“He who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things ought himself to be a true poem.”

--John Milton, from Apology for Smectymnuus (1642)

“For assuredly I do not urge or enforce anything upon my own authority. On the contrary I advise every reader, and set him an example by doing the same myself, to withhold his consent from those opinions about which he does not feel fully convinced, until the evidence of the Bible convinces him and induces his reason to assent and to believe.”

--John Milton, from the preface to De Doctrina Christiana (pub. posthumously, 1825)

“The shop of war hath not there more anvils and hammers waking to fashion out the plates and instruments of armed justice in defense of beleaguered truth than there be pens and heads there, sitting by their studious lamps, musing, searching, revolving new notions and ideas wherewith to present, as with their homage and their fealty, the approaching reformation; others as fast reading, trying all things, assenting to the force of reason and convincement [...] Where there is much desire to learn, there of necessity will be much arguing, much writing, many opinions; for opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making.”

--John Milton, from Areopagitica (1644)

“The insemination, structure, and story of Milton’s Cosmos declare that it is replete with meaning. This may be the most important thing one can say about it.”

--Dennis Danielson, Paradise Lost and the Cosmological Revolution (2014)

“Most profoundly, [Milton] explores through Adam and Eve the fundamental challenge of any love relationship: the uneasy, inevitable, and ultimately creative tension between autonomy and interdependence.”


**Course summary:**
This course focuses on John Milton’s epic retelling of the biblical story of Adam and Eve. Like other great works of literature from before our time that continue to fascinate today, Paradise Lost cultivates in readers the habit of studying the past as a way of thinking critically about the present. As we witness Milton himself questioning, challenging, and creatively refashioning the Bible, major works from classical Greece and Rome, and entrenched interpretations of these books—effectively making them new for his own time—we find that the poem is prompting us to do the same with its own text. In short, one discovers that Paradise Lost has as much to do with our personal and global concerns in 2017 as it does with Milton’s immediate concerns in 17th-century England. The poem will engage us in fruitful debates about the meanings of “good” and “evil”; the nature of love; the politics of gender and marital relationships; the respective responsibilities of citizens, leaders, and governments; the age-old question, “what is the good life?”; and the ecological relationships between the Earth and its human inhabitants. We’ll also study closely the aesthetic and scientific fabrics of the several “worlds” that comprise the multiverse Milton creates in this most cosmic of epic poems.
Required texts:

- Mark Twain, *The Dairies of Adam and Eve*, Ed. D. Roberts (Fair Oaks)
- Various articles, chapters, and other readings accessible on our course’s Moodle site.

Graded work:

- Participation ------------------------------------------------------ 10
- Presentation ------------------------------------------------------ 10
- First formal essay (5+ pages) ------------------------------------- 20
- Five response papers (of one single-spaced page each) ----------- 30
- Second formal essay (10+ pages) ---------------------------------- 30

**Attendance** is a sign of your commitment to your studies. I become concerned after a student has missed more than two classes. If you miss three classes, I expect you to schedule a meeting with me so we can discuss your status in the class. Ordinarily (and certainly if I hear nothing from you), each absence beyond three will reduce the final grade by one-third of a letter grade.

**Please arrive to class on time.** I understand that the most conscientious of us sometimes are delayed by circumstances beyond our control (and in those instances, please do come to class rather than not at all). Persistent late arrivals, however, become a distraction for the class. You may dismiss yourself during class time, but please do so only for urgent reasons.

**Participation:** Milton himself deplored mere spectatorship and went to great lengths to entice and provoke his readers to think actively and independently. Our class will be successful to the extent that each of you contributes to our discussions of this controversial literature. My sense of your level of "participation" will be based on a number of things: your attendance, how well you appear to be keeping up with the reading assignments (based on your papers and your involvement in discussions), and any conversations you and I have beyond class time. Normally, outstanding participation will raise a final grade by one-third of a letter grade.

**Umbrella topics:** Studying *Paradise Lost* and Milton’s better-known minor works can become overwhelming for thoughtful scholars because these texts are so rich in interpretive possibilities. As a way of making your explorations a little more focused and manageable I will ask each of you to choose one of six “umbrella topics,” which you should use as a general focus for your reading up until the first formal essay, and possibly beyond. These are: 1) the book of Nature (the material world, natural philosophy, science); 2) the book of God’s Word (the Bible, theology); 3) polis and politics (political community, leadership, the Public Sphere); 4) sex, gender, and marriage; 5) the individual (subjectivity, government of self, Milton as persona; 6) poetics (form, genre, aesthetics, authorship). Your mission will be to find a topic for your first formal essay that’s relevant to or otherwise inspired by your umbrella topic. Up until this essay, for the sake of contextual preparation, you should pay special attention in each of our readings to matters pertaining to your umbrella topic.

**Presentation:** Along with one of your classmates, you’ll be asked to address a focused topic or question concerning one of our readings in a presentation of 10-15 minutes. In developing your
response to the prompt, you are required to consult at least one secondary source. Please provide members of the class a handout that helps us to understand and remember the contents of your presentation, including an annotated bibliography.

