

English 9160 Milton's Poetry and Prose

Instructor: Professor John Leonard AHB 2G24 519-661-2111 jleonard@uwo.ca

Full course, Summer 2018

Stevenson Hall 3101 (except May 11 which will be in Somerville House 3355)

**Tentatively set to run Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 2-5 pm starting Thursday 10 May until approximately Friday 15 June.

Description

The course will cover all of Milton's poetry and a generous selection of the prose, especially *Areopagitica*, the divorce tracts, and the regicide tracts. The primary question to be explored in the course will be: "Of what value is Milton today, when so many of his own values have been called into question if not outright rejected?" Milton has traditionally been celebrated as the primary English poet who puts liberty at the centre of his vision. But whose liberty? Hostile critics have argued that he cares about no one's liberty but his own. Critics (and arguably Milton himself) have also elided and often confused two quite different kinds of liberty: liberty as the opposite of tyranny (the freedom to do what one wants) and liberty as the opposite of necessity (to freedom to obey an authoritarian God of one's own volition, not as a puppet). By a close reading of all of Milton's texts, especially *Areopagitica* and *Paradise Lost*, this course will ask the question "of what value is liberty if it is nothing more than the liberty to obey?" We shall also explore the question of whether Milton was a Puritan and what Puritanism meant in the seventeenth century. Other topics for discussion will include: ecocriticism (especially in *Paradise Lost* and the early poems); Milton and science (was Milton an anti-intellectual?); Milton and atheism (can atheists find value in Milton's poetry?); Milton and women; and *Samson Agonistes* and terrorism (is *Samson Agonistes* a "work in praise of terrorism?" and is it possible even to put in a good word for terror in a tragedy?). The central question throughout the course will be: Can Milton be valued today even if his values conflict with the social, political, and moral imperatives of our own time?

Texts

John Milton, *The Complete Poems*, ed. John Leonard (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1998).

John Milton, *Prose: Major Writings on Liberty, Politics, Religion and Toleration*, ed. David Loewenstein (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 1913)

We shall also be reading one anonymous pamphlet, *An Answer to a Book Entitled The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1644). I shall make it available either as pdf or photocopy.

Schedule of Classes

May 10 Introduction. Brief overview of some of the treasures in the William G. Stuart Milton Collection at Weldon. Discussion of some of the main themes of the course. "Sonnet XVII ('Lawrence of virtuous father...').")"

May 11 "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," "The Passion," "On Time," "At a Solemn Music," "Song. On May Morning," "On Shakespeare. 1630," "Sonnet VII" discussed with "Letter to a Friend" (the latter in Loewenstein, 461-3). "Sonnet VIII," "Sonnet X," "Sonnet XVI."

May 15 **Come prepared to sign up for seminars if you have not already done so by this date.**

“L’Allegro” and “Il Penseroso,” “Elegia V,” “Elegia VI,” “Elegia VII” (in translation in Leonard). *Prolusion VI* and *Prolusion VII* (both in Loewenstein), “At a Vacation Exercise” (in Leonard 79, but originally appended to *Prolusion VI*). “On the University Carrier” and “Another on the Same.”

May 17 *A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle (“Comus”)*

May 18 “Elegia IV” (in translation), *Lycidas*, *Epitaphium Damonis* (in translation), “On the New Forcers of Conscience.”

May 22 *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (in Loewenstein) vs *An Answer to a Book Intituled The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (format TBA). “Sonnet XI” and “Sonnet XII.”

May 24 *Tetrachordon* (in Loewenstein). The Creation of Eve in *Paradise Lost* (Eve’s first memories, IV 440-504, compared with Adam’s, VIII 250-654). “Sonnet XIX (‘Methought I saw...’).”

May 25 *Areopagitica*

May 29 *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, *A Second Defence of the English People*, *The Readie and Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth* (all in Loewenstein, *A Second Defence* translated from Milton’s Latin). “Sonnet XV” and the four uncollected English sonnets (Leonard 113-14).

May 31 *Paradise Lost*

June 1 *Paradise Lost*

June 5 *Paradise Lost*

June 7 *Paradise Lost*

June 8 *Paradise Lost*

June 12 *Paradise Lost*

June 14 *Paradise Lost*

June 15 *Paradise Regained*

June 19 *Samson Agonistes*

Assignments

Participation: 10%

Seminar (oral delivery, approx. 20 minutes): 15%

Seminar (written version, approx.. 8 pages, electronic submission due 3 days after oral delivery): 10%

Seminar response (oral delivery, approx. 10 minutes): 10%

Seminar response (brief summary of entire seminar and discussion that followed, 3-4 pages, electronic submission due 3 days after seminar): 5%

Research Paper (5,000 words, electronic submission due Monday 25 June): 50%

Seminars

Each student will deliver **one** seminar and **one** seminar response (not on the same day). For every class with a seminar presentation (8 of 18), there will be one seminar presentation (20 minutes) and one response (10 minutes, given by a different student). This will of course require some prior co-ordination by the two students presenting on the same day. It is permitted (indeed encouraged) for the two students to take opposing views (very easy with Milton) so as to facilitate class discussion. Following the two presentations, the two students will together lead class discussion for an additional 30 minutes, so the total time for any formal seminar-response-discussion period will be one hour. We shall then have a break and resume with informal discussion. So (to give one example) on 22 May, when we will discuss Milton's *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* alongside the anonymous *Answer to a Book Intituled The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, one student might make a case defending Milton against his anonymous critic (or vice versa), and the respondent might take the opposite position so as to facilitate class discussion on the question of whether Milton's arguments for divorce really are (as his 1643 title page claims) "to the good of both sexes." Following the class break, we could either continue this discussion or take it in a new direction, bringing in Milton's two sonnets on his divorce pamphlets. Each of you should be thinking now about which class you would like to choose for a seminar presentation. Once we have 8 seminars allocated, we can start to think about responses.

The written version of the seminar presentation, due 3 days after oral delivery, will be like a conference paper. Not too colloquial, but written for oral delivery, without footnotes or bibliography. The written version of the response will take a different form. This will not be a write-up of the response that was given in class, but will rather be a brief summary of the entire hour's discussion. (Imagine that you are reporting on a conference for a journal rather than submitting a paper for the conference.)

The main research paper should be on a different topic from either your seminar or seminar response. You will choose this topic yourself after consultation with me.

It is essential that the research paper be submitted by the due date. I am going on sabbatical leave on 1 July and will be unavailable between that date and 1 January 2019.

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

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

Academic Handbook, Exam, Course Outlines Page 4 Issued: 2011 02

Scrupulous accuracy in the quotation and citation of all sources and references is expected.

Mental Health

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western:

http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/ for a complete list of options about how to obtain

help.