

Tree of Life School

*"Wisdom is a tree of life to those to those who embrace her."
Proverbs 3:18*

*The Great Ideas III: Good and Evil
Online Class
Course Outline*

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The Study of the Great Ideas in the Great Books

Introduction

A good education should include an opportunity for students to wrestle with some of the weighty questions that come with living. Who am I? Why am I here? Is there a God? Who is He? What does He require of me? What is valuable or worthwhile? What are the principles of right and wrong? For centuries great thinkers have proposed answers to these and other questions. The implications of their answers are all around us. We call it culture and Western Civilisation as it exists is a veritable cornucopia of competing worldviews – all of them out to get control of our minds and to move us to live as becomes a disciple of their way.

Surely, ideas have consequences. They do not exist in a vacuum. As one thinks, so he is. There can be little disagreement that the study of ideas is important. However, there are probably more than 400 basic ideas to explore and discuss. To look at them all would be to take the proverbial route that is a mile wide and an inch deep. Therefore, we have sought to help students understand what might be considered the most foundational of all these ideas: God and Man; Truth and Lies; Goodness and Evil; Beauty and Ethics. The order of the studies is significant as it follows, more or less, the progression of the Trivium; that is, grammar level understanding (God and Man) to rhetorical application in a look at what constitutes beauty and ethical living. Upon completion our hope is that students will be able to articulate that an understanding of truth, for example, significantly impacts the idea of what is good or even what is beautiful. Further an understanding of what is good will affect the view of what is right and wrong; what is just; what is freedom; what is equality. The connectedness goes on and on, becoming for the student his or her worldview; that is, how they will live in this present age.

In 2003 we launched our first level of *Tree of Life's Study of the Great Ideas Through the Great Books*. *The Study of the Ideas of God and Man* has proved to be challenging and stimulating for many students. In 2004 we introduced our second level: *The Study of the Ideas of Truth and Lies*, exploring some core questions that arise when young people begin to read critically. 2005 saw the addition of *The Study of the Ideas of Good and Evil*. Our four year study of the Great Ideas was rounded out with the completion of *The Study of the Ideas of Beauty and Ethics*. However, as students who have gone through every level have discovered, their wrestling with the Great Ideas has only begun. Enjoy the journey!

The Study of the Ideas of Good and Evil

"I am the Alpha and Omega, The Beginning and the End, the First and the Last."

Rev. 22:13

"Man is the measure of all things."

Protagoras

"I am the way, the truth, and the life."

John 14:6a

"You will not surely die."

Satan (Gen. 3:4)

...so sums up our study over the last two years of the ideas of God, Man, Truth, and Lies. But, what about the ideas of Good and Evil? We run into these words almost every day and across many disciplines. One can hardly consider studies in theology, ethics, psychology, politics, or art (just to name a few), without wrestling with questions about the existence and manifestation of Good and Evil. To be sure, what we come to believe about Good and Evil will have a bearing on how we relate to truth and falsity; beauty and ugliness.

Mortimer Adler sates, "The true is the good of our thinking and the beautiful is a quality that certain things have when they are good as objects of contemplation, love, or as production." While we might quibble with Adler's ideas of truth, goodness, and beauty, we should agree that we can better understand goodness and beauty in terms of truth, and truth and goodness in terms of beauty. While they can be considered separately, they are best understood in relation to one another. You will recall that one of the primary aims of the study of the Great Ideas through the Great Books is to contemplate what is True, what is Good, and what is Beautiful.

As you have probably predicted, our view of Good and Evil will be rooted in our concept of God and Man. The psalmist writes, "Oh give thanks to the Lord, for He is good!" (Psalm 136:1) This goodness of God expressed in this psalm is reiterated throughout Scripture. It is multi-faceted and speaks of God's sovereign redemptive love; His kindness and generosity to all His creatures; His pity to those in distress; His patience.

