



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY CENTRAL TEXAS

POLI 4365
Politics of Literature:
J.R.R. Tolkien
Section 110 - Fall 2020
6 PM – 9 PM Tuesdays on Canvas
(Using WebEx)



Dr. Jeffrey Dixon

Office: Heritage Hall 204R

Email: JeffreyDixon@tamuct.edu

(Canvas Inbox Preferred)

Office Phone: (254) 501-5871 (out of office)

Office Hours (select a time slot via WebEx):

4:00-5:30 PM Mon/Wed, 5-5:30 Tues

Course Description

Examine the politics of fiction through a single author or genre to critically evaluate its role in political persuasion, especially normative political theory. Attention is paid to the political uses of genre conventions and the political power of shared myths.

Course Overview

This seminar-type course, team-taught with Dr. Amber Dunai of the English program, examines the politics of literature through the lens of J.R.R. Tolkien's popular and influential works of fiction, including *The Silmarillion*, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Special attention is paid to the political uses of fiction and myths, the political views of Tolkien, the politics described within the fantasy world of Middle Earth, and the relationship of the work to political theory, including theories of religion, gender, race, just war, and rulership. This course meets synchronously using WebEx, with all materials other than textbooks made available online through the Texas A&M-Central Texas Canvas Learning Management System [<https://tamuct.instructure.com>].

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

This is an interdisciplinary course with seven main objectives. These objectives and their associated learning outcomes are ultimately the focus of the course. Course objectives (numbered) and learning outcomes (lower case letters) are listed below.

1. Students should understand how fiction and myths are used for political purposes (a).
2. Students should be able to closely read the fictional works of J.R.R. Tolkien in their narrative (b), historical (c), and political (d) contexts.
3. Students should be able to formulate and express political-literary analyses effectively, both verbally (e) and in writing (f).



4. Students should be able to summarize the relationship between the fictional tales addressed in the course and theories of the politics of religion (g), feminist political thought (h), critical race theory (i), just war theory (j), and ecopolitics (k).
5. Students should be able to identify and compare the working of the political institutions of J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle Earth and those of the real world, including parallels and any differences that are severe enough to break the politically-informed reader's suspension of disbelief (l).
6. Students should be able to perform primary and secondary research on an original research topic related to the politics of (or in) Tolkien's fictional Middle Earth (m).
7. Students should be able to both produce (n) and present (o) an analytical research paper applying political theory to Tolkien's tales of Middle Earth.

Learning outcomes a, e, f, m, n, and o are assessed using the research paper and presentation. Outcomes f, g, h, i, j, k, and l are assessed from the weekly memos in the second half of the course. Outcomes b, c, d, and e are assessed using the weekly memos in the first half of the course and the class participation rubric. Finally, Outcome e is also assessed using the class participation rubric.

Modality

This course is a *100% online* course, meeting synchronously on WebEx each Tuesday at 6 PM, with all materials made available online through the Texas A&M-Central Texas Canvas Learning Management System [<https://tamuct.instructure.com>].

Required Texts

The following texts are required and available for purchase at the Warrior Bookstore. The same texts are used by POLI 4365, POLI 5365, and ENGL 5388, so you may wish to check under all three for available copies. Be sure to get the right edition of each book (below), since page numbers don't match up between different editions. You are under no obligation to purchase a textbook from a university-affiliated bookstore. The same textbook may also be available from an independent retailer, including an online retailer.

Humphrey Carpenter (ed). 2000. *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*. NY: Mariner Books (Houghton Mifflin). ISBN: 978-0618056996

J.R.R. Tolkien. 2005. *The Lord of the Rings*. 50th Anniversary One Volume Edition. NY: Mariner Books (Houghton Mifflin). ISBN: 978-0618640157

J.R.R. Tolkien. 2012. *The Hobbit*. 75th Anniversary Paperback Edition. NY: Houghton Mifflin. ISBN: 978-0547928227

J.R.R. Tolkien. 2014. *The Silmarillion*. Reissue Ed. NY: Mariner Books (Houghton Mifflin). ISBN: 978-0544338012

All other required readings are available on Canvas.

Technology Requirements and Support

This course will use the Texas A&M-Central Texas Instructure Canvas learning management system. [<https://tamuct.instructure.com>].

- **To log on:**
Username: Your MyCT username (everything before the "@" in your MyCT e-mail address)
Password: Your MyCT password
- **Canvas Support:** Use the Canvas Help link, located at the bottom of the left-hand menu, for issues with Canvas. You can select "Chat with Canvas Support," submit a support request through "Report a Problem," or call the Canvas support line: 1-844-757-0953. For issues related to course content and requirements, contact your instructor.



- **Other Technology Support:** For log-in problems, students should contact Help Desk Central. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:
 Email: helpdesk@tamu.edu
 Phone: (254) 519-5466
[Web Chat](http://hdc.tamu.edu): [http://hdc.tamu.edu]
Please let the support technician know you are an A&M-Central Texas student

Grading

Course grades are assigned using the standard 90/80/70/60 division, rounding to the nearest percent, using the following rubric:

Item	Points	Percent
Academic Integrity Exercise	0 (but required to pass)	0% *
Weekly Memos (13)	650 (50 per memo)	About 41%
Participation (15 sessions including discussion board if needed)	600 (40 per session)	About 38%
Research Paper	300	About 19%
Research Presentation	50	About 3%
TOTAL POSSIBLE	1600	100%
2954+ = A 2624-2953 = B 2294-2623 = C 1964-2293 = D 1963 or lower = F		

- Academic Integrity Exercise: This consists of watching a brief lecture, taking a quiz, seeing where any mistakes on the quiz came from, and signing a statement. Once you successfully complete this exercise, you will no longer need to do so in future political science courses. If you have previously completed this exercise for me, you need not do so for this course.
Having completed the Academic Integrity Exercise is a prerequisite to passing this course. It must be completed before you hand in any homework or the due date on the course schedule, whichever comes first.
 - **Rubric: You will automatically fail the course if you have not completed the Academic Integrity exercise on or before the due date on the course schedule.**
- Memos: Before the beginning of each class session, you should submit a typed, two page (about 400-600 words) essay on the day's readings via Canvas.
 - The first half should summarize the relevant material from **each** reading. Its goal is simply to show you did the required readings.
 - For the days when we read Tolkien's fiction: Just outline the main points of who did what in the first page of the memo.
 - For the days when we read other people's work about Tolkien: Before writing, be sure that you understand each author's argument – the thesis of the reading and what evidence the author produces to support the thesis. All of our authors have arguments to make, and some of the *Letters* contain more than one argument. In principle, about one sentence per letter is sufficient, while full essays require a few sentences to detail their arguments.
 - The second half of the memo should focus on one or more related political arguments. Its goal is to further your understanding of the politics of Tolkien's work through application of political theory to Middle Earth and/or application of what we see in Middle Earth to contemporary political thought.



