

Department of English & Writing Studies

English 4320F (001)**Seminar in Renaissance Literature: Milton and C.S. Lewis**

Fall 2026

Prerequisites: 1.0 from English 3000-3999 or permission of the Department

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

John Leonard, FRSC. Distinguished University Professor.
UC 3423. Office hours TBA.

Students must use their Western (@uwo.ca) email addresses when contacting their instructors.

Course Syllabus, Schedule, Delivery Mode

C. S. Lewis (1898-1963) is mostly remembered as a Christian apologist and an author of children's literature (the "Narnia" chronicles), but he was also a Professor of English at both Oxford and Cambridge, and a writer of science fiction (the "Space Trilogy"). While at Oxford, he wrote one of the most influential works of Milton criticism of the twentieth century, *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (1942). His posthumously published *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (1964) also makes frequent reference to Milton. *Perelandra* (volume 2 of the "Space Trilogy") is a reimagining of the Adam and Eve story, much influenced by *Paradise Lost*, which Lewis first read when he was a nine-year-old boy. Lewis's Milton criticism has always provoked controversy and there has been a reaction against it in recent decades, but it has remained in print for 84 years. There has been a very recent revival of interest in Lewis's dystopian novel *That Hideous Strength*, which has been read as a prophetic warning about the perils of AI. This seminar course will provide students with an opportunity to read *Paradise Lost* alongside both Lewis's criticism and the trilogy, with a special emphasis on Milton's and Lewis's depictions of outer space and life on other worlds, and Satanic influences on our world.

Learning Outcomes

"Ye shall be as gods, / Knowing both good and evil as they know." -- John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 9.708-9.

"It is to bring out of that cocoon of organic life which sheltered the babyhood of mind the New Man, the man who will not die, the artificial man, free from Nature." -- C. S. Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*.

"Learning outcomes" don't get any better than that, and both the above will be central to English 4320F. If you are reading this syllabus from "the Ministry" (the source of the requirement for "Learning Outcomes"), you can stop reading now, secure in the knowledge that the present course is fully compliant and that you would be perfectly at home in C. S. Lewis's NICE ("National Institute of Co-ordinated Experiments"). If you are a student, stay tuned. Milton's and Lewis's notions of "Learning outcomes" are a little more complicated, but all will become clear as the course proceeds.

English 4320F meets once a week for a three-hour seminar. Students are encouraged to participate in class discussion and every student is expected to make one in-class presentation of approximately 30 minutes followed by discussion. Seminar topics have been chosen with a view to promoting lively debate. There will be a maximum of two presentations per class. Students should therefore choose their presentation day as soon as possible (not leave it to the last minute). There will be no opportunity for make-ups once the course ends. Seminar topics have been chosen so that two students can take opposing sides on a controversial subject.

Course Schedule

Too long to insert here. See the separate document entitled “Schedule of Classes.” That document also contains a list of suggested seminar topics.

4. Course Materials

The following 5 books, all available through campus bookstore:

1. John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. John Leonard, Penguin Classics. \$16.00
2. C. S. Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet*. Harper Collins. \$18.00
3. C. S. Lewis, *Perelandra*. Harper Collins. \$18.00
4. C. S. Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*. Harper Collins. \$18.00
5. C. S. Lewis, *A Preface to ‘Paradise Lost’*. Harper Collins. \$19.00
6. C. S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image*. Cambridge UP. \$24.45

Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site (<https://westernu.brightspace.com/>) regularly for news and updates. Essential resources will be posted there, and this is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class.

If students need assistance with the course OWL site, they can seek support on the [OWL Brightspace Help](#) page. Alternatively, they can contact the Western Technology Services Helpdesk. They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

Statement on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

This course will *discuss* AI (especially in relation to Lewis’s *That Hideous Strength*), but students are not permitted to *use* it. The following policy (drafted by the central administration) will apply:

In this course, the use of AI (automatic translation tools, grammar checkers, ChatGPT...) is prohibited. If AI use is suspected, the instructor will ask for research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and other materials used in preparing assignments. Students are expected to retain these materials until after final grades have been entered. In the unlikely event of concerns being raised about the authenticity of any assignment, students may be asked to produce these materials; an inability to do so may weigh heavily against them.

5. Methods of Evaluation

Grading Scheme and Assessment Dates

The overall course grade will be calculated as listed below:

In-class seminar presentation (approx. 30 minutes). You may present on the same topic as one of your essays. Due date: to be arranged with instructor. Presentations will be spaced so that there will be at most two per class, so you should claim your preferred topic asap. Once set, the presentation date **cannot be changed without supporting documentation**. See below, "Formal Documentation Designation Statement." **Weighting: 25%**.

Short essay (1500 words). Topics TBA. **Due date(s): 19-25 October**. Flexible deadline (accommodation built into system, DO NOT REQUEST ACCOMMODATION). Submit via OWL portal (not hard copy). **Weighting: 25%**.

Long essay (2500 words). Topics TBA. **Due date(s): 23-29 November**. Flexible deadline (accommodation built into system, DO NOT REQUEST ACCOMMODATION). Submit via OWL portal (not hard copy). **Weighting: 40%**.

Participation. Weighting: 10%

Formal Documentation Designation Statement

Please note that this assessment (in-class presentation) is central to the learning objectives for this course. Accordingly, students seeking academic consideration for this assessment will be required to provide formal supporting documentation. Students who are granted academic consideration for this assessment will be provided with the following opportunity to make up this work: an alternative date, BUT please be aware that this will enormously disruptive and there can be **no make-ups at all once the term ends** as I am retiring on 1 January.

LATE PAPER POLICY

Both essays (short and long) have flexible deadlines (see above). If you submit a paper after the flexible due date but within two weeks of the final date in the flexible range, the paper will be counted as late and the following procedures will apply:

- The paper will not be read until all the assignments handed in on time have been read and returned (all papers are read in order of receipt).
- The paper will be read and a grade given, but NO COMMENTS OR CORRECTIONS will be made on it.
- The grade will be reduced by a penalty of two marks (2%) for each calendar day that it is late. Note that when a paper is late, every day counts (including weekends).

PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED IF SUBMITTED MORE THAN TWO WEEKS AFTER THE DUE DATE UNLESS PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE.

VERY IMPORTANT: I AM RETIRING ON 1 JANUARY 2027. NO WORK WILL BE GRADED OR ACCEPTED AFTER 15 DECEMBER 2026.

THERE IS NO EXAM FOR THIS COURSE. DO NOT REQUEST ACCOMMODATION FOR AN EXAM THAT DOES NOT EXIST.

6. Additional Statements

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, here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences.pdf

As noted above, the use of AI to write essays and assignments is strictly prohibited.

Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays

I respect all religious holy days, but this course has **no final exam or mid-term**. Both essays have flexible deadlines, so I do not foresee any conflicts. Students who observe religious holy days should be aware of the relevant dates when signing up for seminar presentations.

Special Examinations

Not applicable to this course, which has **NO EXAM. DO NOT REQUEST ACCOMMODATION FOR AN EXAM THAT DOES NOT EVEN EXIST!**

Support Services

Mental Health Support

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Gender-based and sexual violence

Western University [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/studentssupport/survivorsupport/get-help.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Learning Development and Success

Counsellors at the Learning Development and Success Centre <https://learning.uwo.ca> are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.

USC

Additional student-run support services are offered by the USC, <https://westernusc.ca/services/>.