

English 335: Milton

Professor Newstok

Fall 2008
TuTh 2:00-3:15pm
Buckman 325

newstoks@rhodes.edu
Office: Palmer 310

Office hours: M 9am-noon; MWF 3–4pm; or by appointment

A man may be a heretic in the truth, and if he believe things only because his pastor says so, or the Assembly so determines, without knowing other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds becomes his heresy.—Areopagitica

Course description

A study of the major poetry and selections of prose of the 17th century writer John Milton, whose 400th anniversary of his birth we will be celebrating (1608-1674). Milton's a fascinating figure who composed in an extraordinary range of genres, including an epitaph on Shakespeare; sonnets on historical events as well as on his own life; poems about Christ, including a dialogue with Satan; a play about shepherds; prose treatises on divorce and governance; an influential elegy on the death of a companion; a 'closet' drama about the biblical Samson. While we will be surveying the full range of these genres across his learned career, we will be devoting much of our attention to *Paradise Lost*, the major epic of the English language, based on the story of Genesis yet encompassing profound and still relevant reflections on liberty, rebellion, history, providence, social hierarchies, and domestic relations in magnificent verse. As a contemporary writer praised this undertaking: “You who read *Paradise Lost*, the sublime poem of the great Milton, what do you read but the story of all things?”

As an advanced seminar in the English department, students will be expected to evaluate scholarly resources a weekly basis; write brief but regular critical reflections on primary and secondary reading; and complete a substantial final research project that argues for their own interpretation in dialogue with the critical tradition within this field.

Required Texts

- *The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton* (=ML)
—always bring this to class as our core textbook
- *Cambridge Companion to Milton* (=CC)
- It also helps to have on hand for reference a copy of the Bible (King James Version, 1611)

Schedule—subject to revision, per class interest and instructor’s discretion

*Have the assignments read **before** our discussions each week. Ideally, you will read them once over the weekend, and then **re-read** them during the week—good reading always entails **re-reading**. Be sure to bring your **Modern Library Milton** to each class, along with **any assigned secondary reading***
You are always expected to read the ML headnotes to each text.

INTRODUCTION

Thursday	Aug. 27	Milton mattering; “On Shakespeare” (ML 34)
Tuesday	Sep. 2	Sonnets (ML 139–62); Hall (CC 98–112)
Thursday	Sep. 4	<i>Ad Patrem</i> (ML 220–24); Johnson <i>Life of Milton</i> (handout); <i>2nd Defense</i> (ML 1090–96); Aubrey (ML xxi–xxx); Dobranski (CC 1–24)

