

John Leonard UC 3423 Office Hours Tuesday 3:30-4:20, Thursday 4:30-5:20. Other times by appointment (in person or zoom).

Course Location and Time: Classified information available only to registered students.

John Milton's lifelong ambition was to be an epic poet, and he achieved that goal late in life with the publication of *Paradise Lost*. But if he aspired to be the English Homer or Virgil, he also strove to be the English Demosthenes or Cicero, as well as "Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, the three tragic poets unequalled yet by any" (Preface to *Samson Agonistes*). This course will fall into three parts: 1) a close reading of the early poems (especially "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," *A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle* [Comus], and "Lycidas"; 2) an examination of Milton's middle years, when poetry yielded to prose pamphlets defending political causes, especially divorce, free speech, and freedom from tyranny; 3) *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*. Emphasis throughout the course will be placed on Milton's lasting relevance. Is he a timeless champion of liberty who should "be living at this hour" (Wordsworth) or an illiberal gatekeeper of repression and privilege, "a bad man of a very particular kind, who is a bad man because he is so sublimely certain of being a good one" (John Middleton Murry)? This course is intended to be a complement my half-course on *Paradise Lost*, though neither course is a prerequisite for the other and it does not matter in which order they are taken, should any students decide to take both.

Texts

There are only required texts for purchase: 1) my Penguin edition of Milton's *Complete Poems* and William Poole's Penguin edition of *Areopagitica and Other Writings*. So far as I am aware, these are the most affordable scholarly editions available (there are cheaper editions, but they have no notes or scholarly apparatus). My edition of the *Complete Poems* is currently listed at \$29.99 on Amazon.ca. Poole's edition is listed at \$23. If you already own another reliable edition (such as the *New Modern Library Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton*), you can use that instead of the Penguin. The New Modern Library edition currently sells as a hardback on Amazon for \$76.78 (reduced from \$82). You should not use an anthology, as the notes are inadequate. Consult me for guidance if you are in doubt. Additional primary and secondary readings will be assigned on a weekly basis and made available either in Leanne's office or via OWL (mostly the latter).

Assignments

Each student will present one **20-minute** (8 page) seminar. A written version will be due one week after the oral presentation. Each student will also write one essay, of approximately 3,500 words, due on the last day of classes. The essay should be on a different topic from the seminar paper.

Oral seminar presentation:

25%.

Written version of seminar paper (due one week after oral delivery)	25%.
Essay (approx. 3,500 words, due on 10 December):	40%.
Class participation:	10%

Syllabus

- 8 September Introduction. 'Letter to a Friend' (Poole, 289-291). Sonnet VII ('How soon hath Time') and Sonnet XVI ('When I consider how my light is spent').
- 15 Sept. 'On the Morning of Christ's Nativity'. 'At a Solemn Music'. 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso'. 'Elegia VI', 'Elegia VII'. Sonnet VIII ('Captain or colonel').
- 22 Sept. *Arcades. A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle*. Autobiographical digression from *An Apology against a Pamphlet*, 1642 (Poole, 300-305). Entry on 'Marriage', *Commonplace Book* (Poole, 292-294).
- 29 Sept. 'Elegia III', 'Elegia IV', *Lycidas*. 'On the University Carrier' and 'Another on the Same'. 'At a Vacation Exercise'. *Epitaphium Damonis. The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelaty*, 1642 (Poole, 3-39).
- 6 October THANKSGIVING
- 13 Oct. *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (Poole, 40-84). *An Answer to a Book Entitled The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (OWL resource). Sonnet XII ('I did but prompt') and Sonnet XI ('A book was writ of late').
- 20 Oct. *Of Education. Areopagitica*. 'On the New Forcers of Conscience'. **Trigger warning:** this class will be about free speech. I shall permit and even encourage students to relate Milton's arguments to current controversial topics, including and especially the hot topic of censorship and free speech. Reference will be made to the University of Western Ontario's own 'Freedom of Expression Policy', 'Policy 1.54', which you can read here: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/policies_procedures/section1/mapp154.pdf In accordance with the spirit and letter of that policy, students are at liberty to argue that it should not exist or that it does not offer sufficient protection to those who hold dissident or unpopular views.
- 27 Oct. English sonnets published in Milton's lifetime (Sonnets I – XIX). Be prepared to discuss any of these sonnets. Special attention will be paid to Sonnets XV ('Avenge O lord'), XVII ('Lawrence of virtuous father') and XIX ('Methought I saw my late espoused saint'). If there was insufficient time for 'Sonnet VIII' on 15 September, we shall discuss it here. **Trigger warning:** my powerpoint for Sonnet XV contains some 17th-century images of atrocities, including violence against women, that some students may find distressing. I shall make two versions of this powerpoint available on OWL.