On the other hand if, like Protagorus, a person sees "man as the measure of all things", Good and Evil are not rooted in the character of a Supreme Being who has created man in His own image. These ideas then become, in the words of Montaigne, "in large part the opinion we have of them". Like Shakespeare's Hamlet we are free then to determine for ourselves what, if anything, is evil.

So the stage has been set and through the ages thinkers of all stripes have debated the existence, source, and effect of Good and Evil on our world. Some have sought the right application of Good for their own benefit; others for the Common Good of society; and the rest, the Greatest Good for the greatest number. Few have actually sought what they considered to be Evil. However, all, in one form or another, have had to decide on answer to key questions: Is there a God? If so, who is He? What is He

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like? What does He require of me? Does Truth exist? If so, how do I apply it to all areas of my life? They also probably wrestled with the same questions that you will tackle this year: Does Good and Evil exist? If so, what are their attributes? How do they affect my perception of the world? My actions? How am I to seek Good? What conflicts arise as I seek to do this?

"Hey, wait a minute!" you might be saying. "Haven't I already dealt with many of these questions in the books, poems, and stories that I've read over the last two years?" Congratulations! You're quite astute if this has occurred to you at any time while you've been reading this introduction. (That's the good news.) The better news is that you will, no doubt, re-visit many of the questions and ideas already studied and begin to explore their interconnectedness with this year's ideas of Good and Evil. Welcome to the Great Conversation! Uncle Screwtape will not be happy.

Outline

The following schedule is given in the hopes that it will help you work your way through the course requirements with greater ease than if left to set up your own schedule. You will of course understand that you might spend an entire year studying only one the required books - indeed with some you could spend a lifetime. However, it is not within the scope of this Great Ideas course to fully mine all that there is to learn from the books that you will read. It is hoped that you will certainly get something from them and, at the very least, that you will be less intimidated by the thought of tackling more of the great literature of Western civilization by the time you finish this year than you were before you started.

How to Work Through The Course

This course has been divided into a **140 day schedule**. This will allow the student to follow a **four-day school week** and still complete the course in a normal academic year. The **fifth day** of each week can be used to **catch up on assignments**, do **extra reading**, or simply **take the day off** from the course. For the average student this may mean committing three hours or more each day to reading, answering questions, and preparing essays. You may even find that extra time will need to be spent completing the reading selections. That said, try to work on the material when you are freshest. The material demands your best and you will benefit most if you put an honest effort into the course work. Adherence to the schedule is particularly important because of the coordinated nature of blog postings and online discussions with the class. Care has been taken to provide specific instructions for each day's work. Therefore, **all work is to be completed in the order presented in the daily schedule**.

Calculating Your Final Grade

Your final mark in the course will be based on the following percentages:

Assignments (9)	30%
Formal Essays (4)	35%
Blog Posting and Discussions (8)	35%

Assignment Expectations in General

Tests

Short answer tests should be written in complete sentences. Rarely should answers be more than a few sentences or a brief paragraph unless otherwise indicated. In these cases a short (one page) essay may be required to expand on the material learned throughout the year.

Paragraph

Well-written paragraphs contain a topic sentence that makes it clear what the thesis (purpose) of the assignment is. The student will then expand on this thesis, developing it so that the reader is led systematically through the argument until he/she arrives at the final sentence of the paragraph (the conclusion). It is here that the student will close his/her paragraph in a way that is appropriate to the topic.

Poetry or some other special type of assignment may require the student to do a bit of research into the vehicle that is being used to deliver the material. For example, if the student is required to write a sixteen line poem that is divided into four stanzas, with each line made up of a common meter and the entire poem having an obvious rhyme scheme, this may necessitate determining what these elements are before the assignment can be written. Students should understand concepts such as 'meter' and 'feet'.

