

Department of English & Writing Studies

English 3321F (001)**Paradise Lost**

Fall 2025

Instructor: John Leonard**Antirequisites:** The former English 3224E, the former English 3228F/G.**Prerequisites:** At least 60% in 1.0 of English 1020-1999 or permission of the Department.

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

2. Instructor Information

Instructor. John Leonard, FRSC, Distinguished University Professor.

Email: jleonard@uwo.ca Students must use their Western (@uwo.ca) email addresses when contacting their instructors. Do not use any other email address and please do not leave phone messages.

Office hours: UC 3423. Tuesday 3:30-4:20. Thursday 4:30-5:20. (Both right after the scheduled class). Other times by appointment including Zoom.

3. Learning Outcomes

The Delphic Oracle declared Socrates the wisest man in Greece because he knew he knew nothing. Socrates knew better than to promise any "Learning Outcomes", but John Milton is a different matter. Learning outcomes are what *Paradise Lost* is all about:

Your eyes, that seem so clear
Yet are but dim, shall perfectly be then
Opened and cleared and ye shall be as gods
Knowing both good and evil as they know. (IX. 706-709)

Now *there's* a learning outcome for you. And it will be in this very course! What could possibly go wrong?

4. Course Schedule

September 4: Introduction. Genesis. The English Civil War. Milton's epic aspirations. What kind of a poem is *Paradise Lost*?

September 9: Satan and Epic Heroism. Two simple but tricky questions: 1) What does Satan look like? 2) What is his name?

September 11: Satan and Epic Heroism (continued). The Debate in Hell and the Council in Heaven. Theodicy and the Free Will Defence. Satan vs. the Son. Who is more heroic?

September 16: Milton's Multiverse. Chaos. Infinite space. Is Chaos good, evil, or neutral?
September 18: Milton's Grand Style. Pompous bombast or exquisite delicacy? Sound and Sense. The Invocation to Light (book three). Similes and allusions.

September 23: Satan's Odyssey. The search for the new world. Interstellar space. Life on other worlds. Uriel and deception.

September 25: Satan's first three soliloquies (all in book four). Our first sight of the garden and Adam and Eve. Is Satan good deep down? Does God forbid knowledge?

September 30: No class. Truth and Reconciliation Day.

October 2: Innocence and Experience. Eve at the lake (book four). Eve's dream (book five). Is Eve fallen before the Fall?

October 7: Satan's disguises. His discovery in the bower and return to his own shape (end of book four).

October 9. Entertaining Raphael. Food in Paradise. Sex in Paradise. Gardening. Are Adam and Eve in the "hopeless position of Old Age Pensioners enjoying eternal youth"? If Milton had been "stranded in his own Paradise," would he have "eaten the apple in the first five minutes, then written a pamphlet justifying the act"?

October 14. Satan's rebellion (book five). Does God start all the trouble? If so, why? Milton's God: a benevolent deity or ruthless tyrant?

October 16: Satan's rebellion (continued). How does Satan tempt the other angels? Why do they follow him? Would you have followed him? The debate between Satan and Abdiel. Who wins?

October 21. The war in heaven (book six). Epic sublimity? Epic fail? Mock epic?

October 23. The Creation (book seven). Adam's question about astronomy (book eight). What did Milton think about astronomers? Is he a moribund Ptolemaist or a bold (post)Copernican? Does he even prophesy recent discoveries?

October 28. Adam's first memories (book eight). God's best moment? Does Eve really love Adam? Why does Eve blush? Is Adam fallen before the Fall? Are Milton's angels gay?

October 30. The argument about working separately (book nine). Was Eve right to assert her independence? Was Adam right to let her go? Milton's *Areopagitica*, censorship and "safe space".

READING WEEK

November 11. Satan's last two soliloquies (both in book nine). The serpent. Would you have seen through Satan's disguise?

November 13. The temptation of Eve. Satan as confidence man. Eve's fall. Her motives. Her soliloquies. Was she right to eat the apple?

November 18. The Fall of Adam. Should he be condemned or applauded? What else could he have done?

November 20. The immediate aftermath of the Fall. Adam and Eve's second argument. Who wins this time?

November 25. Satan's triumphant return to Hell – and humiliation (book ten). A satisfying resolution or a cheap trick by Milton?

November 27. Book ten. Regrets, recriminations, reconciliation.

December 2. The last two books. An “untransmuted lump of futurity”?

