched an ambitious project. Our goal is to make a complete, fully-supported curriculum available for the humanities—a curriculum that guides you each step of the way, from recommending the best editions of each book on the reading list to strategies for learning the material yourself and teaching it to others. Whether you are a classical school instructor, a home schooling parent, an adult learner or a student of any kind, you will find a wealth of resources at TheGreatBooks.com to make your task easier!

Begin by browsing our complete recommended reading lists for high school students. This chronological list includes favorite editions and the most significant excerpts, so that educators can avoid "information overload" and instead focus on the most influential voices in history.

Next, consider which discussion guides you will need. Do you feel at sea discussing Augustine, or do you have trouble finding the biblical principles relevant to *Leviathan* by Thomas Hobbes? TheGreatBooks.com offers more than 70 guides to equip you to lead biblical discussions about some of the most profound works ever written.

- Course Curriculum
- Course Exams
- Essays
- Our Mission
- About Us
- Schedule
- Worldview Reading List
- A/V Resources
- Crucial History (Dates)
- Additional Reading

WorldviewAcademy

Other Homeschool Resources

Greenleaf Press

Cornerstone curriculum

More tools are available, too. Listen to audio files exploring the themes of literary works. Read essays, including one about creating a socratic classroom. Find the dates that your students should memorize. Use TheGreatBooks.com to equip a new generation of Christian leaders!

Return to the Top

About Us

The Populist


Jeff Baldwin

Jeff Baldwin is the research director for **Worldview Academy** and was the humanities chair for **Providence Classical School**. He served as the creative editor for *Understanding the Times* by David A. Noebel, and co-authored the *Understanding the Times* curriculum.

Jeff recently published a collection of essays, poems and short stories entitled ***The Twelve Trademarks of Great Literature***; the title essay helps Christians learn to discern what makes a great book great. He also authored ***The Deadliest Monster***, an introduction to worldviews based on the stories of Frankenstein and Jekyll and Hyde.

Jeff's first novel, *Ian*, is an allegory thematically based on John 15:13-15. His articles have appeared in *New Attitude*, *Teachers in Focus*, and *The Teaching Home*, and have been broadcast on Charles Colson's radio program, *Breakpoint*. Jeff teaches nation-wide at camps and educators conferences. Jeff's wife, Linda, homeschools their three children, True, Kate, and Emma.

You can email Jeff at:
jbaldwin@worldview.org

The Elitist


J. Mark Bertrand

J. Mark Bertrand is a writer and teacher. He lives with his wife Laurie in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. He has earned a BA in English from Union University and an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Houston. While at UH, he served as production editor of the literary magazine *Gulf Coast*. Mark has developed a passion for theology and for three years he taught Christian doctrine and theology for northwest Houston's Sword In Hand Bible study. He has also served as an adjunct faculty member at Worldview Academy.

Mark's MFA thesis was a collection of short stories titled *Surprise and Recognition*. He has written two business books, countless scripts and a spy novel that is best forgotten. Since the mid-1990s, he has been working intermittently on *Soldier of Misfortune*, a novel about the fall of Constantinople.

For more about Mark, check out his weblog at **jmarkbertrand.com**.

You can also email Mark at:
jmb@jmarkbertrand.com

Course Curriculum
Course Exams
Essays
Our Mission
About Us
Schedule
Worldview Reading List
A/V Resources
Crucial History (Dates)
Additional Reading

Return to the Top

theGreatBooks.com

Worldview Academy

Ancient Medieval Reformation Modern

Explore our Curriculum:




the great books .com

Applying the Christian worldview to the great conversation

Schedule

Jeff Baldwin's Conference Schedule:

- Course Curriculum
- Course Exams
- Essays
- Our Mission
- About Us
- Schedule
- Worldview Reading List
- A/V Resources
- Crucial History (Dates)
- Additional Reading

Worldview Academy

Other Homeschool Resources

Greenleaf Press

Cornerstone curriculum

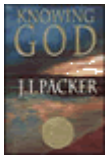
Site by ES.