A **report** may sound a lot like an essay to the student; however, we like to distinguish the two in this way. Reports are typically expository in nature and are based on the student researching a fact based topic, organising the material into a minimum of five paragraphs, then presenting it in a suitable style with all facts, quotes, and statistics properly footnoted. This type of assignment usually has little if any of the student's personal opinion in it. It is also rarely used on its own at the high school level of our course work since it is more typical of what we might ask a student from grades 6 to 8 (maybe 9) to do. In other ways it is the easiest way to teach and practice all of the basic elements needed to write excellent academic papers in the high school years (introduction, body, conclusion, footnotes,

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bibliography, basic style elements). Typical types of report topics might include a cultural study of a country; three causes of a particular war or political situation; or five examples of foreshadowing in a novel.

An **essay** differs from a report in that it will offer much more analysis of the topic from the student's perspective and opinion. This analysis will certainly be based on the information that s/he has gathered and presented. However, the very nature of the question asked for the assignment will require the student to do more than simply present the facts. Either throughout the essay or in the conclusion the student will be offering opinions and commentary that shows s/he has looked at both sides of the issue and has something of his/her own to contribute to the discussion. Typical topics might include a discussion of whether Shakespeare was a racist based on a study of one of his plays; whether a certain treaty contributed to a war that followed its signing; or how a particular worldview has led to a specific problem in society.

Personal essays include narratives and descriptions. These may have a much more personal tone and be very subjective. They can be filled with dialogue, personal pronouns, colourful language, and all sorts of literary devices that might fall under the heading of creative writing. This type of writing is more frequent in our English Literature offerings and is learned specifically in our English II course.

Academic style essays (expository or persuasive) are written in a less personal way. In this type of essay the student should always avoid personal references to themselves and the reader, clichés and idiomatic language, or anything that might be construed as slangy/informal. This is often the hardest kind of writing for many students and it takes practice. However, this is where the give and take between student and evaluator is essential and has become one of the hallmarks of a *Tree of Life* education.

Evaluative Comments and Grades

At the high school level, students are given numerical grades for each of their tests and assignments. We try to be as objective as we can be, but much of what we do is subjective by nature and with several people evaluating work, some will give higher grades than others. We make every effort to be on the same page (so to speak) so that there is not a wide disparity in grades from subject to subject (especially in those areas where much written work is submitted). We also make every effort to communicate to the student what was positive about the assignment and what needs work. If there is a question about a grade or comment on an assignment, we encourage you to communicate this to us. The best way is to send an e-mail or return the assignment with a note attached the next time you send work by mail. This way we can make sure that the evaluator who can best answer your question is notified and can have the opportunity to review the question and assignment and get back to you with what will hopefully be a satisfactory explanation.

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Generally speaking, we employ the following percentages when marking work. We do not usually break down the mark to reflect this but hopefully the comments will reflect areas where the assignment may be improved.

Introduction 20%

Body 40%

Conclusion 20%

Style 10%

Mechanics 10%

Submitting Assignments for Evaluation

Email:

This is our highly preferred mode of submission, due to low cost and faster return rate of graded assignments.

1. Save each individual assignment as a Microsoft Word document (Word Perfect is also acceptable) or as PDF. Do not save a batch of assignments in one file; this will be returned ungraded to you. Entire Study Guides for Great Ideas courses should also be sent as individual files.
2. Name the file with your name, the course, and the assignment number. For example, "John Doe_WH I_Essay 4" or "Sally Brown_GI I_ Confessions Study Guide".
3. Attach each assignment in a **separate email to evaluation@treeoflifeathome.com** **The subject line of your e-mail should be the same as the file name of your assignment.** This helps us organise the work and be sure it gets to the proper evaluator.

Regular mail:

Be sure *all* work is clearly labelled with your full name, course name, and assignment. Also, be aware this mode of submission will have the longest turnaround time.

