English S220E
Milton

Department of English
Yale University, Summer 2020 (Session A)
May 25 – June 24
MW 7:30-8:30 p.m.

Professor:  
John Rogers  
john.rogers@yale.edu

Teaching Fellow:  
Andrea Walkden  
andrea.walkden@qc.cuny.edu

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 YA science fiction trilogy *His Dark Materials*. Students will watch or listen to pre-recorded lectures, and will meet online for biweekly seminar discussions. Fulfills "Renaissance" requirement for the English Major. WR.

Course Texts

ISBN: 978-0872206786:  

Philip Pullman, *His Dark Materials*  
ISBN: 978-0375847226  
Alternative Milton edition:
ISBN: 978-0679642534

Requirements

- Two papers (one 4-6 pp. and one 6-8 pp.) Suggested paper topics and guidelines will be distributed. Students will have the chance to revise and resubmit their first paper.
- Three short written responses posted online over the course of the term (see explanation below)
- Regular attendance and participation in biweekly online class meetings (see below). There are so few class meetings for this course, that missing even one session puts the student at a real disadvantage. If for some reason you must miss a class, you are obliged to write two additional responses: one for the class you missed and one for the next class meeting. (In other words, that's two additional written responses for each class meeting you miss.)

Grade breakdown: short essay (20%), long essay (40%), three responses (20%), attendance and participation (20%)

Schedule of Assignments

Page numbers refer to the Hughes edition; page numbers for the Kerrigan edition of Milton appear in square brackets.

Monday, May 25 - Introduction

- Lecture 1: Milton, Power, and the Power of Milton
  “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 27 - *Paradise Lost*: The Brightness Visible of Hell

*Paradise Lost* (1667), Books I and II
- Lecture 9: *Paradise Lost*, Book I
- Lecture 10: God and Mammon: The Wealth of Literary Memory

Monday, June 1 - *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 3 - *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 5 - Paper #1

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

Monday, June 8 - *Paradise Lost*: Flashback to the First Event in History

*Paradise Lost*, Books V and VI
- Lecture 15: *Paradise Lost*, Books V-VI

Wednesday, June 10 - *Paradise Lost*: Creation Stories

*Paradise Lost*, Books VII and VIII
Pullman, *The Golden Compass*
- Lecture 16: *Paradise Lost*, Books VII-VIII

Monday, June 15 - *Paradise Lost*: The Fall

*Paradise Lost*, Books IX and X
Pullman, *The Subtle Knife*
• Lecture 17: Paradise Lost, Book IX
• Lecture 18: Paradise Lost, Books IX-X

Wednesday, June 17 - 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 19, 2020: (Optional) revision of Paper #1 due
Upload (optional) revision of Paper #1 to the “Essay 1 Revision Submission” under the June 5 “Assignment” by 5:00 pm EST

Monday, June 22 - Reading Samson Agonistes after 9/11
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 24 - 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.

Saturday, June 27 - Paper #2
Upload Paper #2 (6-8 pp.) via the “Essay 2 Submission” under the June 27 “Assignment” 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 the specific passage noted, or the question asked, under the “Directed Reading Response” link on the “module” for each class meeting (beginning Wednesday, May 27). Each contribution should be the length of a brief paragraph and should be posted on the course’s Canvas website before noon (Eastern Standard Time) 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 (by clicking “reply” to the “Directed Reading Response” question itself, or by clicking “reply” to one of your classmate's contribution 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 must 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.

Your three required responses must be spread out over the course of the term, with only one response for any given week. Be sure you’re posting a response for an upcoming class, and not a class meeting that has already occurred. If you for any reason must miss a class meeting, you are obliged to write two additional responses: one for the class you missed and one for the next class meeting. (In other words, that's two additional written responses for each class meeting you miss.)