3 November. READING WEEK

10 Nov. *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates. Ready and Easy Way. Digression from the History of Britain. Commonplace Book.* (All in Poole). The four political sonnets unpublished in Milton's lifetime (Leonard, 113-114).

17 Nov. *Paradise Regained.*

24 Nov. *Paradise Regained.*

1 December. *Samson Agonistes.*

8 December. *Samson Agonistes.* Conclusions.

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

STATEMENT ON STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES (SAS)

Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program.

Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are encouraged to register with Student Accessibility Services, a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both SAS and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.

For more information, see <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd/>

Statement on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

“Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following

website: https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca .”

Statement on AI use.

I am not yet convinced that ‘Artificial Intelligence’ is an accurate term for technological tools that merely mimic human intelligence and consciousness, though I recognize that the mimicry is often very convincing, and is getting better (or worse, depending on your point of view) every day. I use ‘AI’ myself in creating images for a recording of *Paradise Lost* that I am working on, so I am not opposed to ‘AI’ in principle. But I am opposed to deception and academic fraud. AI should in no circumstances be used for writing essays. I want to hear *your* voice, not some robot’s. I have in the past caught students cheating with ChatGPT and have referred such cases to the appropriate authorities for disciplinary action. I shall do so again if I find proof of deception. That said, I am open to discussion *about* the ethics of using AI in academic work. That question would be especially relevant to the class on 20 October. If you wish to use AI in any capacity for this course, speak to me first. I am open to discussion, judging each request on its own merits. The technology and related practical questions are constantly changing, but the foundational principle (that honesty is good, deception bad) is in my view clear. Allusion differs from its dark twin plagiarism in one simple respect. An author who makes an allusion wants readers to catch the allusion; an author who plagiarizes does not want readers to catch the echo. It all comes down to intention. AI does not have intentions, so the distinction between allusion and plagiarism may seem to be blurred. But the human being using AI does have intentions, so the distinction still stands. That at least is my current view. I am open to hear and consider others.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

John Milton all about those. ‘Learning outcomes’ are what *Paradise Lost* is all about:

Your eyes, that seem so clear
Yet are but dim, shall perfectly be then
Opened and cleared and ye shall be as gods
Knowing both good and evil as they know. (IX. 706-709)

Now *there’s* a ‘learning outcome’ for you. Unfortunately, it won’t be in this course, which concentrates on Milton’s other works, but the same person who speaks the above lines in *Paradise Lost* continues to push ‘learning outcomes’ in *Paradise Regained*, where he urges a prospective student to brush up his Greek philosophers:

Without their learning how wilt thou with them,
Or they with thee hold conversation meet? (IV.231-232)

To whom the student sagely thus replied:

Think not but that I know these things, or think
I know them not; not therefore am I short
Of knowing what I ought. (IV.286-288)

The same student continues:

many books,
Wise men have said, are wearisome; who reads
Incessantly, and to his reading brings not
A spirit and judgement equal or superior . . .
Uncertain and unsettled still remains,
Deep versed in books and shallow in himself. (IV.321-327)

I'm not sure how this student would have fared with comps, let alone the Ontario Ministry of Education's requirement about 'learning outcomes', but his answer is what it is. At the very least, you will learn who he is.