Address: Tree of Life

443 Weston Road

Weston, NB

E7K 1B1

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Requirements:

1. Assignments that do not satisfactorily adhere to these guidelines may be returned ungraded!
2. Length of assignments will vary based on the nature of the topic. The student ought to always answer in complete sentences, full paragraphs (generally 5 to 9 sentences), or well-structured essays. Almost all assignments require the essay format to complete the requirements.
3. Essay requirements
 - a. Use only Times New Roman or Ariel black font, size 12. Avoid colours. Text should be double-spaced.
 - b. The essay format includes a well-written introductory paragraph that will set the context for the essay and end in a clear thesis statement. It will also have a *minimum* of three paragraphs (but usually more) that will develop the thesis fully within the context of the assignment. It will end with a concluding paragraph that will satisfactorily bring the essay to a close.
 - c. Title page. Include essay title, student name, course name, assignment number, and date.
 - d. Footnotes and bibliographies. Personal essays may be an exception, but the bulk of every academic essay is based on research that the student has learned from another source. Presenting this information in either quoted or paraphrased version without providing the proper citation is known as plagiarism. The student may think that s/he is sounding brilliant but this will get you kicked out of university (at worst) and significantly lower your mark (at best). The source for direct quotes or paraphrases should be cited at the bottom of the page in a footnote. The bibliography includes any and all resources used (regardless of whether they appear in your footnotes) and is placed on a separate page at the end of the essay.

Specific Guidelines:

The Title Page

Each assignment should have a title page with the essay title, student name, course name, assignment number, and date clearly displayed.

Title of Essay
Name of Student Course/Subject Assignment Date

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Footnotes

There are far too many situations that need to be footnoted to show here, but below you will find some of the common examples that will show up in most research reports. Use the "Insert Reference" or "Insert Footnote" feature of your word processor to automatically insert the footnote number as well as place the citation correctly at the bottom of the page.

Book	¹ Tom Smith, <u>Skating to the Music</u> (Hogtown: Ice Palace Publishers, 2010) 45.
Magazine	² Sally Smith, "Skating Is My Life," <u>Skating Magazine</u> 12 May 2009: 20-24.
Newspaper	Same basic format as that of magazine.
TV or Radio	⁴ "An Interview with Zeke," Skaters' Forum, CBC, Toronto, 12 March 2010.
Personal Interview	⁵ Bill Jones, personal interview, 23 August 2011.
Internet	⁶ Tom Camelspin, "Jumping for Glory", www.skate.com, 10 January, 2010.

Bibliography

If you have used the ideas of others to help you form your thoughts for your essay, you need to cite them at the end of your essay in the bibliography. The format for the bibliography is different than for footnotes; merely copying and pasting your information will not be adequate.

Following you will find some common examples to help you.

Book	Smith, Tom. <u>Skating to the Music</u> Hogtown: Ice Palace Publishers, 2010.
Work from Anthology	Clark, Jim. "Working the Judges." <u>Anthology of Skating Poems</u> . Editor John Doe. Boston: Ice Palace Publishers, 2001. 354.
Article from Reference Book	"Figure Skating," <u>Big City Encyclopedia</u> . 1988 ed. Reference on CD-ROM Macrotuff Multimedia Encyclopedia. Computer Software. Hogtown, ON: Macrotuff Software, 2001. CD-ROM.
Magazine	Smith, Sally, "Skating Is My Life," <u>Skating Magazine</u> 12 May 2009: 20-24.
Newspaper	Same basic format as that of magazine.
TV or Radio	"An Interview with Zeke," Skaters' Forum, CBC, Toronto, 12 March 2010.
Personal Interview	Bill Jones, personal interview, 23 August 2011.
Internet	Camelspin, Tom , "Jumping for Glory", www.skate.com, 10 January, 2010.
Oral Presentation	Champ, Ima. Speech. NB Figure Skating Convention, Fredericton, 21 May, 2002

