



I have had very good luck with the following, which is based, as you will know, on a venerable insight in PL studies. For the _first_ assignment in my upper-division undergraduate seminar on Milton, I give students a concordance of the word "high" and its various forms in the first three books of PL and ask them to analyze what happens with and to the word in these books. Among many benefits to the students, this assignment helps them see early and clearly that words in PL are quick and changing, never static, always challenging the reader by the energy of their polysemy and the paradoxes of their positions.

Al Shoaf

Though I do not speak from the perspective of an "experienced teacher," I can say that I do have some experience as a student creating essays in response to effective Milton writing assignments, ones that I particularly enjoyed because I thought that they were simple yet sophisticated, sophisticated in their simplicity, ones that, in my opinion, allow the reader to enter the enormous universe of Milton through nice, narrow, focused, little topics. (They are manageable topics for a 1,500-2,000 word essay.) All of the topics specifically treat _Paradise Lost_.

The following writing assignments were given by Jonathan F. S. Post in his Milton undergraduate seminar and Paul Douglas Sheets in his Wordsworth undergraduate seminar, both at UCLA.

Post gave a range of seven topics:

1) Take any simile or pair and analyze how it (they) function. This means tracing down the allusions, working through the imagery and the comparison in detail, interpreting its effect on the reader, and finally determining its meaning in a wider thematic or stylistic context supplied by the book in which it appears or by _Paradise Lost_ as a whole.

2) Solitude and its problems: analyze the different kinds of "aloneness" in _PL_. You might begin by looking up the several meanings of "alone" in the _OED_ and then see how different figures in the poem (i.e., God, Satan, Abdiel, or Adam and Eve) compare to each other in the different

kinds of solitude they manifest.

3) Imperialism/Colonization: as epic, Milton's poem is frequently said to participate in Renaissance colonialist discourse, a discourse made especially acute and resonant with the discovery of the "new" world. How does Milton's poem make use of these linked ideas? What metaphors of exploration does he adopt? Who are the imperialists and colonizers? How are they described? What defines an Imperialist? A Colonizer?

4) Milton might well be the most deeply political poet in English literature. In what way does an understanding of Milton's politics help with a reading of *Paradise Lost*? You might begin by gathering references from the poem to the subject of monarchy, for instance. Do you find the poem manifests a consistent political attitude?

5) Adam and Eve waking: Compare the different ways Milton represents the first responses-the births-of our "Grandparents." How is each described? What does it tell us about their "subjectivity," that is, their sense of self? Who is the more assured? Why? And how does this difference manifest itself in the scene and elsewhere in the poem?

6) Milton and the Visual Arts. Many scenes from *PL* have inspired artists, of whom William Blake is the most famous. He made a series of illustrations for many of Milton's poems, including *PL*. Take one or two of these and compare visual and verbal representations. Many have now been conveniently collected in Robert N. Essicks recent *William Blake at the Huntington* (1994).

7) *Paradise Lost* is an epic of erotic and spiritual love, with many kinds of love described: male-female; male-male; angel to angel; man to God; father to son; God to his Creation; poet and his muse. Which do you think is the most important to Milton?

Sheets's assignment is to write 500-word essay comparing Eden's moon rise in *Paradise Lost* (IV.597-609) to Wordsworth's "A Night-piece" (1798). His suggestion is to look carefully at how the writer's choice of words, use of figurative language, and selection and presentation of images effect the representation of "nature" and its relation to the reader. (This topic is perhaps designed more to evoke a more Wordsworthian response than one which gets at issues that are fundamental to

comprehending Milton.)

I hope these are useful. I also have, if anyone is interested, a list of the graduate course readings, and a mixture of other pedagogical devices that Post had chosen for the Milton graduate seminar. (One such device was a handout of the last two pages of Edward Snow's introduction to Inside Bruegel: The Play of Images in Children's Games in which Snow contextualizes Nietzsche's advocacy of "lento," slow reading, as the prime act of the philologist.)

