The Inklings Course Description

A Word about Course Objectives
We believe that the ultimate aim of a complete education is to help each student to flourish, namely, to rightly order his or her soul and body through acquisition of skills and information, growth in discernment and mental acuity, establishment of justified true beliefs, formation of Godly sentiments and habits, and growth in understanding of God, one’s self, humankind, and the rest of God’s creation so that he or she can grow deeper in the love and knowledge of God, becoming more like Christ through the activity of the Holy Spirit.

Torrey Academy can by no means encompass the entirety of such an education in its scope. Hence, while keeping the larger vision in view, we focus on the following essential objectives in the three core classes:

(1) Development of crucial skills—As the basis for true understanding and discernment, the following skills are paramount: critical thinking and reasoning, reading comprehension and biblical hermeneutics, written and oral communication.

(2) Formation of crucial sentiments and habits—As models for students to imitate, tutors and staff will help students value the life of the mind, reverence the Bible as is its due, love and desire God, love one another, value integrated learning across the disciplines, develop humility and self-discipline, cultivate a teachable attitude, defer to others, respect authority, desire holiness, be zealous for Truth and true doctrine, oppose anti-Christian ideologies (specifically: materialism, naturalism, scientism, skepticism, relativism), work diligently, follow through, practice study as an act of worship and service to God.

(3) Establishment of justified true beliefs—While not taught explicitly by the tutors, the following beliefs are assumed as the foundation for all Torrey learning, are modeled by the tutors, and are articulated in many of the texts, especially by the authors in The Inklings curriculum: belief in metaphysical and epistemic realism; that faith and reason work together and are not antithetical; that the various fields of study inform one another and are rightly informed by knowledge of Christ; that religious, aesthetic, and ethical beliefs can be justified and true (or unjustified or false) and therefore are to be considered fields of knowledge; that the Christian cultural and intellectual heritage is rich, beautiful, good, and true and makes the most sense out of reality; that God’s design for human flourishing is holistic, encompassing the intellect, the volition, the affections, and the body; that knowledge of God rightly informs school, vocation, relationships, lifestyle, hobbies, play, and all of life.

The Inklings
This course provides a foundation in critical thinking, academic writing, Christian thought, and biblical hermeneutics. Students explore the works of the twentieth-century Oxonian group of Christian writers and thinkers known as the Inklings, as well as authors who influenced or were influenced by their writing. Readings include works from C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams, G. K. Chesterton, Dorothy L. Sayers, T. S. Eliot, W. H. Auden, G. M. Hopkins, Sheldon Vanauken, and J. R. R. Tolkien. Genesis, the Gospel of John, and hermeneutic materials will also be discussed and studied. We recommend that parents and independent study programs count this class as meeting the requirements for thirty high school academic
Specific Course Objectives:
Students will become competent in critical thinking. They will be able to
• identify and summarize major arguments in a nonfiction work
• identify major themes in works of fiction and summarize fictional plots
• support their interpretations of a text with textual citations
• begin to support their opinions and beliefs with reasonable arguments
• begin to respond to opposition to their opinions and beliefs with reasonable rebuttals
• begin to distinguish between good and bad arguments
• begin to identify and reject anti-Christian ideologies when they arise in their own thinking

Students will become more competent in academic writing. They will be able to
• articulate significant ideas in their own words using outline and paragraph forms
• format written work and citations according to an academic standard (MLA)
• compose interesting argumentative thesis statements
• visualize an intended audience and articulate opposition to a thesis
• support a thesis with a well-organized written argument
• sustain a plausible written argument for five or six pages

Students will develop an understanding of Christian thought. They will be able to
• appreciate and articulate the importance of doctrine in the Christian life
• identify major elements of Christian theology
• identify and respond to some key contemporary threats to Christianity
• appreciate the relationship between Christian faith, the life of the mind, and daily living
• apply Christian thinking to their own lives by pursuing challenging application questions

Students will develop basic biblical hermeneutics. They will be able to
• reverence the books of the Bible as is due to God’s inspired and inerrant Word
• recognize the importance of textual and historical context in interpreting biblical passages
• identify and articulate the main theme or argument of a biblical book
• begin to identify and articulate the structure of specific biblical books
• understand the difference between the meaning and the significance of a biblical passage

Course objectives will be realized through the intensive reading, writing, and discussion required of the students. The discussion and the writing assignments will serve as the evaluative tools to assess the student’s progress toward the set objectives. Student notebooks serve as a catalog of the student’s progress through the course of the academic year, and the final term paper is equivalent to a final exam.