- For the days when we read Tolkien’s fiction: Explore the political implications of some aspect of the parts that were assigned for the day. For example, here are some sample topics relevant to our first few sessions (*The Silmarillion*):
 - Who and what are the Ainur – and where might they fit into Tolkien’s own Catholicism?
 - How are the politics of subcreation by the Ainur presented?
 - What vice (or perhaps the lack of what virtue) is ultimately the source of Melkor’s rebellion against Illúvatar?
 - How might the first parts of the *Silmarillion* explain theodicy – the apparent contradiction between a benevolent deity and the existence of evil?
 - What determines the gender of the Ainur (or the Valar), and how does gender affect them?
 - What are the political implications of seeing death as a divine gift rather than simply an end to being which comes all too soon?
 - Do the Valar (other than Melkor) make mistakes?
 - What were the fundamental causes of the War of the Powers, and what were its consequences?
 - How does Tolkien develop the idea of cultural and even racial distinctions among Elves?
 - What are the gender politics of the relationship between Elwë Singollo (Thingol) and Melian the Maia?
 - If Fëanor was “great,” what qualities does the great person possess?
 - Why did Fëanor marry Nerdanel? Were there political reasons for his decision?
 - If “Manwë was free from evil and could not comprehend it,” was he truly possessed of free will, i.e. the ability to choose between right and wrong?
 - What type of political regime (leadership selection) is portrayed as “natural” in *The Silmarillion*?
 - Is there a difference between evil and rebellion against God’s plan? That is, are acts rightful or wrongful because they do or do not comport with what God would want, or would some things be right and wrong even in the absence of a deity? (If you’ve read Plato’s dialogue *Euthyphro*, this is similar to the basic question asked by Socrates).
 - Is a holy war/crusade/jihad the only legitimate form of war? Can any other type be just? Can even this type be just?
 - How are we supposed to appreciate things like jewels and other shiny things, according to Tolkien’s portrayal? That is, are they wealth, possessions, art, or something else?
 - If *The Silmarillion* was to be viewed as a political allegory, what might the Silmarils represent?
 - What are the consequences of the lies spread by Melkor? Do they reveal a fundamental problem with allowing free speech?
 - If Melkor represents evil as the absence of goodness and the perversion of it rather than the creation of anything, what might Ungoliant represent? Is her evil different from his evil?



- What are the sources of Fëanor’s crimes? Are they the same as the causes of Morgoth’s actions? Is Fëanor evil?
- What role might oaths play in a political system?
- Why did Fëanor decide to seize the ships at Alqualondë instead of just building some ships to sail to Middle Earth? Why the haste – and what might the answer reveal about Tolkien’s attitude towards masses of ordinary people?
- Some people consider Tolkien’s portrayal of Dwarves to be anti-Semitic. Why might they think this?
- How is migration/immigration portrayed in *The Silmarillion*?
- What attitude towards the international relations theory of “realism” is displayed by Melian’s advice to Thingol regarding the Noldor?
- How just is the treatment of Maeglin’s father?
- Why does Maeglin seek power?
- What are the politics of genealogy? Why do we care about the heritage of Turín, Tuor, and Beren?
- What modern weapons might have inspired those used by Morgoth in the Battle of the Sudden Flame?
- What lessons about politics and fortune are we supposed to draw from the story of the children of Hurín, especially Turín Turambar?
- What are the similarities and differences between the Melian-Thingol and Beren-Luthien relationships?
- What effect does unchecked political power have on the character and behavior of monarchs in Tolkien’s fiction?
- Are Men and Elves moral equals in Tolkien’s fiction? Would he advocate a multi-racial polity of Men and Elves where individuals of both “races” enjoy the same political powers/rights?
- Where is the diversity we see in our world found in Middle Earth? How is it portrayed?
- Was the struggle of the Noldor and their allies against Morgoth “worth it” -- or pointless?
- What were the fundamental causes of the downfall of Numenor?
- Was the subcreation of Numenor a mistake by the Valar?
- Do all empires end up as exploiters of the less powerful?
- How did Sauron recover from Morgoth’s defeat to become a great power in Middle-Earth?
- For the days when we read other people’s work about Tolkien: Detail at least one weakness in the evidence or warrants of one or more connected pieces we read, and suggest how this weakness might be addressed by scholars. Look for weaknesses in one or more arguments you summarized in the first half of the paper, especially if they are common to all of the arguments on one side of an issue. Do not forget to suggest how scholars might address or further investigate this weakness.
- These memos shouldn’t require outside research but if you do some, be sure to cite it properly using the APSA system (see Canvas for examples). If you only cite from the assigned readings, you don’t need a works cited page; otherwise, you do.



- Rubric:
 - Each half of the memo is worth half of the credit.
 - The first half is graded for clarity and descriptive accuracy. It should show that you read and understood the material.
 - The second half is graded as an argument. That is, it should have a thesis (claim), evidence drawn from the readings, and express or implied warrants between the two. Moreover, you should say what we can do with this information – either by application of Tolkien’s work to politics or application of politics to Tolkien’s work. This is an opportunity to practice coming up with researchable paper topics.
 - Spelling/grammar errors can reduce the grade on the memo by up to 20% (1% deduction per error). Check the link on Canvas to at least address my personal pet peeves. If this is a consistent source of lost points, you may wish to seek guidance from the University Writing Center (described below).
- Participation: Students should professionally and constructively participate throughout each class session.
 - Professionalism: Students are to maintain a high level of collegiality and respect when interacting with one another and the professors. Please refrain from using profanity or slurs in interactions related to this course, and use “Dr. Dunai” or “Professor Dunai” instead of “Amber” or “Ms. Dunai.” This pattern of professionalism should also extend to your email interactions, i.e. proper address and use of full sentences and words (“you” rather than “u”). If you have a preferred name other than the one listed in the roster (“Nick” rather than “Nicholas,” for example), please indicate this during first-day introductions so that your classmates and I can use it.
 - Rubric: This will be graded on a simple system. A student who attends and does little else will receive 40% credit for that session (16 points). A student who constructively and professionally participates in about half of the class will receive 80% credit (36 points). A student who constructively participates throughout class will receive 120% credit (50 points). A good rule of thumb is to be sure to contribute something relevant (even just a question that shows engagement with the course material) at least once an hour (i.e. three times per class session) if there is no lecture.
 - Constructive participation means making comments or asking questions that demonstrate familiarity with the assigned readings for the week. It also means actively engaging in any in-class exercises. During the final week of class, it means asking questions about others’ research projects. If we don’t meet synchronously on Election Day, it requires contributing multiple cogent posts to the discussion board.
 - As the amount of class time devoted to lecture increases, the amount of participation expected from students decreases proportionally. There are few lectures in this course, however.
 - Students who enter the meeting late or leave it early without a legitimate excuse (see the rules for excused absences below) will have an amount equal to the proportion of time they missed (rounded up to the next 10%) deducted from their participation score.
- Research Paper: Students will construct an original research paper during the course that addresses some aspect of the politics of *The Hobbit* and/or *The Lord of the Rings*. POLI 4365 students should use the APSA citation system (detailed on Canvas). The main body of the paper -- excluding the cover



page, abstract, works cited, and any endnotes, tables or figures -- may be anywhere from 2500 to 7500 words long (about 10-30 double-spaced pages using standard fonts and margins).