Worldview Reading List

Before you can apply the Christian worldview to the great conversation, you have to understand what the Christian worldview really is! This is a list of the ten books Jeff and Mark recommend that every Christian should read -- preferably in order, from most accessible to most challenging -- to understand their Christian faith as a worldview.

How to Be Your Own Selfish Pig, by Susan Schaeffer-McCauley

BUY this book!



Knowing God, by J.I. Packer

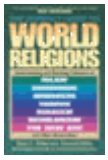
BUY this book!

The Deadliest Monster, by J. F. Baldwin

BUY this book!

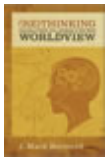
Loving God, by Charles Colson

BUY this book!



The Compact Guide to World Religions, edited by Dean Halverson

BUY this book!



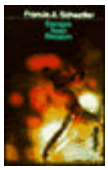
Rethinking Worldview, by Mark Bertrand

BUY this book!

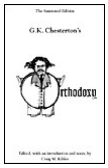
Escape from Reason, by Francis Schaeffer

How Now Shall We Live? by Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey

Course Curriculum
Course Exams
Essays
Our Mission
About Us
Schedule
Worldview Reading List
A/V Resources
Crucial History (Dates)
Additional Reading



Orthodoxy,
by G.K. Chesterton



Understanding the Times,
by David A. Noebel

Return to the Top

Site by ES.

Audio / Visual Resources

Christianity and Literature Series by Jeff Baldwin

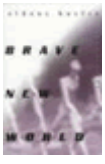
This series provides a biblical perspective on the great books, empowering parents and students to approach literature studies with confidence. Anyone who uses these discussions to avoid reading the works presented here is cheating themselves. These talks are only designed to enhance the reading experience.

Get Real Player

Lecture 1: Heros and *The Plague*
By Albert Camus

Listen Save

Lecture 2: *Brave New World*
By Aldous Huxley

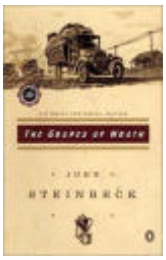


Listen Save

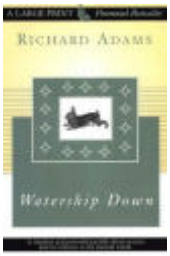
Lecture 3: *The Grapes of Wrath*
By John Steinbeck

Listen Save

Course Curriculum
Course Exams
Essays
Our Mission
About Us
Schedule
Worldview Reading List
A/V Resources
Crucial History (Dates)
Additional Reading



Lecture 4: *Watership Down*
By Richard Adams



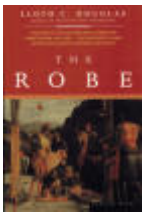
Listen Save

Lecture 5: *The Great Divorce*
By C.S. Lewis

Listen Save

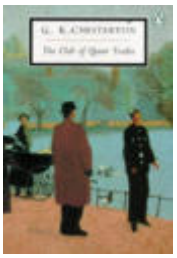
Return to the Top

Lecture 6: *The Robe*
By Lloyd C. Douglas



Listen Save

Lecture 7: *The Club of Queer Trades*
By G.K. Chesterton



Listen Save

Lecture 8: *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

By Mark Twain

Listen Save

Lecture 9: *Billy Budd Sailor*
By Herman Melville

Listen Save

Lecture 10: *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
By Harriet Beecher Stowe

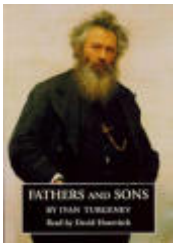
Listen Save

Lecture 11: *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*
By Alexander Solzhenitsyn

Listen Save

Return to the Top

Lecture 12: *Fathers and Sons*
By Ivan Sergeevich Turgenev



Listen Save

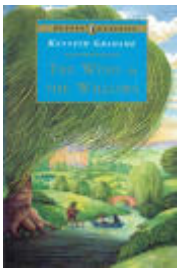
Lecture 13: *The Fall*
By Albert Camus

Listen Save

Lecture 14: *Captains Courageous*
By Rudyard Kipling

Listen Save

Lecture 15: *The Wind in the Willows*
By Kenneth Grahame



Listen Save

Lecture 16: *The Lord of the Rings*
By J. R. R. Tolkien

Listen Save

Return to the Top

Historical Timeline

The following dates provide a framework for contextualizing The Great Conversation. Jeff has his students memorize these dates in the grammar stage (grades K-5).