Tuesday	Sep. 9	Nativity Ode (ML 18–29); Fish (handout)
Thursday	Sep. 11	<i>L'Allegro & Il Penseroso</i> (ML 41–52); Brisman (handout)
Tuesday	Sep. 16	<i>Comus</i> (ML 61–98); Jonson <i>Pleasure Reconciled</i> (handout)
Thursday	Sep. 18	<i>Comus</i> , continued; Brown (CC 25–39)
Tuesday	Sep. 23	“Lycidas” (ML 99–110); Spenserian elegy (handouts)
Thursday	Sep. 25	“Lycidas,” continued; Evans (CC 39–53)
Tuesday	Sep. 30	<i>Areopagitica</i> (ML 923–66); Smallenburg (handout)
Thursday	Oct. 2	<i>Areopagitica</i> , continued
Tuesday	Oct. 7	<i>Of Education</i> (967–82); Festa (handout)
Thursday	Oct. 9	<i>Doctrine and Disc. of Divorce</i> (ML 853–922); Patterson (handout)
Tuesday	Oct. 14	<i>Paradise Lost</i> I (ML 293–322); Carey (CC 160–74)
Thursday	Oct. 16	<i>Paradise Lost</i> II (ML 323–58); Lewalski (CC113–29)
Tuesday	Oct. 21	No class: Fall Break
Thursday	Oct. 23	<i>Paradise Lost</i> III (ML 359–83); Empson (handout)
Tuesday	Oct. 28	<i>Paradise Lost</i> IV (ML 384–417); Ricks (handout)
Thursday	Oct. 30	<i>Paradise Lost</i> V (ML 418–446); Lewis (handout)
Tuesday	Nov. 4	<i>Paradise Lost</i> VI (ML 445–75); Danielson (CC 144–59)
Thursday	Nov. 6	<i>Paradise Lost</i> VII (ML 476–96); Genesis 1–3 (KJV)
Tuesday	Nov. 11	<i>Paradise Lost</i> VIII (ML 497–516); Leonard (CC 130–143)
Thursday	Nov. 13	<i>Paradise Lost</i> IX (ML 517–51); Schoenfeldt (handout)
Tuesday	Nov. 18	<i>Paradise Lost</i> X (ML 552–84); McColley (CC 175–92)
Thursday	Nov. 20	<i>Paradise Lost</i> XI–XII (ML 585–630); Cavanagh (handout)
Saturday	Nov. 22	Marathon Public Reading of <i>Paradise Lost</i> (?)
Tuesday	Nov. 25	<i>Paradise Regained</i> (ML 635–88); Radzinowicz (CC 202–218)
Thursday	Nov. 27	No class: Thanksgiving Break
Tuesday	Dec. 2	<i>Samson Agonistes</i> (ML 707–66); Bennett (219–35)
Thursday	Dec. 4	<i>Samson Agonistes</i> continued; Wittreich (handout)
Tuesday	Dec. 9	Last Day of Class— <i>Milton's 400th Birthday</i>
Monday	Dec. 15	Final Papers due

Requirements

Engagement (30%) is mandatory, broadly conceived to include regular, active **participation** (*listening* and *responding* to your peers as well as the professor), consistent **preparation** of course readings, **enthusiasm** for assignments, **collaboration** with your peers, and **respect** for the course. Occasional unannounced **quizzes** will gauge your engagement with the readings.

Successful students are typically those who re-read thoroughly in advance of discussion, arrive on time to class, and participate thoughtfully every day of the semester. If you miss a class *for any reason*, your **'re-admission ticket'** to the following class will be a short (300-word) typed essay on the single most interesting thing from your reading for the prior class. If *for whatever reason* (including medical and personal emergencies, extracurricular events) you miss **more than five classes** (that is, three full weeks of the semester!), **you will fail the course**.

Short essays (30%) are arguments (one **full** page, single-spaced—**around 500–700 words** each) designed to familiarize you with a number of different *kinds* of approaches to reading Milton's various genres—from examining very minute details to considering larger issues across multiple texts. Hard copies (not email attachments) are due **every Monday by 5pm in my office (Palmer 310)**. **No late work**—the responses prepare your thoughts in advance of Tuesday's discussion. Numerical 'grades' (a rough score out of 10) will be assigned to give you a sense of your progress throughout the course, although you will be judged on your cumulative work.

Final projects (40%) involve engaging in a **critical dialogue** with other readers (critics) of Milton's works, leading to a **4000-word** research paper on a topic of your own choice. The texts addressed, however, must be selected from those read in this course—your audience consists of your peers, so you will need to address poems and prose with which they are already familiar. I presume that most of you will be addressing at least some aspect of *Paradise Lost*. Please submit your final paper in a **self-addressed envelope** so I can return your essays to you via mail.

Grading: 'C' (70–79%) represents *satisfactory* work; a 'B' (80–86%) represents *good* work; a 'B+' (87–89%) represents *very good* work; an 'A-' (90–93%) represents *excellent* work; and the infrequent 'A' (94% and above) represents *extraordinary* achievement. This holds true for overall engagement, short essays, and your final projects.

Policies: As always, please observe Rhodes guidelines regarding the **Honor Code**; academic dishonesty will not be tolerated, and an Honor Code violation (including plagiarism) will be grounds for **failure in the course**. Respect the integrity of the course: please turn off **cell phones** and **remove hats** before entering the classroom; please **do not eat during class**. Treat email exchanges with one another and with the professor as **formally composed correspondence**.