- Elements (adapted from Andrew Enterline, 2007, “A Guide to Writing Research Projects in Graduate Political Science Courses,” Version 2.0):
 - Research Question/Puzzle (a page or two which will be subsequently linked to your Introduction and ultimately guide every part of the paper, from your literature review to your theory and argument/analysis)
 - Select a research area and look for unanswered or incompletely answered questions in that area. Write down as many as possible while brainstorming, although only one will make it into your paper (until the conclusion, when you may wish to introduce others as potential follow-on projects). Then select and write down a specific research question of interest from the set of questions that you identified in your research area.
 - Consider the potential academic and societal implications of your study of said question, so that the project is not an isolated event, but part of a broader body of scholarship.
 - After you have identified your research question, you should consider whether the question is clear and concise. That is, can the question be stated in a single, interrogative sentence of moderate length?
 - Ultimately, research questions are not “written in stone” —i.e., they can change and evolve as you read and explore. For example, you might find that, upon reading some of the literature, you discover that a great many scholars have explored your question previously, and you wish to explore a research question that is relatively unexplored. Alternatively, as you read the literature you might find a particular sub-area or nuance of your original question that you find of interest and wish to explore as your research question.
 - Research question evolution notwithstanding, the question that you do arrive at must be clearly and visibly stated in your research project. That is, there should be absolutely no uncertainty on the reader’s part as to your research question and its validity as the focus of your research project.
 - Literature Review (about five pages)
 - General Purpose: It is necessary to thoroughly vet the scholarly literature (broadly defined) that is relevant to your research question. In doing so, you are engaged in the process of “reviewing the literature,” or identifying and familiarizing yourself with prior efforts by scholars that bear in some way on your investigation of your research puzzle/question.
 - Ultimately, you should keep in mind that you have about 10 double-spaced pages to execute your literature review, so you need to be concise, while at the same time devoting sufficient space to the listed tasks. This 10 page limit is purposely constraining. Hallmarks of poor graduate seminar papers are long literature reviews that result in starvation of the remaining sections of the project, such as the theory and detailed examination of the evidence. As such, the page limit compels you to be succinct, identify the general attributes of the extant literature, and develop a transition to your theoretical section.
 - A literature generally focuses on secondary sources, rather than primary or tertiary sources.



- It would require unusual justification to have less than ten secondary sources (scholarly books or peer-reviewed journal articles) in a literature review.
- Examples of primary sources include books, letters, and drafts by Tolkien himself. Secondary sources are written by scholars discussing the primary source material. Finally, tertiary sources like the *J.R.R. Tolkien Encyclopedia* summarize material from secondary sources. Such sources should generally be avoided in the literature review, although they may serve as useful jumping-off points when discussing your research question in the beginning of the paper.
- Reviewing the literature requires you to provide the reader with just enough information about prior efforts, without regurgitating the details of each and every study that is relevant to your inquiry. A good rule of thumb is that the literature review should be no more than half of your final paper, in order to leave room for development of your argument and presentation of your evidence.
- In addition to reviewing how previous efforts have approached theoretical and empirical issues relevant to your study, you should also demonstrate to the reader the strengths and weaknesses in this work in an effort to set the stage for your own investigation.
- In sum, the purpose in writing a literature review is, broadly speaking, threefold:
 - To discuss the scholarly work relevant to your project;
 - To point out the strengths and weakness of this body of research (and, in doing so, keeping in mind a respectful, even-handed approach to evaluating this work); and
 - Identifying how this body of research as it currently stands has not addressed sufficiently the research puzzle/question that you've identified, or that this body of research might be helpful in addressing your question or puzzle. This task is indeed critical, because it informs the reader as to the reason(s) why further research (i.e., your paper) is warranted, and provides the setup for the theoretical portion of your project. It is very important that you devote some project space to elaborating the reasons why the current literature is inadequate for answering your research question in some way or ways.
 - As an exercise, you might consider yourself confronted by a very skeptical reader who is deciding whether or not to spend the time to read the remaining pages of your project. Ask yourself how well you are doing in convincing this reader to read on. Are you really providing a neat angle on the literature, something that will draw the reader in, or is the remainder of your paper likely to be a very small, incremental advance in previous work, or even worse, quibbling over very minor offenses in prior work?
- Theory (a few pages): Describe the theoretical lens that you will use to address your research question/solve the puzzle. Since most authors we read have access to the same primary sources that you do, it is important to select or devise a method that guides your interpretation of those sources. For example, if you are analyzing the



political implications of all or some of the text, you might use a theoretical lens like just war theory, feminism, queer theory, critical race theory, Christian or other theology, Marxism or class analysis, environmentalism, critical theory, some strand of conservative or liberal political philosophy, democratic peace or selectorate theory, psychological theory, economic theory, etc. This theory will help you select and interpret the relevant primary source materials. You should include more than one source that details your theoretical perspective (avoiding tertiary sources, of course). Justify this theoretical perspective by showing how it has helped address political puzzles in past academic work.

- Argument (perhaps three to five pages): This is where you solve the puzzle or answer the research question. Each argument includes a claim (your thesis, or a point that supports your thesis), evidence (focusing on primary rather than secondary sources – your proof should come from the text rather than the mere authority of other scholars unmoored from their sources), and an express or implied connection between the two called a *warrant* (often provided by your theoretical perspective).
- Introduction and Conclusion: These should generally be written last, since they constitute a preview and summary of your analysis, respectively.
 - The introduction should reveal the research question/puzzle, establish its importance, summarize how previous literature has dealt with it, preview your theoretical perspective and thesis, and conclude with a “road map” to the rest of the paper. This can be done in 2-3 paragraphs.
 - The conclusion should revisit the research question/puzzle in light of your arguments and analysis, demonstrating that the evidence, taken as a whole, does indeed support your thesis and that your argument constitutes an important advance in some respects from previous scholarship. It should conclude with a paragraph establishing next steps in your research agenda – in other words, where you or scholars reading your work should focus their energies next.
- Title Page and Abstract.
 - Your title should make the subject of your paper plain. Some even use their underlying research question as a title or subtitle.
 - Follow the title with your name, affiliation (presumably Texas A&M University – Central Texas), your professional contact information (e.g. your student email address), and the date or version of your paper. All of this should be centered on the upper half of the page.
 - Follow this information with a single-spaced abstract (a summary of the paper that at a minimum lists the puzzle/question, the theoretical lens with which you approached the problem, any methods used (e.g. “analysis of the text of Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*, Letters, and drafts from the *History of Middle-Earth*”), and the paper’s conclusion and theoretical importance. The abstract is quite short – no more than 250 words – and should be entirely contained on the title page or placed on the second, unnumbered, page of the paper.
 - Footer: At the bottom of the title page, one puts identification of the conference, date, and location where the paper was or is to be presented. This is also the place to thank anyone who contributed, e.g. by reviewing draft manuscripts or



offering constructive ideas. Finally, it is customary but optional to request that readers contact you for the latest draft of the work prior to citation.