But if there was one critical reading that Post kept returning to, and has always continued to return to, in so far as it concerns Milton, it is Dr. Johnson's account in the Lives. Post believes that any student who wants to begin to learn about Milton ought to read Johnson's "life of Milton." I quote Post's syllabus:

Although it may not be apparent from a look at current criticism generated by the Milton industry, Samuel Johnson's "life of Milton" remains the single indispensable introduction to Milton, and I assume everyone will, at some point, curl up with a copy and treat themselves to one of the great critical reads of a lifetime.

Tristan Saldana

Here's an exam question that could also be a paper topic; I got some interesting and thoughtful responses to it. I didn't get as many fuzzy overgeneralized answers as you might expect, perhaps because I warned the students to support their arguments with plenty of close analysis of specific passages.

"Truth is beauty, beauty truth," Keats writes. Anachronism aside, how might Milton respond? In a clear, well-written essay full of specific examples, discuss the relationship of truth to beauty in *Paradise Lost* and at least three of the following four works: *A Masque*, *Areopagitica*, the companion poems, the *Nativity Ode*.

Gardner Campbell
Mary Washington College

What an exciting message--it felt like a classified ad! Here are my topics, and I always start off with two short explications (about one page) to make sure they are oriented. I hope they are helpful.--Margie

1) Consider the role of the good angels in the poem--Uriel, Gabriel, and the angelic guard in Eden (Book 3.621-742; 4:115-130, 549-590, 776-1015; Book 10.18-39.); Raphael (Books 5-8); and Abdiel and the warriors in Heaven (Abdiel, Book 5:803-Book 6). What does their behavior reveal about Milton's idea of Christian heroism? Or what kinds of models do the good angels offer Adam and Eve and the regenerate reader?

If you find this topic too large, you may focus on one group of angels or one incident.

2) Milton has filled Paradise Lost with parallel passages. Choose a pair--Satan's encounter with Sin and Death in Book 2 and his encounter with Zephon, Ithuriel, and Gabriel in Book 4; Eve's account of her birth in Book 4 and Adam's account of his birth in Book 8; Sin's account of Satan's evil thought in Book 2 and Eve's account of her evil dream in Book 5; the Son's offer of self-sacrifice in Book 3 and Adam's in Book 9 (these are just a few examples). What is the relationship between these two passages? How does the pairing that you have chosen illuminate the central issues of the poem? How does their sequence help the poem to educate its reader?

You may NOT compare the two Councils or compare Satan's offer of self-sacrifice in Book 2 with the Son's offer of self-sacrifice in Book 3. Professor Samuel's essay might serve as a model for approaching this kind of topic.

3) Paradise Lost tells multiple stories of Creation--in the invocation to Book 1; in Uriel's speech at the end of Book 3; in Raphael's description in Book 7; in Adam's account of his birth in Book 8. Why does each character see something different? What do their differing perspectives contribute to the poem's sense of what God is like? OR why do the accounts come in this particular order? How do they build upon each other?

4) Choose a scene that you find particularly complex, problematic, or compelling. How does Milton use this scene as part of his effort to show

that the Fall is not inevitable?

5) Critics often refer to the narrator as a character in *Paradise Lost*. Choose one section of the poem--an invocation or a section in which the narrator comments frequently (any episode involving Satan). Why does he intrude so much of his personal situation into the poem? How does Milton use the narrator in this poem?

6) How does Milton use epic similes to amplify the significance of particular moments in the poem? You may either analyze a section of the poem where he uses several epic similes in close succession, or you may select similes that particularly interest you and develop a thesis that offers a logic for considering them as a group.

ENG 413: Milton
Spring 2002
Dr. Berglund

Criticism Review (paper 2) and Long Essay (paper 3) on *Paradise Lost*

Read as much of *Paradise Lost* as you can during spring break—at least through Book 9. You need to start thinking about a topic for your long essay, and you can't do so until you have a better sense of how issues and characters develop.

The final assignment is a 2,500-3,000 word essay on *Paradise Lost*. The paper must be informed by at least one work of literary criticism and must include close readings of the poem. You may, but need not, use *Areopagitica*, *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, or *Comus* to shape your analysis of *Paradise Lost*.

I have broken the assignment down into the following steps.

1. Criticism Review, due Wednesday, 10 April. I have placed on reserve 12 articles or chapters grouped under four broad topics: "Eve," "Milton as poet," "politics" and "God." Read all the criticism listed under one of these topics and then write a summary of the argument of two of the articles. You may either integrate your discussion of the two articles or you may write about each article separately. Identify each critic's thesis and the

ideas that strike you as most interesting. Include one or two brief quotations from each article and analyze their meaning and importance. Finally, comment on what issues raised by the criticism you might explore further in your paper on *Paradise Lost*. This review should run 1,000 - 1,500 words.

Grades for the criticism review will be based on a) the appropriateness of your choices for summary and quotation analysis; b) the accuracy of your summaries and analysis of quotations; c) the correctness and readability of your prose; and d) the quality of your ideas for further exploration. You may, of course, disagree with the conclusions reached in the article(s).

I will supply a sample criticism review written by me when we return from break.

2. Thesis proposal, due Wednesday, 24 April. Once you finish reading *Paradise Lost* and have my comments on your criticism review, work on defining an original thesis for the long essay. I encourage you to build on the foundation that you laid in the criticism review but you are not required to stick with everything you wrote. On 24 April, give me, preferably via email, one or two paragraphs (around 250 words) proposing the thesis and rough outline for your long paper. You will not be graded on this proposal but handing it in is required. I will provide feedback as soon as possible.

3. Final Essay, due at our CEP meeting, Wednesday, 8 May, 3:40 p.m. This paper may incorporate material from your third paraphrase and from the criticism review. Your paper must use at least one secondary source, though it need not be one discussed in your criticism review. If you choose to read other critics, I advise you to begin by consulting Flannagan's bibliography and the anthologies of criticism already on reserve. There is a great mass of critical material on the Internet but not all of it is reliable.

Grades on the final paper will be based on 1) the originality, focus and persuasiveness of your thesis; 2) your insight into Milton's poetry and ideas; 3) your skill at close reading and incorporation of quotation analysis; 4) your ability to integrate criticism into your essay without letting the critics' ideas take over the paper; 5) the clarity of your prose; 6) your adherence to rules of grammar and mechanics; and 7) the accuracy of your citations, attributions, and bibliography.

Please note that I am always happy to read a draft of any paper; I return comments within 48 hours.

Articles and Books on Reserve

Politics:

Merritt Y. Hughes, *Ten Perspectives on Milton*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1965. Chapter 7, "Satan and the 'Myth' of the Tyrant"

Steven Jablonski, "'Freely We Serve': Paradise Lost and the Paradoxes of Personal Liberty." In *Arenas of Conflict*, ed. Kristin Pruitt McColgan and Charles W. Durham. London: Associated University Presses, 1997: 107-119.

Mary Ann Radzinowicz, "The Politics of Paradise Lost." In *Politics of Discourse: The literature and History of Seventeenth-century England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987: 204-229.

God:

Robert Crosman, *Reading Paradise Lost*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1980. Chapter 2, "Light Invisible"

William Empson, *Milton's God*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1961. Chapter 3, "Heaven" (Also recommended, Chapter 1, "Critics")

Geoffrey Hartman, "Milton's Counterplot" (1958). Reprinted in *Milton: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Louis L. Martz. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1966: 100-108.

Milton as Poet:

*Janet Adelman, "Creation and the Place of the Poet in Paradise Lost." In *The Author in His Work: Essays on a Problem in Criticism*. Ed. Louis L. Martz and Aubrey Williams. New Haven: Yale UP, 1978: 51-70.

Anne Davidson Ferry, *Milton's Epic Voice: The Narrator in Paradise Lost*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1963.

Chapter 1, "Tone: The Bird and the Blind Bard."

Stanley E. Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost*. New York: MacMillan, 1967.

Chapter 5, "The Interpretative Choice"

Eve:

*Christine Froula, "When Eve Reads Milton: Undoing the Canonical Economy." *Critical Inquiry* 10 (1983): 321-47.

Diane McColley, "Eve and the Arts of Eden." In *Milton and the Idea of Woman*, ed. Julia M. Walker. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988: 100-119.

*James Grantham Turner, "Passion and Subordination." Excerpted from "Love Made in the First Age: Edenic Sexuality in *Paradise Lost* and its Analogues." *One Flesh: Paradisal Marriage and Sexual Relations in the Age of Milton*. Oxford UP, 1987.

