

John Leonard UC 3423 Office Hours TBA

Course Location and Time: Top Secret. See OWL.

PARADISE LOST

ENGLISH 9053A

Is *Paradise Lost* an epic? Is “the grand style” sublime or merely bombastic? Was Milton “of the Devil’s Party without knowing it”? Were Adam and Eve “fallen before the Fall”? Was Milton a misogynist? Questions like these have recurred over the centuries, but they have been asked in different ways, at different times. One eighteenth-century editor was so enthused by fallen Adam’s diatribe against women that he added an icon of a pointing hand in the margin of the text, for fear that readers might miss a valuable gobbet of Miltonic wisdom: “OBSERVE. Here, an excellent Caution, how to rule a Wife.” A few years later, Samuel Johnson deplored Milton’s “Turkish contempt of females.” A few years after that, Mary Wollstonecraft chided Milton not for despising women, but for loving them in the wrong way. In recent times, Joseph Wittreich has lauded Milton as a “feminist.” Early editors believed that Milton’s universe accorded with the post-Copernican model of multiple solar systems, but most critics since the nineteenth century have assumed that Milton adopts the Ptolemaic system, which was obsolete decades before *Paradise Lost* was published. Can all these conclusions follow from the same text? This course will trace several controversies over the centuries, exploring the ways in which critics have made one of English literature’s most canonical texts accord with their own prejudices and anxieties. A key question for the course will be: “Can any critic see past his or her own prejudices?”

Texts

The only required text for purchase is Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, but critical readings will be assigned on a weekly basis and made available either in Leanne’s office or via OWL (mostly the latter). You should use a reliable text of the poem with thorough annotations. The bookstore has copies of my Penguin edition. The list price on Amazon is C\$16. Also recommended (and particularly good for graduate work) is Alastair Fowler’s 1998 Longman edition. Other good editions include the Modern Library *Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton*, edited by William Kerrigan, Stephen Fallon, and John Rumrich (2007). You should not use an anthology, as the notes are inadequate.

Assignments

Each student will present one **30-minute** (approx. 12 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 9 December):	40%.
Class participation:	10%

Schedule of Classes

- 10 September Introduction. Background to the poem. Genesis. The Civil War. Milton's epic aspirations.
- 17 Sept. Satan and Epic Heroism. Two simple but tricky questions: 1) What does Satan look like? 2) What is his name?
- 24 Sept. The Debate in Hell vs. the Council in Heaven.
- 1 October. Satan's voyage through space. Milton's Universe(s) I. The Multiverse. Infinite Space. Milton and Lucretius. Is Chaos good, evil, or neutral?
- 8 Oct. Milton's Grand Style I. Sound and Sense.
- 10-18 Oct. READING WEEK
- 22 Oct. Innocence and Experience in Paradise. Are Adam and Eve fallen before the Fall?
- 29 Oct. Satan's Rebellion and the War in Heaven.
- 5 November. Milton's Universe(s) II. Creation. The colloquy about Astronomy.
- 12 Nov. The Argument about Working Separately. Eve's Fall.
- 19 Nov. Adam's Fall and its immediate aftermath.
- 26 Nov. Milton's Grand Style II. Epic Similes.
- 3 Dec. Conclusions. Did Adam get knowledge? Was the Fall Fortunate?
Essay due by 9 December. Submit via OWL.

Learning Outcomes

The Ontario Ministry of Education requires all Graduate Course Outlines to include a statement of "Learning Outcomes." I am happy to comply. *Paradise Lost* is all about "learning outcomes." Indeed, they are the main event, explicitly promised at the poem's climax: "Ye shall be as gods, / Knowing both good and evil as they know" (IX 708-9). Now *there's* a "learning outcome" for you. If you are reading this course outline from "the Ministry," you can stop reading now, secure in the knowledge that English 9053 is fully compliant, and you have no further work to do. If you are a student, stay tuned. It's a little more complicated than the above quotation suggests, but all will be revealed as the course unfolds.

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 the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

This course will likely *discuss* AI (especially in relation to forbidden knowledge), but students are not permitted to *use* it to write assignments. The following policy 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.”

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/>