- Example:

Surge, Escalate, Withdraw & Shinseki:
Forecasting & Retro-casting American Force
Strategies & Insurgency in Iraq*

Andrew J. Enterline Univ. of North Texas Dept. of Political Science Box 305340 Denton, TX 76203-5340 ajenter@unt.edu	J. Michael Greig Univ. of North Texas Dept. of Political Science Box 305340 Denton, TX 76203-5340 greig@unt.edu
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February 21, 2007

Abstract

Central to the contemporary American foreign policy debate is the issue of reducing insurgency and promoting stability in Iraq, and the role of American military forces in achieving these outcomes. Military force-related proposals range from complete withdrawal to a moderate "surge" in troops to a massive escalation of the force commitment. Here, we draw upon an analysis of domestic political stability in 60 imposed political systems occurring during the period 1816-1994 to forecast the effectiveness of said force-related proposals. The analysis underscores, in part, that (a) a policy of surging American troops is unlikely to succeed, (b) a policy of belated massive escalation reduces insurgency, but much less so than an initial policy of massive invasion coupled with massive occupation, a strategy that preempts the development of a robust insurgency.

*We are grateful to the Department of Political Science and the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of North Texas for research and intellectual support.

- Works Cited: Attach a works cited page using APSA specifications, ordered by the last name of the authors and formatted with a hanging indent. Include only works you have cited in the paper.
- Tables and Figures: Should you use tables, charts, images, or other figures in your work, they should either appear on the page they are mentioned, or (more common) be attached as separate pages following your works cited, with one page per such table or figure. Regardless of how you present them, each table or figure needs to be numbered and captioned.
- General Formatting: Just follow this checklist:
 - _____ The main body of the text is in proportional 12 point type and is double-spaced;
 - _____ One-inch margins (left, right, bottom and top) are used through- out the text;
 - _____ Headings, sub-headings, and sub-sub-headings (consistently hierarchical) are employed to sub-divide the text; and
 - _____ The paper is no more than 35 sheets in length (everything included—title page, abstract page, main body of text, endnotes, references, tables, and figures).



○ Rubric:

Points Possible	% of Paper Grade	Description
40	13%	Summary of Preliminary Research Question/Puzzle, Theoretical Approach, and Available Resources The student writes a few pages containing his or her research question/puzzle, a brief statement on what theoretical approach he or she intends to use, and a list of at least four unassigned scholarly sources on that topic (as an APSA-formatted Works Cited page) by the relevant deadline on the syllabus. Students are not “locked in” to these choices, but rather should communicate any revisions to the professor in a timely manner in order to receive useful advice about how to proceed.
25	8%	Introduction and Research Question/Puzzle: See the above requirements for each. The question/puzzle and thesis selected must be relevant to both political science and Tolkien’s fiction and follow all established assignment guidelines.
75	25%	Literature Review: The literature review should meet all requirements set forth in the “literature review” section of the syllabus.
40	13%	Theory: Be sure to not only select a theoretical lens to work with, but to defend that theoretical approach by demonstrating that it has been used successfully to solve other puzzles in previous scholarship (which may well have been on different topics or writings than yours).
75	25%	Argumentation and Evidence: Ideally, the final thesis will be supported by multiple line of argument (claim, evidence, warrant), each of which will itself be supported through argument construction. For example, you might include material from the assigned writings from Tolkien and trace their evolution in the <i>History of Middle Earth</i> and/or <i>The History of the Hobbit</i> .
20	7%	Title Page, Abstract, and Conclusion: See above for the requirements for each.
25	8%	Works Cited: You should have cited at least 7 works by the end of the paper – four for the literature review, another two or three when discussing and defending your choice of theoretical perspective, and a couple of primary sources or research monographs to provide evidence for your thesis and associated arguments. Everything should be in APSA format, alphabetically by author last name, etc.
Possibly negative	Up to -100%	Word and Page Counts: For every 100 words short of the minimum word count for the <u>body</u> of the paper (see above), 5% of the remaining credit will be deducted from the paper.
Possibly negative	Up to -20%.	Writing Style and Tone: Content should be written in Standard American English in complete, grammatically-correct sentences. Standard punctuation rules should also be observed. The project should be written in a formal tone suitable for a scholarly audience. Colloquialisms and slang should be avoided in favor of more professional diction. For each error over five, 1% will be deducted, to a maximum of 20%.

- Research Presentation: Prepare a 5-10 minute summary of your puzzle, thesis, and supporting evidence. In some disciplines, people literally read their papers at conferences, but in political science you should **not** read us your paper, although notes or an outline for your own use are a must. Some prepared visual aid, such as a PowerPoint presentation, is required. **You can record the presentation**



using the **Studio tool in Canvas** or any other presentation recording software. You will be graded on preparation, professionalism, content, and how you address questions about your work from other students or the professors. (Your own questions of the other presenters form the participation grade for this portion of the session).

- Rubric: You will be scored on these five criteria. The first four are worth 12 points each, with the last one possibly subtracting from the sum of the first four.
 - Presentation (structure, notes, use of visual aids)
 - Professionalism (dress, conduct, language and syntax)
 - Content (puzzle, thesis, evidence)
 - Question handling (background knowledge, handling counter-arguments):
 - Over/under time limits: -10 per minute over/under
 - TOTAL = 2 + _____ /50

Course Policies

Regrade Policies

Mistakes happen. Don't be shy about checking everything twice. In order to prevent a last-minute search for points long after the original grading has been done, there are two policies for regrades or disputes over grades. Please remember the deadlines in each case. After this time, I am no longer confident that I will be able to remember enough to fairly regrade the material (i.e. using exactly the same standards as those applied to other students).

- Written Work: The instructor is not perfect, and if you believe part or all of a written assignment has been graded incorrectly, you need only return it **within one week** of the posting of comments and grades on Canvas with a *brief* note specifying the part(s) to be regraded. The specified parts will be compared to the key again. After a week has passed, I can no longer be sure that you will be graded to the same standards as those used for all the other students, so work will not be regraded after this period.
- Participation: **At the end of any class period**, you may request to see your participation grade for that class. If you disagree with the grade, you need to explain your disagreement **then, while the discussion is still fresh in everyone's memory**. I advise you to write down a few words each time you participate so that you might be able to jog my memory after class if you believe I missed your effort.

