

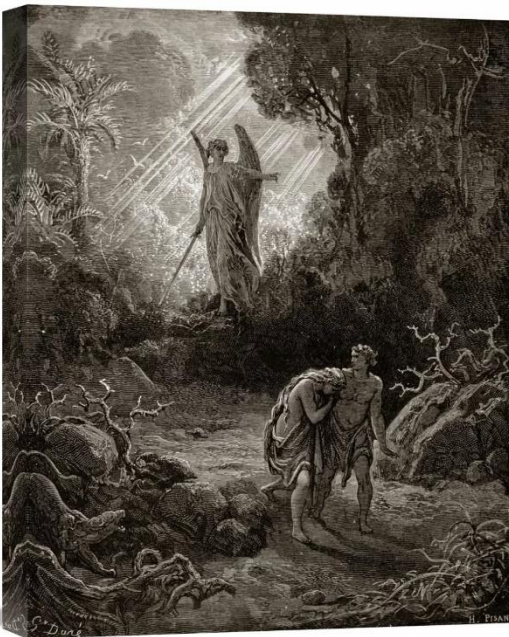
English 454: Milton

Professor Mark Netzloff

Online asynchronous

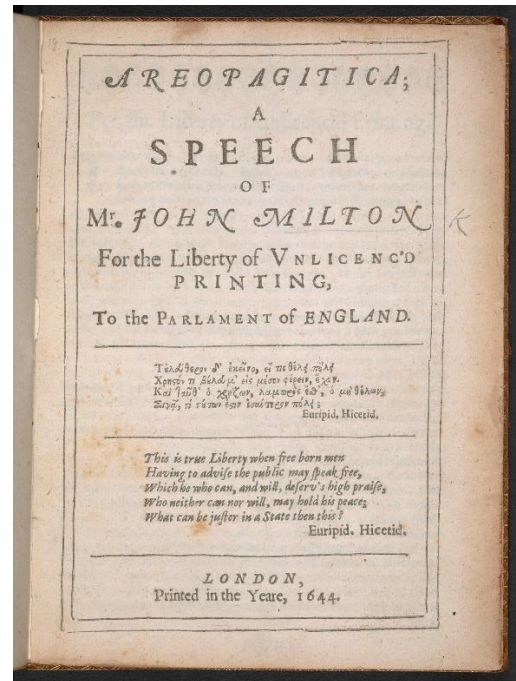
Note: English 454 fulfills requirements for a pre-1800 course for most tracks of the English major. As an online course, it additionally fulfills this requirement for the Open Track.

In 1667, the poet John Milton published his epic poem Paradise Lost, a text that emerged from the experience of a series of personal and political losses – his own blindness, the collapse of the revolutionary government he served, a violent suppression of political and religious dissent, the Great Fire of London that destroyed much of the city, and a pandemic of another era, the Great Plague, which in the previous two years had killed 15% of the population of London.



Much of our focus in the course will consist of a close reading of Paradise Lost. Our own reading of the poem will mirror the circumstances of its composition: since Milton himself dictated the poem, we will not only read the text but also *hear* it being performed in an audio recording. The Canvas site will provide introductory material on a range of topics, from Milton's use of scriptural and classical sources to the political contexts that inform the poem.

The other component of our course will focus on Milton's prose writings, many of which he composed while serving as an official in the revolutionary government that had overthrown the monarchy during the English Revolution. Milton's influence is longstanding, from his defense of a free press (Areopagitica) and the civil basis for marriage and right to divorce (Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce) to his support for the execution of the king, Charles I, and abolition of the monarchy (The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates). We will additionally situate Milton alongside other writers of the English Revolution, including the influential political theorist Thomas Hobbes.



Course work:

Weekly reading questions – 50%

Weekly discussion posts – 50%

Required texts:

Milton, John, Paradise Lost, ed. Gordon Teskey, 2nd edition (Norton)

ISBN: 978-0-393-61708-5; cost: \$24.25

Milton, John, Milton's Selected Poetry and Prose, ed. Jason P. Rosenblatt (Norton)

ISBN: 978-0-393-97987-9; cost: \$23.12

Additional readings posted as pdfs on Canvas, and alternatively available in hard copy as a course packet available at Clark Graphics.