**Essays:**

1) **Response papers.** These are informal, one page (single-spaced) explorations of some aspect of a text we have read recently. A total of five are required. You should use these papers as an aid to your reading (one typically thinks differently when writing about literature than when reading only) and as a forum for generating interesting questions and topics you might pursue in either of your two formal papers. Otherwise, you have considerable freedom in how you go about these papers. You may revise and build upon a previous paper so long as your revisions are substantial and reflect your engagement with an additional text.

2) **First formal essay.** For this essay (of five or more double-spaced pages) you will devise a focused topic that is in some way relevant to your “umbrella topic” (see above). To earn a grade of “C” or higher, your essay must have a strong, clearly stated thesis—which is to say, a focused claim that requires the work of your body paragraphs to demonstrate.

3) **Second formal essay** (of no fewer than ten double-spaced pages) should engage with your chosen primary text(s) and carefully selected critical/theoretical publications. It will be your responsibility to devise a topic for this paper, however, I encourage you to talk with me about your reading and research interests at any point during the semester.

**Academic honesty:** Plagiarism is a violation of scholarly trust. According to the Provost, “Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at [http://www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321](http://www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321).” Violators of the Student Conduct Code will receive an “F” for the offending paper. Each essay you submit must be signed at the bottom of the last page, assuring that the work is your own, except where indicated by proper documentation. Your signature is your word that the essay is free of plagiarism.

**Accommodation:** The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with DSS, please contact DSS in Lommasson 154. I will work with you and DSS to provide an appropriate accommodation.

**Specific objectives of this course:**

1. To gain familiarity with the major cultural currents and happenings of the seventeenth century, and to understand how these contexts can contribute to our interpretations of Milton’s works of literature.
2. To learn how Milton works with the conventions of certain literary genres (epic, lyric, and political pamphlet) and how he deviates from these conventions in meaningful ways.
3. To develop your skills in performing meaningful, interesting close readings of literary texts.
4. To gain practice in revising and developing informal response papers into formal analytical essays.
5. To develop your proficiency in writing rhetorically effective essays (well-reasoned and grammatically sound), driven by a thesis and sustained by an ordered, coherent argument.
The following schedule is tentative. At the beginning or end of each class I will confirm the reading for the next class. If you ever miss a class, please check with a classmate (or myself) about any schedule changes that may have occurred.

1/24 Tues. Introductions; “Ad Patrem” (“To his Father”)
1/26 Thurs. John Shawcross, “The Life of Milton,” pp. 1-6 (on Moodle); Elegy 6, to Charles Diodati (handout); The Nativity Ode (in Rosenblatt, pp. 3-13); Georgia Christopher, “Milton’s ‘Literary’ Theology in the Nativity Ode” (in Rosenblatt, pp. 465-471)

1/31 Tues. **First response paper due.** Virgil, Eclogue V (link to e-text on Moodle); "Lycidas" (94-107).

2/7 Tues. Shawcross, “The Life of Milton” (6-12); *Areopagitica* (pp. 333-363); Recommended for historical context: N.H. Keeble, “Pamphlet Wars” (Moodle)
2/9 Thurs. **Second response paper due.** *Areopagitica* (pp. 363-380); Stanley Fish, “Driving from the Letter...” (in Rosenblatt, pp. 574-579, and more if you have time).

2/14 Tues. *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (pp. 380-419)
2/16 Thurs. C. S. Lewis, from *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (Moodle); *Paradise Lost*, prefatory texts and book one, lines 1-126; Shawcross, “The Life of Milton” (12-19).

2/21 Tues. **Third response paper due.** *Paradise Lost*, book one (finish); from Neil Forsyth, *The Satanic Epic* (Moodle)
2/23 Thurs. *Paradise Lost*, books one and two (lines 1-628)

2/28 Tues. **Fourth response paper due.** *Paradise Lost*, book two (finish)
3/2 Thurs. *Paradise Lost*, book three (lines 1-417); Dennis Danielson, “The Fall of Man and Milton’s Theodicy” (Moodle)

3/7 Tues. *Paradise Lost*, book three (finish); Danielson, "Astronomy" (Moodle)
3/9 Thurs. **Fifth response paper due.** *Paradise Lost*, book four; Genesis, chapter 3

3/14 Tues. *Paradise Lost*, book four (finish) and book five (lines 1-135)
3/16 Thurs. *Paradise Lost*, book five (finish); Stephen Fallon, "Paradise Lost and Intellectual History" (Moodle)
3/17 Fri. **First formal essay due** (please slide under my office door before the end of the day)

Week of 3/20 **Spring Break**

3/30 Thurs. *Paradise Lost*, books seven; Genesis, chapters 1-2
4/4 Tues.  *Paradise Lost*, book eight
4/6 Thurs.  *Paradise Lost*, book eight (continued); book nine (lines 1-191)

4/11 Tues.  Genesis, chapter 3; *Paradise Lost*, book nine (finish); Barbara Lewalski, "Milton on Women - Yet Once Again" (Moodle)


4/25 Tues.  Milton’s legacy to 19th century; Mark Twain, *The Dairies of Adam and Eve*
4/27 Thurs.  Mark Twain, *The Dairies of Adam and Eve*

5/2 Tues.  Term paper reports
5/4 Thurs.  Term paper reports; Milton’s legacy: 20th century to the present

**Term papers are due on May 12 (Friday) by high noon.** Please slide your essay under my office door.