Absences

Unexcused absences earn zero credit for the session.

- Excusing an Absence
 - Scheduled Absences: Students must inform the instructor *prior to an absence*. Send me an email stating the dates(s) you will be missing and the reason(s). **Hand in your make-up work (see below) for each missed session before you leave.**
 - Emergencies: Send me an email if possible. If all else fails, you or a friend may call my office and speak to me or my voicemail. There are very few situations in life that preclude making a phone call or having a friend do so; failure to contact the instructor *prior to class* will normally rule out any sort of make-up. The standard is "ASAP" – that is, as soon as a reasonable person would have been able to contact me. **When you return, be sure to bring make-up work (see below) for any missed classes. This is due one week after you return. It is not the instructor's duty to remind you.**



- **Make-up Work:** For each **excused** absence, you will need to make up for the lost participation credit by expanding your memo from two pages to four. It should now contain about one page of descriptive text about the assigned readings plus three pages containing and developing your own argument, as detailed above in the section on the memos.
- **Late work:** Each memo is due by 6 PM on the day of class for which it is assigned. Late memos lose 20% of the credit they would otherwise receive per day, beginning with -20% a few minutes after class begins.
- There will be no incompletes in this class, barring actual hospitalization or unforeseen deployment after the withdrawal deadline has passed. By university policy, incompletes must be finished in the subsequent semester.

Academic Integrity

University Code of Academic Honesty Texas A&M University -Central Texas values the integrity of the academic enterprise and strives for the highest standards of academic conduct. A&M-Central Texas expects its students, faculty, and staff to support the adherence to high standards of personal and scholarly conduct to preserve the honor and integrity of the creative community. Academic integrity is defined as a commitment to honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Any deviation by students from this expectation may result in a failing grade for the assignment and potentially a failing grade for the course. Academic misconduct is any act that improperly affects a true and honest evaluation of a student's academic performance and includes, but is not limited to, working with others in an unauthorized manner, cheating on an examination or other academic work, plagiarism and improper citation of sources, using another student's work, collusion, and the abuse of resource materials. All academic misconduct concerns will be referred to the university's Office of Student Conduct. Ignorance of the university's standards and expectations is never an excuse to act with a lack of integrity. When in doubt on collaboration, citation, or any issue, please contact your instructor before taking a course of action.

For more [information regarding the Student Conduct process](https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct.html), see [https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct.html].

If you know of potential honor violations by other students, you may [submit a report](https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?TAMUCentralTexas&layout_id=0), [https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?TAMUCentralTexas&layout_id=0].

Specific guidelines for this course, which supplement and do not replace University policy:

- **Violations:** There are many forms of academic misconduct. Some common violations of academic integrity that I have observed while teaching similar classes at TAMUCT are
 - Copying another student's homework. I encourage study groups, but copying must be avoided. Discuss the readings as long as you wish, but don't "share" the contents of your assignments before they are due. You may not "jointly" complete any of the homework exercises in this course unless otherwise indicated on the assignment; these are to be completed by yourself alone. If you provide another student with a copy of your homework and they copy it, both you and the copier will be deemed to have violated the policy.
 - Using direct quotes without quotation marks. Even if you are just using three- or four-word phrases, you need to surround them with quotation marks if you didn't create them yourself. This is true even if you cite the source! Remember that changing a few words in a sentence does not transform a direct quote into a paraphrase; instead, it transforms one long direct quote into several shorter direct quotes with a word of your own between each. A true paraphrase is the expression of the cited source's ideas in your own words.



- Paraphrasing another person's words without citing the source.
- **Penalties:**
 - The normal penalty for a violation of academic integrity (whether or not it is specifically listed above) in any of my classes is a grade of zero for the work or a deduction of 20% (two letter grades) from your course grade, whichever is **greater**. The infraction will be reported to the TAMUCT administration, with a recommendation for probation in the case of deliberate violation or remediation in the case of clearly inadvertent violation.
 - The (a) outright purchase, download, or completion by others of an exam/QLR element, or (b) second or subsequent violation of academic integrity (in this course or other courses) display such serious disregard for academic integrity that either one of them will result in course failure **and** recommendation for the strongest possible sanctions to the TAMUCT administration.

University Policies

Drop Policy

If you discover that you need to drop this class, you must complete the [Drop Request](#) Dynamic Form through Warrior Web.

[<https://dynamicforms.ngwebsolutions.com/casAuthentication.ashx?InstID=eaed95b9-f2be-45f3-a37d-46928168bc10&targetUrl=https%3A%2F%2Fdynamicforms.ngwebsolutions.com%2FSubmit%2FForm%2FStart%2F53b8369e-0502-4f36-be43-f02a4202f612>].

Professors cannot drop students; this is always the responsibility of the student. The Registrar's Office will provide a deadline on the Academic Calendar for which the form must be completed, signed and returned. Once you return the signed form to the Registrar's Office, you must go into Warrior Web and confirm that you are no longer enrolled. If you still show as enrolled, FOLLOW-UP with the Registrar's Office immediately. You are to attend class until the procedure is complete to avoid penalty for absence. Should you miss the drop deadline or fail to follow the procedure, you will receive an F in the course, which may affect your financial aid and/or VA educational benefits.

Professors are Mandatory Reporters

Texas State Law S.B. 212 states that:

- "An employee of a postsecondary educational institution who, in the course and scope of employment, witnesses or receives information regarding the occurrence of an incident that the employee reasonably believes constitutes **sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, or stalking** and is alleged to have been committed by or against a person who was a student enrolled at or an employee of the institution at the time of the incident shall promptly report the incident to the institution's Title IX coordinator or deputy Title IX coordinator"
- Further: "A person **commits an offense if the person is required to make a report...and knowingly fails to make the report.** ... A postsecondary educational institution **shall terminate the employment** of an employee whom the institution determines in accordance with the institution's disciplinary procedure to have committed [such] an offense."