Before Christ (BC)

c. 2050 BC	Abraham offers to sacrifice Isaac
c. 1406 BC	Joshua leads Jews into Promised Land
c. 1150 BC	Troy falls to the Greeks
1003 BC	David crowned king over all of Israel
586 BC	Fall of Jerusalem; Jews exiled
c. 563 BC	Buddha born
516 BC	Jewish temple rebuilt under Zerubbabel
c. 460 BC	Queen Esther intercedes for the Jews
445 BC	Nehemiah rebuilds wall around Jerusalem
c. 427 BC	Plato born
27 BC	Caesar Augustus assumes power over Roman Empire
19 BC	Virgil completes his *Aeneid*

Anno Domini (AD)

30	Christ is risen!
35	Paul's conversion on Damascus Road
70	Fall of Jerusalem
95	Last book of the Bible written (Revelation); John dies
313	Edict of Milan legalizes Christianity in Roman Empire
325	Council of Nicea
426	Augustine finishes *City of God*
432	Patrick begins mission to Ireland

Course Curriculum
Course Exams
Essays
Our Mission
About Us
Schedule
Worldview Reading List
A/V Resources
Crucial History (Dates)
Additional Reading

476	Last Roman Emperor overthrown
529	Benedict founds monastery in Monte Cassino
c. 600	Talmud formally closed
632	Mohammed finishes Koran and dies
800	Charlemagne crowned Holy Roman Emperor
1054	The Great Schism divides Eastern Orthodox from Catholicism
1066	Norman Conquest of Britain
1095	First Crusade begins
1215	King John signs Magna Carta
c. 1313	Dante finishes his *Inferno*
1388	John Wycliffe's English translation of the Bible distributed
1415	John Hus martyred
1453	Constantinople falls to the Turks
c. 1456	Gutenburg prints first Bible using movable type
1492	Columbus sails to America
1513	Machiavelli finishes *The Prince*
1517	Martin Luther posts his 95 Theses
1523	Ulrich Zwingli's First Disputation
1534	English Act of Supremacy
1536	John Calvin publishes his *Institutes*; William Tyndale martyred
1549	Xavier begins mission to Japan
1588	England defeats the Spanish Armada
1605	Miguel Cervantes finishes first book of *Don Quijote*
1608	John Smith becomes governor of Jamestown
1616	William Shakespeare dies
1620	Mayflower lands at Plymouth Rock
1642	Rene Descartes published his *Meditations*
1654	Blaise Pascal trusts Christ; Oliver Cromwell tells Parliament that freedom of religion is a fundamental right
1667	John Milton publishes *Paradise Lost*
1688	The Glorious Revolution replaces King James II with William and Mary
1739	John Wesley founds Methodism
1743	David Brainerd begins mission to American Indians
1776	Thomas efferson authors Declaration of Independence
1788	U.S. Constitution ratified
1789	French Revolution begins
1803	Lewis and Clark begin expedition to Pacific
1830	Joseph Smith writes *Book of Mormon*
1833	Britain frees all slaves

