

## **2016 Research Week Proposal**

**Title** – The Poetics of Good Literature

**Program of Study** – English

**Presentation Type** – Print Poster

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**Category** – Textual

**Abstract:** This paper seeks to explore the characteristics of Literature that deem it “good” or “beautiful.” The concept of “goodness” has been debated for centuries. As man orients himself around the concept of goodness, a worldview naturally develops which determines his stances towards beauty, art, and God. These standards go on to govern the way in which man judges the mundane, and encompasses topics such as music, architecture, and literature. Man can identify beauty and goodness, and does so every day, without understanding what makes that beauty good or desired. Literature is just one area within the mundane that man has come to consider good and beautiful, but not without qualifications and determining characteristics which deem a work worthy of the title Literature. Therefore, this paper will expand upon the attributes of good literature, and explain how these aspects inform both Christian and secular audiences about the ways in which the “goodness” of literature, through form and content, points toward God and an ultimate reality experienced in the physical realm through reading. Good literature consistently influences through the sublime, impacts personal narrative, and imitates reality. Good literature incorporates aspects of the sublime, which moves the reader towards an experience within the text. It also maintains the capacity to influence one’s personal narrative and interact with the common human experience. Finally, good literature maintains a mimetic quality, and acts as a reflection of reality, and ultimately, God. These elements combine to create effective art within a text that moves the reader and allows one to learn through the experience of reading. As Longinus has written, “the ability to judge literature is the crowning achievement of long experience,” and this experience will lead to a greater understanding of the function of literature within both the secular and religious contexts.

**Christian Worldview Integration:** The Christian worldview has informed my research design by gearing the focus of the project toward art and literature as a form of worship. As creatures created in the image of God, our behavior, habits, and values naturally imitate the character of God through our innate desire to seek beauty and value goodness. Therefore beauty itself, being a concept highly valued by God, remains highly valuable to creators created by God as well. This worldview views Literature as a medium through which beauty and goodness can be experienced by the world – and is enjoyed by both secular and Christian audiences. The Christian worldview values good literature for its capacity to communicate grand concepts and usher one into experiencing the sublime. All of these characteristics of good literature ultimately point to characteristics maintained by the Creator Himself, and allow one to see the excellence of good literature as a form of worship unto God. Good literature maintains value in itself because it functions on both a physical and spiritual level to communicate truth through the sublime, through an

influence on personal narrative, and through imitation of the Creator. My research impacts the culture at large by revealing the principles by which man naturally judges and experiences art and beauty. Through revealing the fundamental relationship between art, beauty, and God, the culture at large is exposed to the truth of God's presence in all His creation. Therefore even secular literature illustrates the ways in which the character of God influences and interacts with humanity.