Student Resources

- **Warrior Shield (Emergency Warning System for Texas A&M University-Central Texas)**
 - Warrior Shield is an emergency notification service that gives Texas A&M University-Central Texas the ability to communicate health and safety emergency information quickly via email, text message, and social media. All students are automatically enrolled in Warrior Shield through their myCT email account.
 - Connect to Warrior Shield by 911Cellular [<https://portal.publicsafetycloud.net/Account/Login>] to change where you receive your alerts or to opt out. By staying enrolled in Warrior Shield, university officials can quickly pass on safety-related information, regardless of your location.
- **University Library:** The University Library provides many services in support of research across campus and at a distance. We offer over 200 electronic databases containing approximately 250,000 eBooks and 82,000 journals, in addition to the 85,000 items in our print collection, which can be mailed to students who live more than 50 miles from campus. Research guides for each subject taught at A&M-Central Texas are available through our website to help students navigate these resources. On campus, the library offers technology including cameras, laptops, microphones, webcams, and digital sound recorders.
 - Research assistance from a librarian is also available 24 hours a day through our online chat service, and at the reference desk when the library is open. Research sessions can be scheduled for more comprehensive assistance, and may take place on Skype or in-person at the library. Assistance may cover many topics, including how to find articles in peer-reviewed journals, how to cite resources, and how to piece together research for written assignments.
 - Our 27,000-square-foot facility on the A&M-Central Texas main campus includes student lounges, private study rooms, group work spaces, computer labs, family areas suitable for all ages, and many other features. Services such as interlibrary loan, TexShare, binding, and laminating are available. The library frequently offers workshops, tours, readings, and other events. For more information, please visit our Library website [<http://tamuct.libguides.com/index>].
 - *For Fall 2020, all reference service will be conducted virtually. Please go to our Library website [<http://tamuct.libguides.com/index>] to access our virtual reference help and our current hours*
- **Academic Accommodations**
 - At Texas A&M University-Central Texas, we value an inclusive learning environment where every student has an equal chance to succeed and has the right to a barrier-free education. The Office of Access and Inclusion is responsible for ensuring that students with a disability receive equal access to the university's programs, services and activities. If you believe you have a disability requiring reasonable accommodations please contact the Office of Access and Inclusion, WH-212; or call (254) 501-5836. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such. For more information please visit our Access & Inclusion Canvas page (log-in required) [<https://tamuct.instructure.com/courses/717>]
 - Important information for Pregnant and/or Parenting Students
 - Texas A&M University-Central Texas supports students who are pregnant and/or parenting. In accordance with requirements of Title IX and related guidance from US Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights, the Dean of Student Affairs' Office can assist students who are pregnant and/or parenting in seeking accommodations related to pregnancy and/or parenting. Students should seek out assistance as early in the pregnancy as possible. For more information, please visit Student Affairs [<https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/index.html>]. Students may also contact the



institution's Title IX Coordinator. If you would like to read more about these requirements and guidelines online, please visit the website [<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/pregnancy.pdf>].

- Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex and gender—including pregnancy, parenting, and all related conditions. Texas A&M University-Central Texas is able to provide flexible and individualized reasonable accommodation to pregnant and parenting students. All pregnant and parenting students should contact the Associate Dean in the Division of Student Affairs at (254) 501-5909 to seek out assistance. Students may also contact the University's Title IX Coordinator.
- **Tutoring:** Tutoring is available to all Texas A&M University - Central Texas students, on a remote online basis. Visit the Academic Support Community in Canvas to view schedules and contact information. Subjects tutored on campus include Accounting, Advanced Math, Biology, Finance, Statistics, Mathematics, and Study Skills. Tutors will return at the Tutoring Center in Warrior Hall, Suite 111 in the Fall 2020 semester. Student success coaching is available online upon request.
 - If you have a question regarding tutor schedules, need to schedule a tutoring session, are interested in becoming a tutor, success coaching, or have any other question, contact Academic Support Programs at (254) 501-5836, visit the Office of Student Success at 212F Warrior Hall, or by emailing studentsuccess@tamuct.edu
 - Chat live with a tutor 24/7 for almost any subject from on your computer! Tutor.com is an online tutoring platform that enables A&M-Central Texas students to log in and receive online tutoring support at no additional cost. This tool provides tutoring in over 40 subject areas except writing support. Access Tutor.com through Canvas.
- **University Writing Center:** The University Writing Center (UWC) at Texas A&M University–Central Texas (TAMUCT) is a free service open to all TAMUCT students. For the Fall 2020 semester, all services will be online as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The hours of operation are from 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Monday thru Thursday with satellite hours online Monday thru Thursday from 6:00-9:00 p.m. The UWC is also offering hours from 12:00-3:00 p.m. on Saturdays.
 - Tutors are prepared to help writers of all levels and abilities at any stage of the writing process. By providing a practice audience for students' ideas and writing, our tutors highlight the ways in which they read and interpret students' texts, offering guidance and support throughout the various stages of the writing process. While tutors will not write, edit, or grade papers, they will assist students in developing more effective composing practices. Whether you need help brainstorming ideas, organizing an essay, proofreading, understanding proper citation practices, or just want a quiet place to work, the UWC is here to help!
 - Students may arrange a one-to-one session with a trained and experienced writing tutor by making an appointment via WOnline [<https://tamuct.mywconline.com/>]. In addition, you can email Dr. Bruce Bowles Jr. at bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu if you have any questions about the UWC and/or need any assistance with scheduling.

University COVID-19 Policies

To promote public safety and protect students, faculty, and staff during the coronavirus pandemic, Texas A&M University-Central Texas has adopted policies and practices to minimize virus transmission. All members of the university community are expected to adhere to these measures to ensure their own safety and the safety of others. Students must observe the following practices while participating in face-to-face courses, course-



related activities (office hours, help sessions, transitioning to and between classes, study spaces, academic services, etc.) and co-curricular programs:

- Self-monitoring—Students should follow CDC recommendations for self-monitoring. Students who have a fever or exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 should participate in class remotely and should not participate in face-to-face instruction. Students required to quarantine must participate in courses and course-related activities remotely and must not attend face-to-face course activities. Students should notify their instructors of the quarantine requirement. Students under quarantine are expected to participate in courses and complete graded work unless they have symptoms that are too severe to participate in course activities.
- Face Coverings— Face coverings must be worn inside of buildings and within 50 feet of building entrances on the A&M-Central Texas Campus. This includes lobbies, restrooms, hallways, elevators, classrooms, laboratories, conference rooms, break rooms, non-private office spaces, and other shared spaces. Face coverings are also required in outdoor spaces where physical distancing is not maintained. The university will evaluate exceptions to this requirement on a case by case basis. Students can request an exception through the Office of Access and Inclusion in Student Affairs.
 - o If a student refuses to wear a face covering, the instructor should ask the student to leave and join the class remotely. If the student does not leave the class, the faculty member should report that student to the Office of Student Conduct. Additionally, the faculty member may choose to teach that day's class remotely for all students.
- Physical Distancing—Physical distancing must be maintained between students, instructors, and others in the course and course-related activities.
- Classroom Ingress/Egress—Students must follow marked pathways for entering and exiting classrooms and other teaching spaces. Leave classrooms promptly after course activities have concluded. Do not congregate in hallways and maintain 6-foot physical distancing when waiting to enter classrooms and other instructional spaces.
- The university will notify students in the event that the COVID-19 situation necessitates changes to the course schedule or modality.