1838	Trail of Tears
1842	Lord Shaftesbury frees British miners
1845	Frederick Douglass publishes Narrative
1848	Marx and Engels publish the Communist Manifesto
1859	Charles Darwin publishes Origin of Species
1865	America frees all slaves
1889	Nietzsche goes insane
1901	Booker T. Washington publishes Up from Slavery
1914-1918	World War I
1917	Lenin leads the October Revolution
1925	Scopes Monkey Trial
1933	Humanist Manifesto I published
1941	Japanese attack Pearl Harbor
1942	Planned Parenthood is established
1945	Dietrich Bonhoeffer executed
1947	Jackie Robinson integrates baseball
1948	Alan Paton publishes Cry, the Beloved Country
1969	Armstrong walks on the moon
1973	Roe v. Wade legalizes abortion in America
1974	Solzhenitsyn publishes the Gulag Archipelago
1989	The Berlin Wall falls
2001	World Trade Center destroyed by terrorists

Additional Reading Book List

Our recommended reading list is by no means comprehensive; there are hundreds of other worthy books that we chose to exclude for various reasons. Some of these reasons are merely practical-we didn't include J.R.R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, for example, because we know students will read it anyway.

What follows, then, is an incomplete list of more great books. You should read all of these books as well, and if you can shoe-horn them into your high school curriculum, do it!

Please notice that these books are listed in ascending order, with the most accessible books coming first and the more challenging ones rounding out the list.

- *The Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame
- *Captains Courageous* by Rudyard Kipling
- "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" by Washington Irving
- *Silas Marner* by George Eliot
- *Watership Down* by Richard Adams
- "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens
- *Loving God* by Charles Colson
- *Phantastees* by George MacDonald
- *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan
- *The Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis
- *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde
- *Animal Farm* by George Orwell
- *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson
- *Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain
- *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee
- *A Severe Mercy* by Sheldon Van Auken
- *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald
- *Abide in Christ* by Andrew Murray
- *Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien
- *The Nine Tailors* by Dorothy Sayers
- *The Club of Queer Trades* by G.K. Chesterton

Course Curriculum
Course Exams
Essays
Our Mission
About Us
Schedule
Worldview Reading List
A/V Resources
Crucial History (Dates)
Additional Reading

- *Anthem* by Ayn Rand
- *The Cherry Orchard* by Anton Chekhov
- *She Stoops to Conquer* by Oliver Goldsmith
- *Emma* by Jane Austen
- *Manalive* by G.K. Chesterton
- *The Little Prince* by Antoine de St. Exupery
- *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte
- *A Good man is Hard to Find* by Flannery O'Connor
- *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe
- *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis
- *Darkness at Noon* by Arthur Koestler
- *The Pickwick Papers* by Charles Dickens
- *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* by Alexander Solzhenitsyn
- *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne
- *The Samurai* by Shusaku Endo
- *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau
- *An Ideal Husband* by Oscar Wilde
- *Fidelity and Other Stories* by Wendell Berry
- *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley
- *The Everlasting Man* by G.K. Chesterton
- *The Abolition of Man* by C.S. Lewis
- *The Journals of Lewis and Clark*
- *The Oregon Trail* by Francis Parkman
- *The Fall* by Albert Camus
- *The Vicar of Wakefield* by Oliver Goldsmith
- *Orthodoxy* by G.K. Chesterton
- *The End of the Affair* by Graham Greene
- *The Life of King Alfred* by Asser
- *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift
- *Night* by Elie Wiesel
- *Les Miserables* by Victor Hugo
- *Anna Karenin* by Leo Tolstoy
- *Fathers and Sons* by Ivan Turgenev
- *Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoyevsky
- *Dead Souls* by Nikolai Gogol
- *First Circle* by Alexander Solzhenitsyn
- *Cancer Ward* by Alexander Solzhenitsyn
- *Til We Have Faces* by C.S. Lewis
- *Angle of Repose* by Wallace Stegner
- *War and Peace* by Leo Tolstoy
- *The Course of Empire* by Bernard DeVoto
- *The Idiot* by Fyodor Dostoyevsky
- *The Brothers Karamazov* by Fyodor Dostoyevsky
- *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare
- *King Lear* by William Shakespeare
- *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville

- *The Mind of the Maker* by Dorothy Sayers
- *The Confidence Man* by Herman Melville
- *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare