

Kevin Lewis

Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Ph.D. University of Chicago, 1980

Area of research & scholarship: Religion and Culture

Dr. Lewis taught with the department of Religious Studies at USC from 1973 until his retirement in 2015.

Trained in the sub-field, Religion, Literature, and the Arts, Lewis conducted an evolving program of undergraduate and graduate teaching, cross-disciplinary scholarship, and individualized guidance of MA students. (His U. of Chicago dissertation addressed the Protestant character and formal strategy of longer poems of William Blake and W.H. Auden.)

His interests are not limited to primary specialization in religious dimensions of nineteenth- and twentieth-century literatures in English or translation, especially poetry. Lewis' teaching and writing interest in religion in the South from a cultural perspective, in apocalypse, and in Blake.

His 2010 book, "American Lonesomeness," probes the religious-like moment in images of loneliness transcended across the American arts: poetry, fiction, country music, and the "luminist" painting of Edward Hopper. This is a current expression of his larger project: development of writing strategies for presenting research results in Religion and Literature. He was interviewed by Jack Kuenzie with WISTV in December 2010 on the topic of American Lonesomeness

His Selected Publications indicate others. The 1999 essay, "Nathanael West and American Apocalyptic" offers, in miniature, an example of an approach he employs. Another, from 1997, is: "On the Heresy of Literalism". His poem, "Lovesick Blues", won honorable mention in the University of Chicago Alumni Poetry Contest, Spring 2003. Another, "Easter Noon", won first place in the Lake Murray Magazine annual writing contest, September, 2005.

In his time with the department, Lewis served as graduate director, was a member of the consulting faculty for Comparative Literature, and served as associate faculty of the Women's Studies program. He was also on 27 committees for PhDs completed in the English department and on the board of H-Arete, the discussion list supported by the Sport Literature Association. In January 2001 he began a Governor's appointment to the South Carolina Holocaust Council. Each of his six students in RELG 572: Religious Classics (Fall 1999) contributed an essay on one of the seven deadly sins — have a look. He enjoyed a third Visiting Fellowship in Wolfson College in 2012.



Dr. Walid Amer, (Chair, IUG English Dept.), Kevin, and Becky, Gaza, Fall 1998.

Kevin and his wife, Becky, served as start-up Principals of USC's first residential college, Preston College from 1995 through 1998. They taught together, each a full load, at the IUG (Fall 1998), and were appointed jointly to the governing board of the Nineteenth Century Studies Association (NCSA) in 2003. Becky, PhD., English, USC, holds an appointment in English and Women's Studies with USC's Academic Credit Programs/ Continuing Education, and was Fulbright Senior Lecturer at the University of Jordan in Amman (Fall 2005).

In his years teaching with the department of Religious Studies, Dr. Lewis taught the following courses:

Religion and Culture
Spiritual Autobiography
Visions of the Apocalypse
Religion and Existentialism
Literature and Film of the Holocaust
Religious Classics
Religion in the South



During his years with the department, Lewis took four separate years away: as Visiting Fellow in Trevelyan College, U. of Durham, England (1985-86); Fulbright Senior Lecturer in American Literature at the Jagiellonian University, in Krakow (1988-89); Fulbright Senior Lecturer in American Literature at the Islamic U. of Gaza (Fall 1998), Research Fellow in Wolfson College, Cambridge (Spring 1999), and a research sabbatical in Amman, Jordan (Fall 2005), followed by a second fellowship in Wolfson College, Cambridge (Spring 2006).



Twelfth Night - January 6, 2005