*If a title is asterisked, it's a photocopy; otherwise the entire book is on reserve.

ENG 413: Milton
Spring 2002
Dr. Lisa Berglund

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Office Hours: MWF 10:00-11:00 a.m., MW, 2:00-3:00 p.m. and by appointment

Course Objective: Attempting to become Milton's "fit audience," we will devote the semester to a rigorous reading of *Paradise Lost*. The course will begin to place Milton's poem and his politics in the context of both 17th and 21st century ethics, theology, aesthetics and morality.

Text: *The Riverside Milton*, ed. Roy Flannagan. You must use this edition; other editions do not have the same spelling and punctuation, and our reading assignments will rely heavily on Flannagan's notes and bibliography.

You will need a King James translation of the Bible. I recommend the version published by Thomas Nelson; it's inexpensive and attractive. You also may access the King James Bible online at <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/kjv.browse.html>.

Course Requirements: Three essays, one 750-1250 words (15%), one 1,000-1,500 words (15%), and one 2,500-3,000 words (35%); three short paraphrases of passages from Paradise Lost (grades averaged; 15%), and participation in class discussion (20%). Material from the second paper and the paraphrases may be incorporated into the longer essay. You must complete all work assigned in order to pass.

Papers must follow format guidelines that I will distribute in class. Grades will be based on the clarity of your thesis, the focus and persuasiveness of your evidence, the accuracy of your interpretation of quotations, and your adherence to rules of grammar, mechanics and documentation. You may hand in a partial or complete draft of any paper in advance for my comments. I prefer to receive such papers via email (either as a Word attachment or as your text message); I will email my comments to you within 48 hours. My comments generally address thesis, evidence and organization; I do not correct grammatical, typographical or mechanical errors on drafts. However, you are responsible for correcting any such errors before handing in a final version of the essay. Late papers will be marked down 1/3 of a grade.

When you are assigned a study question to answer during class discussion, prepare 3-5 minutes of organized comments. Use the questions to guide your reading; all members of the class should participate in discussion of all questions. Depending on the size of the class, each student will be assigned 3 or 4 study questions over the course of the semester. You will receive a grade on your answer to each question, which will be averaged together with your grade for ad hoc contributions to discussion.

If you miss class on a day when you are assigned a study question, you will earn a "0" for participation (i.e., you will lose 20% of your total grade). If you miss more than one question, your final grade will be lowered a further 1/3 of a level (e.g., from a C to a C-). If you are unexpectedly unable to be in class for your study question, we may be able to work out an arrangement so that you will not be penalized.

On days you are not assigned a study question, attendance is not required, but frequent absences may negatively affect your class participation grade. You are responsible for collecting any materials distributed during your absences before the next class meeting. The syllabus, paper format instructions and paper topic handouts are available at my website.

Classroom protocols: 1) Turn off all cell phones before entering the classroom. 2) Do not leave the room during class except in an emergency. 3) Always bring the anthology with you to class.

If you have or may have a disability that requires accommodation to fulfill the requirements of the class, contact the Office of Special Services for Students with Disabilities, at 878-4450.

Essential reading: 1) Finish reading Paradise Lost by the time we return from spring break. Your second and third papers will require knowledge of the entire poem and you will need to begin working on these papers before our discussion reaches the later books. 2) If you are not familiar with the King James Bible, read the following books as soon as possible: Genesis, Isaiah, Matthew, Luke, 1 Corinthians and Revelation. I will assign specific passages from these and other books to read in conjunction with Paradise Lost and the prose works. 3) If you have not studied Greek and Roman mythology and poetry, read a summary of famous myths. Prose versions written for children are often quite good, though they may omit or sanitize the sex.