Amendments

Not all exigencies can be foreseen, especially in the midst of a pandemic. I reserve the right to amend the syllabus at any time. Any such amendment will be provided to the students in writing by uploading a revised syllabus to the course on Canvas. If I need to do so, I will use the Announcements feature of Canvas to inform students of the change(s).



Course Topics, Readings, and Due Dates

August 25: Introduction – The Politics of Myth and Literature

September 1: Dawn of the First Age

J.R.R. Tolkien, The Silmarillion, “Ainulindalë”

J.R.R. Tolkien, The Silmarillion, “Valaquenta”

J.R.R. Tolkien, The Silmarillion, “Quenta Silmarillion,” Chapters 1-5

Due Memo 1

Due: Academic Integrity Exercise

September 8: The Siege of Angband

J.R.R. Tolkien, The Silmarillion, “Quenta Silmarillion,” Chapters 6-17

Due: Memo 2

September 15: Heroism, Downfall, and *Eucatastrophe* in the First and Second Ages

J.R.R. Tolkien, The Silmarillion, “Quenta Silmarillion,” Chapters 18-24

J.R.R. Tolkien, The Silmarillion, “Akallabêth”

Due: Memo 3

September 22: There and Back Again

J.R.R. Tolkien, The Hobbit, Chapters 1-4

J.R.R. Tolkien, The Hobbit (First Edition), Chapter 5 (Canvas)

J.R.R. Tolkien, The Hobbit, Chapters 5-19

Due: Memo 4

September 29: The Return of the Shadow

J.R.R. Tolkien, The Lord of the Rings, Prologue and Book One

Due: Memo 5

October 6: Journey of the Nine Companions

J.R.R. Tolkien, The Lord of the Rings, Book Two and Chapters 1-2 of Book Three

Due: Memo 6

October 13: The Two Towers

J.R.R. Tolkien, The Lord of the Rings, Chapters 3-11 of Book Three and all of Book Four

Due: Memo 7

October 20: The War of the Ring

J.R.R. Tolkien, The Lord of the Rings, Book Five

Due: Memo 8

October 27: The End of the Third Age

J.R.R. Tolkien, The Lord of the Rings, Book Six

J.R.R. Tolkien, “Mythopoeia” (Canvas)

Due: Memo 9



November 3: The Mythopoeic Politics of Middle Earth (Election Night -- Modality TBD in First Week)

Letters 52, 181, 183, 186, 346

Charles Lincoln, "A Literary Lens into Constitutional Interpretation and a Possible Synthesis of Natural and Positive Law: *The Silmarillion*" (Canvas)

Dominic Nardi, "Political Institutions in J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle Earth: Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying about the Lack of Democracy" (Canvas)

Jeffrey Dixon, "Political Theory, Political Myth, Political Science? The Domestic Politics of *The Lord of the Rings*" (Canvas)

Dennis Wise, "On Ways of Studying Tolkien: Notes Toward a Better (Epic) Fantasy Criticism" (Canvas)

Due: Summary of Preliminary Research Question/Puzzle, Theoretical Approach, and Available Resources

November 10: Politics of War

Letters 64, 66, 81, 71, 78, 96 (pp. 109-111 only), 101, 195

Amber Dunai, "Ofmod and Aristocratic Chivalry in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*" (Canvas)

Steven Carter, "Faramir and the Heroic Ideal of the Twentieth Century; Or, How Aragorn Died at the Somme" (Canvas)

Michael Livingston, "The Shell-shocked Hobbit: The First World War and Tolkien's Trauma of the Ring" (Canvas)

Janet Brennan Croft, War and the Works of J.R.R. Tolkien, Excerpt (Canvas)

Jeffrey Dixon, "Political Fictions: Tolkien's Middle Earth as a Refutation of Modern Just War Theory" (Canvas)

Matthew Dickerson, "On Hobbits, the Treatment of Prisoners, and the Ethics of War" (Canvas)

Due: Memo 10

November 17: Politics of Race and Culture

Letters 29, 30, 53, 78, 269

J.R.R. Tolkien, Excerpt from "Words, Phrases and Passages in Various Tongues in *The Lord of the Rings*" (Canvas)

J.R.R. Tolkien, Excerpts from "A Letter to Mrs. Munby" (Canvas)

Niels Werber, "Geo- and Biopolitics of Middle-Earth: A German Reading of Tolkien's '*The Lord of the Rings*'" (Canvas)

Margaret Sinex, "'Monsterized Saracens,' Tolkien's Haradrim, and Other Medieval 'Fantasy Products'" (Canvas)

Dmitra Fimi, "A Hierarchical World" (Canvas)

Helen Young, "Diversity and Difference: Cosmopolitanism and 'The Lord of the Rings'" (Canvas)

Jonathan Lench, "Migration in the Myth: The Role of Migration in Tolkien's Fiction" (Canvas)

Due: Memo 11

November 24: Politics of Gender

Letters 43, 49, 177, 214, 244, 348

Adam Roberts, "Women" (Canvas)

Melanie Rawls, "The Feminine Principle in Tolkien" (Canvas)

Nancy Enright, "Tolkien's Females and the Defining of Power" (Canvas)

Due: Memo 12



December 1: Religion, Virtue, and Environment in Middle Earth

Letters, 131, 142, 153, 191, 208, 246, 310, 320, 339, 343, 353

Claudio Testi, "Tolkien's Work: Is it Christian or Pagan?" (Canvas)

Eleanor Simpson, "The Evolution of J.R.R. Tolkien's Portrayal of Nature: Foreshadowing Anti-speciesism" (Canvas)

Matthew Dickerson and Jonathan Evans, "Woods, Wildness, and the Feraculture of the Ents" (Canvas)

Verlyn Flieger, "Taking the Part of Trees: Eco-Conflict in Middle Earth" (Canvas)

Due: Memo 13

December 8: Conference – The Politics of J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle Earth

Due: Conference Papers and Conference Presentations (Recorded)



