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### LIT 353L.01: Milton

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*"He who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things ought himself to be a true poem."*

**--John Milton, from *Apology for Smectymnuus* (1642)**

*"For assuredly I do not urge or enforce anything upon my own authority. On the contrary I advise every reader, and set him an example by doing the same myself, to withhold his consent from those opinions about which he does not feel fully convinced, until the evidence of the Bible convinces him and induces his reason to assent and to believe."*

**--John Milton, from the preface to *De Doctrina Christiana* (pub. posthumously, 1825)**

*"The shop of war hath not there more anvils and hammers waking to fashion out the plates and instruments of armed Justice in defense of beleaguered truth than there be pens and heads there, sitting by their studious lamps, musing, searching, revolving new notions and ideas wherewith to present, as with their homage and their fealty, the approaching reformation; others as fast reading, trying all things, assenting to the force of reason and convincement. [...] Where there is much desire to learn, there of necessity will be much arguing, much writing, many opinions; for opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making."*

**--John Milton, from *Areopagitica* (1644)**

*"The insemination, structure, and story of Milton's *Cosmos* declare that it is replete with meaning. This may be the most important thing one can say about it."*

**--Dennis Danielson, *Paradise Lost and the Cosmological Revolution* (2014)**

*"Most profoundly, he explores through Adam and Eve the fundamental challenge of any love relationship: the uneasy, inevitable, and ultimately creative tension between autonomy and interdependence."*

**--Barbara Lewalski, *The Life of John Milton: A Critical Biography* (2000)**

### **Course summary:**

This course focuses on John Milton's epic retelling of the biblical story of Adam and Eve. Like other great works of literature from before our time that continue to fascinate today, *Paradise Lost* cultivates in readers the habit of studying the past as a way of thinking critically about the present. As we witness Milton himself questioning, challenging, and creatively refashioning the Bible, major works from classical Greece and Rome, and entrenched interpretations of these books—effectively making them new for his own time—we find that the poem is prompting us to do the same with its own text. In short, one discovers that *Paradise Lost* has as much to do with our personal and global concerns in 2017 as it does with Milton's immediate concerns in 17th-century England. The poem will engage us in fruitful debates about the meanings of "good" and "evil"; the nature of love; the politics of gender and marital relationships; the respective responsibilities of citizens, leaders, and governments; the age-old question, "what is the good life?"; and the ecological relationships between the Earth and its human inhabitants. We'll also study closely the aesthetic and scientific fabrics of the several "worlds" that comprise the multiverse Milton creates in this most cosmic of epic poems.

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**Required texts:**

- John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Ed. Barbara Lewalski (Wiley Blackwell). ISBN: 978-1-4051-2929-9
- *Milton's Selected Poetry and Prose*, Ed. J. P. Rosenblatt (Norton Critical Edition). ISBN: 978-0-393-97987-9
- Various articles, chapters, and other readings accessible on our course's Moodle site.

**Graded work:**

Four response papers (of one singled-spaced page each) -----	40
Shorter formal essay (5+ pages) -----	20
Term paper (10+ pages) -----	40
Presentation -----	pass/fail

**Attendance** Your regular attendance is important to the success of this class, so please make every effort to limit any absences to two. I'll become concerned if you miss more than two classes; if you find yourself in this situation, please reach out to me. Serial absences, in the absence of communication, will lower your final grade.

**Please arrive to class on time.** The most conscientious of us sometimes are delayed by circumstances beyond our control, and, in those cases, please *do* come to class rather than not at all! Persistent late arrivals, however, become a distraction for the class.

**Participation:** Milton himself deplored mere spectatorship and went to great lengths to entice and provoke his readers to think actively and independently. Our class will be fruitful to the extent that each of you contributes to our discussions about this controversial literature.

**Essays:**

**1) Response papers.** These are informal, one page (single-spaced) explorations of some aspect of a text we have read. A total of five are required. You should use these papers as a way of creatively exploring aspects of our readings that interest you and as a forum for generating questions and topics that you might pursue in either of your two formal papers. You have considerable freedom in how you go about these papers. **An option for your fourth response paper** will be to attempt to imitate Milton's writing style and voice, either in verse or prose, on a subject of your choosing.

**2) Shorter formal essay.** For this essay (of five or more double-spaced pages) you will devise and discuss a specific topic about something that you've found to be especially interesting about any of our readings thus far. To earn a grade of "C" or higher, your essay must have a strong, clearly stated thesis—which is to say, a focused claim that requires the work of your body paragraphs to demonstrate.

**3) Term paper.** This essay of ten or more pages should engage with *Paradise Lost* (in addition to any other relevant primary texts) and carefully selected critical or theoretical publications. It will be your responsibility to devise a topic for this paper, however, I encourage you to talk with me about your reading and research interests at any point during the semester.

**Presentation:** Either solo or with one of your classmates, you'll be asked to introduce the class to a piece of secondary scholarship that bears on the reading for that day. Your presentation should provide us with an understanding of the article's or chapter's major arguments and how the scholar supports these. You should also offer your own reflections on the scholar's claims and engage the class in discussion about these. Please send me by e-mail a page or two that will

help us understand and remember the contents of your presentation, including a bibliography. I'll post this on Moodle.