December 4. Conclusions.

5. Course Materials

John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, edited by John Milton (Penguin, 2003). Required. Cost: \$16 (Amazon.ca price).

Additional course material (powerpoints, journal articles, etc.) will be posted to OWL:

<https://westernu.brightspace.com/>

Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site (<https://westernu.brightspace.com/>) regularly for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class.

If students need assistance with the course OWL site, they can seek support on the [OWL Brightspace Help](#) page. Alternatively, they can contact the Western Technology Services Helpdesk. They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

Technical Requirements

A stable high-speed internet connection is highly recommended for accessing and downloading powerpoints and other materials from the OWL site.

Electronic Devices

There is no exam for this course. Electronic devices including phones should not be used in the classroom.

Statement on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

In this course, students are permitted to use AI tools exclusively for information gathering and preliminary research purposes. These tools are intended to enhance the learning experience by providing access to diverse information sources. However, it is essential that students critically evaluate the obtained information, exercise independent thinking, and engage in original research to synthesize and develop their own ideas, arguments, and perspectives. The use of AI tools can serve as a starting point for exploration; however, students are expected to uphold academic integrity by appropriately attributing all sources and avoiding plagiarism. Assignments should reflect the students' own thoughts and independent written work. By adhering to these guidelines, students contribute to a responsible and ethical learning environment that promotes critical thinking, independent inquiry and allows them to produce original written contributions.

6. Methods of Evaluation

Grading Scheme and Assessment Dates

The overall course grade will be calculated as follows:

Short essay (1500 words). Topics TBA. Due date(s): **12-18 October**. Flexible deadline (accommodation built into system). Submit via OWL portal (not hard copy). **Weighting: 25%.**

One-page written analysis of a visual illustration of *Paradise Lost* or a work of art that illustrates a moment that *Paradise Lost* also depicts. Your analysis should compare and contrast your chosen work of art with Milton's poetic account, identifying and discussing parallels and contrasts. Example: countless artists (even some illustrators of *Paradise Lost*) have depicted the serpent with a human face. Milton's serpent is upright before the Fall, but its outward appearance is otherwise unremarkable. How would Eve's temptation be different if Milton's serpent had a human face? Due date(s): **9-15 November**. Flexible deadline (accommodation built into system). **Weighting: 10%**.

Long essay (2500 words). Topics TBA. Due date(s): **16-22 November**. Flexible deadline (accommodation built into system). Submit via OWL portal (not hard copy). **Weighting: 40%**.

Quizzes (best 3 out of 5). Multiple choice questions. Dates unannounced. Quizzes will be distributed and answered in **the first 10 minutes** of class. If you arrive late you will **not** be permitted to answer that day's quiz. **Weighting: 15%**.

Participation: 10%.

This class meets twice a week. Students should come to lecture prepared to participate in group discussion: read the assigned portions of the text in advance of class, and always bring the text to class with you.

Quizzes (15%): We will have five quizzes. The best three will count. The two extra quizzes are to accommodate people who miss one or even two due to sickness. In other words, accommodation is built into the course, so do not seek academic accommodation if you miss a quiz. **MAKE-UPS ARE BUILT INTO THE SYSTEM**. Quizzes will be unannounced (to encourage attendance) but distributed more or less equally throughout the term. Quizzes will cover our current work and may be based on readings for the day the quiz is given (so be prepared for class).

Note: there is no final exam for the course. DO NOT SEEK ACCOMMODATION FOR AN EXAM THAT DOES NOT EXIST.

Important. I am now semi-retired and only work six months of the year (July-December). The **absolute final date** for which I shall accept any work, even with accommodation, even with extensions, is **Tuesday 9 December** (the final class and Milton's 417th birthday). I must submit my final grades in the following week and have absolutely no flexibility.

Students are fully responsible for looking at and being familiar with the information posted on the department website at

<http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html>.

7. Additional Statements

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, here:

<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/scholasticdisciplineundergrad.pdf>.

Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays

Students should review the [policy for Accommodation for Religious Holidays](#) . Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but **not later than two weeks** prior to writing the examination/term test. In the case of conflict with a midterm test, students should inform their instructor as soon as possible but not later than one week prior to the midterm.

Religious Accommodation requests for final exams should be submitted via the Student Absence Portal.

Mental Health Support

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Gender-based and sexual violence

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

<https://www.uwo.ca/health/studentssupport/survivorsupport/get-help.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.