Course Syllabus

Department of English, Yale University, Summer 2018

English 220E, Milton
May 28 – June 29
MW 7:30-8:30 p.m.

Professor:
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Teaching Fellow:
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Overview

A study of John Milton’s poetry and his engagement with the cultural, social, and political struggles of the seventeenth century. We will examine the literary impact of the revolutions in the period’s thinking about political sovereignty, the relation between the sexes, the material world, religiously motivated terrorism, and the nature of God. Our main texts are Milton’s Paradise Lost and Samson Agonistes. But we will look in addition at Milton’s influence on literary culture today, considering the specific case of Philip Pullman’s deeply Miltonic science fiction trilogy His Dark Materials. Students will watch or listen to pre-recorded lectures, and will meet online for biweekly seminar discussions. Satisfies pre-1800 requirement.

Text (available from amazon.com):
Link to amazon.com: http://www.amazon.com/Complete-Poems-Major-Prose-Milton/dp/0872206785 (Links to an external site.)

Link to amazon.com: http://www.amazon.com/Materials-Omnibus-Golden-Compass-Spyglass/dp/0375847227 (Links to an external site.)

Alternative Milton text (also available from amazon.com):
Link to amazon.com: http://www.amazon.com/Complete-Poetry-Essential-Milton-Library/dp/0679642536 (Links to an external site.)

Note: page numbers for the Kerrigan/Rumrich edition of Milton appear in brackets below

Requirements:

Two papers (one 4-6 pp. and one 6-8 pp.)
Three short written responses posted online over the course of the term
Regular attendance and participation in biweekly online class meetings (see below)
Grade breakdown: short essay (20%), long essay (40%), three responses (20%), attendance and participation (20%)

Schedule of Assignments

Monday, May 28, 2018: Introduction

Lecture 1: Milton, Power, and the Power of Milton
"On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity” (1629), pp. 42-50 [18-30]
"At a Vacation Exercise in the College” (1628), pp. 30-32 [11-15]
"Elegia sexta” (1629), pp. 50-53 [190-193]
Lecture 2: The Infant Cry of God

Wednesday, May 30, 2018: Paradise Lost: The Brightness Visible of Hell
Paradise Lost, Books I and II
Lecture 9: Paradise Lost, Book I
Lecture 10: God and Mammon: The Wealth of Literary Memory
Monday, June 4, 2018: Paradise Lost: Hail Holy Light

Paradise Lost, Books I and II, and lines 1-55 of Book III
Essays on Milton’s similes by Geoffrey Hartman (“Milton’s Counterplot”) and Stanley Fish (selection from Surprised by Sin)
Lecture 11: The Miltonic Simile
Lecture 12: The Blind Prophet
Wednesday, June 6, 2018: Paradise Lost: Heaven and Earth

Paradise Lost, Book III
Lecture 13: Paradise Lost, Book III
Paradise Lost, Book IV
Excerpts from Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan(1650)
Lecture 14: Paradise Lost, Book IV
Friday, June 8, 2018: Paper #1

Upload Paper #1 (4-6 pp.) to the “Essay 1 Submission” in June 9 Module by 5:00 pm EST

Accessibility score: Low Click to improve Guide for the First Essay

Accessibility score: Medium Click to improve Some Matters of Form -- a style sheet for English literature essays.pdf

Monday, June 11, 2018: Paradise Lost: Flashback to the First Event in History

Paradise Lost, Books V and VI
Lecture 15: Paradise Lost, Books V-VI
Wednesday, June 13, 2018: Paradise Lost: Creation Stories

Paradise Lost, Books VII and VIII
Lecture 16: Paradise Lost, Books VII-VIII
Pullman, The Golden Compass
Monday, June 18, 2018: Paradise Lost: The Fall

Paradise Lost, Books IX and X
Lecture 17: Paradise Lost, Book IX
Lecture 18: Paradise Lost, Books IX-X
Pullman, The Subtle Knife
Wednesday, June 20, 2018: Paradise Lost: The Aftermath of the Fall

Paradise Lost, Books XI and XII
Lecture 19: Paradise Lost, Books XI-XII
Lecture 20: Paradise Lost, Books XI-XII (cont.)
Friday, June 22, 2018: (Optional) revision of Paper #1 due

Upload (optional) revision of Paper #1 to the “Essay 1 Submission” in June 10 Module by 5:00 pm EST

Monday, June 25, 2018: Reading Samson Agonistes after 9/11

531-93 [699-761]
The Bible, Judges, chap. 13-16
Lecture 23: Samson Agonistes
“Of That Sort of Dramatic Poem Which is Call’d Tragedy,” pp. 549-550 [707-709]
“The Passion” (1630), pp. 61-63 [30-33]
Lecture 24: Samson Agonistes (cont.)
Wednesday, June 27, 2018: The Science Fiction Legacy of Milton’s Dark Materials

Finish His Dark Materials. We’ll discuss The Amber Spyglass and its relation to Paradise Lost.
Friday, June 29, 2018: Paper #2

Upload Paper #2 (6-8 pp.) via the “Essay 2 Submission” in the Week 5 Module by midnight. Suggested paper topics are available under that same link in the Week 5 Module.

Note about the required three short written responses:

Each student must produce three written responses over the course of the term. Each response should center on a specific passage from the assigned reading for the upcoming class meeting, available within the relevant module. Each contribution should be the length of a brief paragraph and should be posted on the course’s Canvas website before noon on the day of our class meeting. You will likely find yourself sharing a passage with a fellow student, and so you can choose whether to initiate a response or to contribute to an ongoing discussion thread. Use these postings to share reflections, ask questions, launch arguments, express puzzlement, or do something else altogether, about the material assigned for the upcoming class. You should also regularly read the online discussions, even when not assigned to post for that session. You may find that a point you articulated earlier has been taken up, agreed with, or, in the spirit of Miltonic disputation, even refuted.

Feel free to re-use any response you’ve written in one of the two essays. Just add a footnote indicating where you’d written that before. You may also refer in one of your essays to one of your classmate’s written responses, in which case you would also footnote the source.

Note: Your three required responses must be spread out over the course of the term. (You can’t post three times for one class meeting, and meet the requirement!) Be sure you’re posting a response for an upcoming class, and not a class meeting that has already occurred.