

1. Partners in the Search for Truth: Conversations between Science & Religion

Science and religion, especially in this country, have had an inconsistent and uneasy relationship with each other for some time. While some see no conflict between the two at all, others — both believers and non-believers alike — see a zero-sum match to the death. Even among those who desire to embrace both, it is often unclear how the two might best relate to one another. Join us as we explore the frontiers of science and religion and consider ways of framing their relationship that may lead to more fruitful paths of mutual enrichment and dialogue.

No specific suggestions for reading before class.

2. The Enchanted Imagination: The Christian Vision of J.R.R. Tolkien

"In a hole in the ground, there lived a hobbit." And so begins one of the most beloved stories written in the 20th century, *The Hobbit*, by the English author J.R.R. Tolkien. This story, together with *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy and other works filling out his legendarium, establish Tolkien as one of the greatest, most celebrated storytellers of all time. But what many don't fully appreciate is the degree to which these works of enchanted imagination are rooted in a profound Christian vision of life, hope, and human destiny. Join us as we adventure together!

Suggested Readings:

- * A basic familiarity with the plot and characters of Tolkien's master trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* would be helpful. Both the books and the acclaimed Peter Jackson movies are recommended for that purpose.
- * Christian History Magazine (Issue 78, dedicated to JRR Tolkien) — A PDF of this issue will be sent to all registrants.
- * "On Fairy Stories" (A seminal lecture given by Tolkien in 1938; later published. Be forewarned that this is not light reading, but pp. 26-36 especially will prove essential to understanding Tolkien's vision) — A PDF of this 41page document will be sent to all registrants.

3. The Sermon on the Mount: A Vision of Radical Discipleship and Alternative Community

The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 is perhaps the best example of Jesus' core teachings in the gospels, and yet occupies almost no place in the historic creeds or practical Christian life today. It is often deemed high-minded and idealistic, but impractical. In this class series, we will recover this neglected text's radical vision for discipleship and consider its powerful present-day relevance for building alternative, counter-cultural communities of faithful resistance.

Suggested Readings:

- * Read Matthew 5-7 carefully and make notes on what thoughts and questions arise.
- * Amy-Jill Levine — *Sermon on the Mount: A Beginner's Guide to the Kingdom of Heaven* (Abingdon Press, 2020).

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