**Academic honesty:** Plagiarism is a violation of scholarly trust. According to the Provost, "Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code (<http://www.umt.edu/student-affairs/dean-of-students/default.php>). Violators of the Student Conduct Code will receive an "F" for the offending paper. Each essay you submit must be signed at the bottom of the last page, assuring that the work is your own, except where indicated by proper documentation. Your signature is your word that the essay is free of plagiarism.

**Electronic devices:** Please do not use these during class time for anything unrelated to the class.

**Accommodation:** The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with DSS, please contact DSS in Lommasson 154. I will work with you and DSS to provide an appropriate accommodation.

**Aims of this course:**

1. To gain familiarity with the major cultural currents of seventeenth-century England, and to appreciate how these contexts are relevant to interpreting Milton's works of literature.
2. To learn how Milton works with the conventions of certain literary genres (epic, lyric, political pamphlet) and how he deviates from these conventions in meaningful ways.
3. To develop your skills in performing meaningful, interesting close readings of literary texts.
4. To gain practice using informal writing to generate new ideas and develop your thinking about a text.
5. To develop your proficiency in writing rhetorically effective essays (well-reasoned and grammatically sound), driven by a thesis and sustained by an ordered, coherent argument.

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**The following schedule is tentative.** Please check the daily schedule on Moodle for updates on the next class's homework, which may sometimes include short secondary readings not listed below.

- 8/30 Mon.** Introductions; "Ad Patrem" ("To his Father")
- 9/1 Weds.** John Shawcross, "The Life of Milton," pp. 1-6 (on Moodle); Elegy 6, to Charles Diodati (handout); The Nativity Ode (in Rosenblatt, pp. 3-13)
- 9/6 Mon.** **Labor Day - no class meeting**
- 9/8 Weds.** "Lycidas" (in Rosenblatt, pp. 94-107)
- 9/13 Mon.** **1<sup>st</sup> response paper due.** "Lycidas," continued; Donald Friedman, "'Lycidas': The Swain's Paideia" (in Rosenblatt, pp. 526-543)
- 9/15 Weds.** Shawcross, "The Life of Milton" (6-12); *Areopagitica* (in Rosenblatt, pp. 333-363)
- 9/20 Mon .** *Areopagitica* (pp. 363-380); recommended for historical context: N.H. Keeble, "Pamphlet Wars" (Moodle)
- 9/22 Weds.** C. S. Lewis, from *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (Moodle); *Paradise Lost*, prefatory texts and book one, lines 1-126; Shawcross, "The Life of Milton" (12-19)
- 9/27 Mon.** **2<sup>nd</sup> response paper due.** *Paradise Lost*, book one (finish); from Neil Forsyth, *The Satanic Epic* (Moodle)

- 9/29 Weds.** *Paradise Lost*, books one and two (lines 1-628)
- 10/4 Mon.** *Paradise Lost*, book two (finish)
- 10/6 Weds.** *Paradise Lost*, book three (lines 1-417); Dennis Danielson, "The Fall of Man and Milton's Theodicy" (Moodle)
- 10/8 Fri.** **Shorter formal essay due**
- 10/11 Mon.** *Paradise Lost*, book three (finish); Danielson, "Astronomy" (Moodle)
- 10/13 Weds.** *Paradise Lost*, book four; Genesis, chapter 3
- 10/18 Mon.** *Paradise Lost*, book four (finish) and book five (lines 1-135)
- 10/20 Weds.** *Paradise Lost*, book five (finish); recommended: Stephen Fallon, "*Paradise Lost* and Intellectual History"(Moodle)
- 10/25 Mon.** **3<sup>rd</sup> response paper due.** *Paradise Lost*, book six
- 10/27 Weds.** *Paradise Lost*, books seven; Genesis, chapters 1-2
- 11/1 Weds.** *Paradise Lost*, book eight
- 11/3 Weds.** *Paradise Lost*, book eight (continued); book nine (lines 1-191)
- 11/8 Mon.** Genesis, chapter 3; *Paradise Lost*, book nine (finish); Barbara Lewalski, "Milton on Women - Yet Once Again" (Moodle)
- 11/10 Weds.** **4<sup>th</sup> response paper due.** *Paradise Lost*, book ten
- 11/15 Mon.** *Paradise Lost*, book ten
- 11/17 Weds.** *Paradise Lost*, book eleven; Ken Hiltner, from *Milton and Ecology* (Moodle)
- 11/22 Mon.** *Paradise Lost*, book twelve
- 11/24 Weds.** **Thanksgiving break - no class meeting**
- 11/29 Mon.** *Samson Agonistes* (in Rosenblatt, pp. 153-204)
- 12/1 Weds.** *Samson Agonistes*, continued.
- 12/6 Mon.** Discussion of final projects
- 12/8 Weds.** Discussion of final projects

**Term papers are due December 15 by the end of the day.**

**University guidelines regarding COVID-19:**

- Mask use is required within the classroom.
- If you feel sick and/or are exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, please don't come to class and contact the Curry Health Center at (406) 243-4330.
- If you are required to isolate or quarantine, you will receive support in the class to ensure continued academic progress.
- UM recommends students get the COVID-19 vaccine. Please direct your questions or concerns about vaccines to Curry Health Center.
- Where social distancing (maintaining consistent 6 feet between individuals) is not possible, specific seating arrangements will be used to support contact tracing efforts.
- Class attendance and seating will be recorded to support contact tracing efforts.
- Drinking liquids and eating food is discouraged within the classroom.