Appendix A: Sample Paper Topics

- What is Tolkien's approach to war and peace? When, if ever, is war "just?"
- How did Tolkien's experiences in World War I affect the messages of his novels?
- Do Tolkien's novels reinforce either the "just world" fallacy or "mean world syndrome?"
- To what type of environmental ethics did Tolkien subscribe?
- What is Tolkien's attitude towards political economy – exchange, wealth, class, etc?
- What is Tolkien's ideal form of leadership / governance / political power / stewardship?
- What types of rights are emphasized in Tolkien's novels?
- Do Tolkien's novels tend to support or undermine myths of white supremacy?
- Why have so many Tolkienian feminists rejected feminist critiques of his novels?
- How does Tolkien see or portray women in his novels? Does this tend to undermine or reinforce patriarchy / male dominance?
- What virtues are promoted in Tolkien's novels? From whom does he take this theory of virtue (Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Boethius, or someone else)?
- What are the uniquely Catholic features of *The Lord of the Rings*?
- In what ways, if any, do Tolkien's conservative Catholic views find expression in his novels?
- How have translators altered the politics and meaning of Tolkien's novels in (insert language here)?
- How did the Peter Jackson adaptations of *The Hobbit* (or *The Lord of the Rings*) alter the politics of those works?
- Does Tolkien favor civilization over the alternatives?
- What is the proper role of work / industry in Tolkien's novels?
- What is the virtue of Wisdom, according to Tolkien?
- What do Tolkien's novels have to tell us about the concept of "queerness?"
- What would (insert political philosopher/theorist here) have to say about Tolkien's novels?
- How do characters experience – or fail to experience – *eudaimonia* / happiness in Tolkien's novels?
- What are the political implications of language in Tolkien's novels?
- Is Tolkien in favor of the minimal state?
- How are friendship and politics related in Tolkien's novels?
- Which is more important in the novels – mercy/pity or justice?
- What might the Voice of Saruman represent in terms of political philosophy?
- How does Tolkien view evil, and what are the implications for the virtuous politician?
- How does Tolkien define politics – and to what views about politics does this definition lead him?
- What is the political economy of pipeweed/tobacco in Tolkien's novels?
- Do Tolkien's novels serve as counterpoints to speciesism?
- Why are Tolkien's works, and adaptations thereof, so popular among extremists (or some subgroup of them)?
- What attitudes toward fascist political thought are found in Tolkien's letters and novels?
- What attitudes toward aspects of property rights (such as legitimate ownership) are displayed in the novels?
- Does Tolkien's mythology meet (this or that political scientist's – perhaps Bouchard, Tudor, Botticci, or Cuthbertson) definition of "political myth?"
- What kind of party politics might be supported by Tolkien's portrayal of (insert issue here – e.g. environmentalism and different party platforms in some country or other)?
- What is Tolkien's representation of geopolitics in the Third Age?
- How does Tolkien view and portray the institution of marriage?



- What does the seeming absence of sensuality/sexuality in Tolkien's novels say about the politics of sex?
- Is *The Lord of the Rings* an example of Orientalism (see Said)?
- How do Tolkien's novels undermine the arguments against justice that appear in Plato's *Republic*?
- Which leader is better-suited to the modern world (Aragorn, Faramir, Denethor, Galadriel, Saruman, etc)?
- Does Tolkien seek a return to medieval society / values / politics?
- What role does aesthetics play in Tolkien's fiction and modern political life?
- How might one apply post-colonialism to Tolkien's fiction?
- How does Tolkien approach potential conflicts between Science and faith through his fiction?
- How does Tolkien portray the consequences of war?
- Is Tolkien's advocacy of hope in seemingly hopeless situations compatible with just war theory's "reasonable probability of victory" criterion?
- What kind(s) of nationalism are consistent with Tolkien's portrayal of the peoples of Middle Earth?
- Can Tolkien be reconciled with modern notions of race as a social construct?
- Which hierarchies are legitimate in Middle Earth?
- What are the political parallels to the Ring's power of invisibility?
- What does Tolkien's fiction have to say about sustainable development?
- What errors exist in the Ruane and James portrayal of the international relations of Middle-Earth?
- Does Tolkien's fiction promote the empowerment of the marginalized?
- What are law and lawfulness in Middle-Earth? Can they be reconciled with modern theories of law?
- Does Tolkien's fiction promote feudalism?
- What relevance do the lessons of Tolkien's fiction have for the Global War on Terrorism?
- How is masculinity (or femininity) developed and portrayed in Tolkien's novels?
- What does the intersectional critical perspective have to say about Tolkien's work?
- How should one behave in war, according to Tolkien's writings?
- From where did Tolkien derive his ideas about humility in politics – and are those ideas correct ones?
- How would a rule-utilitarian read Tolkien's novels?
- Does Tolkien believe that there are objective and absolute moral laws in the political realm?
- Is Tolkien's worldview more supportive of parochialism or cosmopolitanism?
- How have governments treated Tolkien's fiction as political, e.g. by censoring it?
- What are the merits of using "authorial intent" as the primary tool to analyze the politics of Tolkien's novels?
- When do myths influence people – and how can these findings be applied to the sort of myths incorporated in Tolkien's fiction?
- How do female and minority readers encounter Tolkien's novels (or react to them)?
- What does the fan-fiction created by Tolkien readers tell us about the political lessons that readers are drawing from the original works?
- What makes Tolkien's fiction politically persuasive?
- In what ways is Tolkien's fiction consistent / inconsistent with Kantian deontology?
- How does Tolkien incorporate the thought of Thomas Aquinas in his writing?
- How does Tolkien incorporate the thought of Augustine of Hippo in his writing?
- How does Tolkien incorporate the thought of Boethius in his writing?
- How are the politics of religion and state portrayed in Middle-Earth?
- Does Tolkien's world reflect a realistic view of the virtues and vices of clan politics?
- Is there a hierarchy of color in Tolkien's work?



- How might myths of a Golden Age (e.g. Numenor or the rise of the Noldor in Valinor) affect one's political ideology and/or perspective?
- Are there nations – as we understand the term today -- in Tolkien's fiction? If so, how are they portrayed? If not, what is his alternative arrangement of peoples and polities?
- How well does [a theory purporting to explain some political aspect of *The Hobbit/Lord of the Rings*] explain Tolkien's writings on the First and Second Ages?
- What might queer theory have to say about interpersonal relations in Tolkien's fiction?
- Does Tolkien idealize distributivism as a political-economic system?
- What implied and express networks of trade exist in Tolkien's novels? And is this trade mutually beneficial or exploitative?
- How does Tolkien's fiction grapple with the dilemma of whether peacetime rules of conduct and ethics should be suspended in wartime?
- Do the more democratic models of Tolkien's fictional realms lean towards delegate or trustee versions of the representation of the people?
- Which does Tolkien support – the rule of (presumably just) law, or the rule of (presumably good) men?
- How might a person reading Tolkien perceive the state of nature that would obtain if there were no polities or political hierarchies?
- What are Tolkien's ethics of stewardship, when applied to political leadership?
- How would Tolkien's characters respond to the political realism of thinkers such as Hobbes or Machiavelli?
- How are migrations and flows of refugees depicted in Tolkien's fiction?
- How does Tolkien portray alliances? Is the enemy of my enemy my friend, or are there moral obligations to only ally with people who share the same values?
- Should alliances always be honored, in Tolkien's fiction?
- What are the requirements of the virtue of hope as portrayed by Tolkien?
- How have the most "political" sections of Tolkien been translated in editions created within different political regimes?
- How does *The Last Ringbearer* function as a political critique of Tolkien's worldview?
- What are the political implications of subcreation?