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Course Calendar

Week #	Start Date	Work / Assignment	Current Reading
1	Sept. 3	Course Introduction / Blog Bio / How to Read a Book Assignment (due Sept. 11)	<i>How to Read a Book</i> <i>Ivanhoe</i>
2	Sept. 9	Finish HTRAB Assignment Ivanhoe Essay (due Sept. 27)	<i>Ivanhoe</i>
3	Sept. 16	Iliad study guide	<i>Iliad</i>
4	Sept. 23	Iliad study guide	<i>Iliad</i>
5	Sept. 30	Iliad study guide (due Oct. 12)	<i>Iliad</i>
6	Oct. 7	<u>Iliad Blog Discussion #1</u>	start Short Stories
7	Oct. 14	Short Story Unit	Short Stories
8	Oct. 21	Short Story Unit (due Oct. 26)	(start <i>Beowulf</i>)
9	Oct. 28	Beowulf reading (optional study guide)	<i>Beowulf</i>
10	Nov. 4	Beowulf reading / <u>Blog Discussion #2</u>	<i>Beowulf</i>
11	Nov. 11	Discussion cont'd / Sir Gawain reading	start <i>Sir Gawain</i>
12	Nov. 18	Sir Gawain Essay (due Nov. 23)	<i>Sir Gawain</i>
13	Nov. 25	Bible study guide*	<i>Job</i>
14	Dec. 2	Bible study guide* (due Dec. 7)	<i>Job</i> , start <i>Hamlet</i>
15	Dec. 9	Hamlet reading	<i>Hamlet</i>
16	Dec. 16	<u>Hamlet Blog Discussion #3</u>	<i>Ideal Husband</i>
		During Christmas Break and first week of January.....	read <i>Ideal Husband</i> , <i>Wuthering Heights</i>

* one of these study guides may be replaced by a Personal Blog Post Assignment. See page 28.

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17	Jan. 6	Ideal Husband Assignment (due Jan. 11)	<i>Macbeth</i>
18	Jan. 13	<i>Macbeth</i> reading (optional study guide)	<i>Macbeth</i>
19	Jan. 20	<u>Macbeth Blog Discussion #4</u>	read <i>Wuthering Heights</i>
20	Jan. 27	Wuthering Heights Assignment (due Feb. 1)	<i>Wuthering Heights</i>
21	Feb. 3	Screwtape Letters study guide*	<i>Screwtape Letters</i>
22	Feb. 10	Screwtape Letters study guide* (due Feb. 15)	<i>Screwtape Letters</i>
23	Feb. 17	Great Divorce reading	<i>Great Divorce</i>
24	Feb. 24	<u>Great Divorce Blog Discussion #5</u>	(start <i>Lord of the Flies</i>)
25	Mar. 3	Essay on Good and Evil (due Mar. 15)	<i>Lord of the Flies</i>
26	Mar. 10	<u>Break Week (can be taken during March)</u>	
27	Mar. 17	Lord of the Flies Assignment (due Mar. 22)	start Poetry / <i>Moby Dick</i>
28	Mar. 24	<u>Poetry Blog Discussion #6</u>	Poetry, <i>Moby Dick</i>
29	Mar. 31	Institutes study guide	<i>Institutes / Moby Dick</i>
30	Apr. 7	Institutes study guide (due Apr. 19)	<i>Institutes</i>
31	Apr. 14	<u>Moby Dick Blog Discussion #7</u>	
32	Apr. 21	Universe Next Door study guide*	<i>Universe Next Door</i>
33	Apr. 28	Universe Next Door study guide*	<i>Universe Next Door</i>
34	May 5	Universe Next Door study guide* (due May 10)	<i>Universe Next Door</i>
35	May 12	Good and Evil Final Essay (due May 24)	

* one of these study guides will be replaced by a Personal Blog Post Assignment. See page 28.

DAILY SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 - SEPT. 4

(start on Tuesday in lieu of Labour Day)

Day 1 - Welcome to the Great Ideas III: Good and Evil course! To get started, please read these instructions and guidelines for course.

1. Make every effort possible to stay on schedule with reading and assignments. The schedule is especially important for blog assignments so that you can share with the class at the same time. Due dates for non-blog assignments are only recommended so that you stay on track.
2. The book readings usually come before the assignments on the schedule by one week. Give yourself plenty of time to comfortably read the books so that you are prepared for the given assignment. It is suggested that you read the novels during recreational, "non-school time" during your day.
3. The tutor is the evaluator for the course and will moderate online blog discussions, answer any questions about reading or assignments, and provide regular feedback to you. If you fall behind in the schedule or have any problems, tell the tutor. The tutor will also keep a Class Blog (address to be announced) with reminders, announcements, and additional instructions as the course proceeds. Check there regularly. Also, all of the assignment files in PDF and DOC can be accessed through the class blog from the Tree of Life website.
4. Since the blog discussions are an integral part of the course, it is important that online communication with fellow students be respectful, constructive, and done in love. Keep these things in mind:
 - Remember that we are all learning at different levels and so we must respect each other and our varying abilities.
 - It is okay to correct someone on a fact or statement. Use kind words.
 - There will be times when disagreement arises on certain ideas; some students will have different perspectives that are not always apparent. It is useful to talk about these things and ask questions to better understand what someone means. It is okay to say that you disagree but first make sure you understand what the other person is saying. Whenever you disagree, you should explain why. Be open to changing your thoughts on some things.
 - Finally, consult Proverbs 15-18 for some basic principles in good communication. Especially consider the following Proverbs:

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Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding. (Proverbs 17:27)

A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion. (Proverbs 18:2)

Before destruction a man's heart is haughty, but humility comes before honor. If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame. (Proverbs 18:12-13)

5. After you have posted a blog entry, you will exchange comments, questions, and additional discussion on these topics. There is no set number of responses or words you must post, but marks will be based on your level of participation and the content of responses. The blog discussions will sometimes precede formal essays. Use these discussions as a chance to gain writing ideas and a greater understanding of the Great Ideas topics.

Today, read the instructions and follow the Study Guide for *How to Read a Book* (see the PDF file online). You will be reading from chapters 13 to 19 and completing the first assignment this week.

Finally, you should also begin reading *Ivanhoe* during your recreational reading time over the next couple of weeks. The first essay of the course will deal with this historical novel.

Day 2-4 - Continue working through *How to Read a Book* and the study guide. **When complete, submit this assignment by Sept. 11.**

If you haven't already done so, create a simple biographical blog post to introduce yourself to your classmates.

WEEK 2 - SEPT. 9

Day 5 - If you haven't already done so, finish off the study guide for *How to Read a Book* (due by Sept. 11).

Even if you aren't done reading *Ivanhoe*, start putting together some ideas for your essay on this novel. Look at the essay question below and collect examples, quotations, and points from the book to support your thesis.

Novels lend themselves to a portrayal of the classic conflict of Good vs. Evil. Perhaps one of the best novels to illustrate this is Walter Scott's timeless tale, Ivanhoe. In it he weaves incredible feats of courage by men of renown, deceit and intrigue, charity and prejudice, love and hate, and characters who either stand for or fall by their principles. While many today might roll their eyes at some of the platitudes presented

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Grade Sheet

Assign	Blog	Essay	Description	Mark
1			How To Read a Book	
		1	Ivanhoe Essay	
2			Iliad Study Guide	
	1		Iliad Blog Discussion	
3			Short Story Assignment	
	2		Beowulf Blog Discussion	
		2	Sir Gawain Essay	
4*			Bible (Job) Study Guide*	
	3		Hamlet Blog Discussion	
5			Ideal Husband Assignment	
	4		Macbeth Blog Discussion	
6			Wuthering Heights Assignment	
7*			Screwtape Letters Study Guide*	
	5		Great Divorce Blog Discussion	
		3	Essay on Good and Evil	
8			Lord of the Flies Assignment	
	6		Poetry Blog Discussion	
9			Institutes Study Guide	
	7		Moby Dick Blog Discussion	
10*			Universe Next Door Study Guide*	
		4	Good and Evil Final Essay	
			Assignments (9)	30%
			Formal Essays (4)	35%
			Blog Posts + Discussions (8)	35%
			Final Mark	

* - Students will complete a Personal Blog Post Assignment on one of these books (*Job*, *The Screwtape Letters*, or *The Universe Next Door*); this will take the place of one study guide of their choice. See pages 28