Wednesday, 23 January	Introduction
Monday, 28 January	"On the Morning of Christ's Nativity"
Wednesday, 30 January	"On the Morning of Christ's Nativity"
Monday, 4 February	"On Shakespeare"; how to write a paraphrase
Wednesday, 6 February	Comus
Monday, 11 February	Comus; first paper (close reading of short poem) due
Wednesday, 13 February	The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce
Monday, 18 February	Presidents Day, no class
Wednesday, 20 February	Areopagitica
Monday, 25 February	Areopagitica
Wednesday, 27 February	"On Paradise Lost" (Marvell's poem); Paradise Lost, Book 1
Monday, 4 March	Paradise Lost, Book 1
Wednesday, 6 March	Paradise Lost, Books 1-2; 1st paraphrase due
Monday, 11 March	Paradise Lost, Book 2
Wednesday, 13 March	Paradise Lost, Book 3

Monday, 18 March Paradise Lost, Book 4
Wednesday, 20 March Paradise Lost, Book 4; 2nd paraphrase due

SPRING BREAK

Monday, 1 April Paradise Lost, Book 5
Wednesday, 3 April Paradise Lost, Book 6

Monday, 8 April Paradise Lost, Book 7
Wednesday, 10 April Paradise Lost, Book 8; criticism review due
Monday, 15 April Paradise Lost, Book 8
Wednesday, 17 April Paradise Lost, Book 9

Monday, 22 April Paradise Lost, Book 9; 3rd paraphrase due
Wednesday, 24 April Paradise Lost, Book 9

Monday, 29 April Paradise Lost, Book 10
Wednesday, 1 May Paradise Lost, Books 11-12

Final paper due during ECP

Date: Thu, 31 Oct 2002 15:54:28 -0500
From: Margaret Thickstun <mthickst@hamilton.edu>
Subject: Passages on exams
To: milton-l@richmond.edu
Sender: owner-milton-l@richmond.edu
Reply-To: milton-l@richmond.edu
X-MailScanner: Found to be clean
X-MailScanner-SpamCheck:

Cynthia--I don't ask for "memory" kinds of tasks anymore. These kids haven't been trained to memorize, so the experience is usually depressing all around. In my course, which is sophomore level, I have two explication assignments early in the semester (I start with Paradise Lost)--so an epic simile and then some other passages that are particularly pithy:

Round 1:

Book 1:302-312, the simile that begins "Thick as"

Book 1:338-355, a two simile bit of description beginning "As when"

Book 1:589-604, beginning "he above the rest. . ."

Book 2:402-416, Beelzebub's speech beginning "But first whom shall we

send"

How does Beelzebub describe the task at hand in such a way as to frighten off any volunteers?

Book 3: 21-40, from the invocation, beginning "Thee I revisit safe"

Book 3:40-55, from the invocation, beginning "Thus with the year / Seasons return"

Round 2:

Book 4, any twenty lines from Satan's soliloquy--it begins at line 32

Book 4:180-193, beginning "Due entrance he disdain'd"

Book 4:245-263, beginning "Thus was this place, / A happy rural seat. . ."

Or, if you are brave about classical allusions, Book 4:268-286, "Not that faire field"

Book 4, any twenty lines (as outer limit) from Eve's account of her birth (4:449-491)

Book 4:639-658, beginning "With thee conversing I forget all time"

Book 4: 674-688, beginning "These then though unbeheld in night"

Book 5, any twenty lines (as outer limit) from Eve's account of her dream (5:35-93). Remember that this is a 'guided' fantasy whispered into her ear by Satan. What do the particulars of the dream reveal about what strategies he thinks might work on her? Be sure to keep the outcome of her dream in mind as you formulate your thesis.

Then on the final exam, I give pairs of passages, identified by work and date: something from Paradise Lost with something from the Nativity Ode; something from Samson with Sonnet 19, etc. I ask them to discuss the passages in relation to one another. It works very well: students who have been paying attention can pick up on themes, concerns, issues; students who are clever can discuss literary techniques; students who haven't been paying attention reveal themselves in the absurdity of responses, assigning a speech of Satan's to Adam, etc. But there's not too much of that.

From: "Duran, Angelica" <ADuran@sla.purdue.edu>

I believe you are completely correct in asking your students to do so.

I

use this method based on the good service my instructors' use of such a method had on me (I hope). Below is a section from my undergraduate Milton

class final exam last year: the actual exam contained at least 10 lines for

each choice and provided them with a half page for their responses. Some students wowed me while others left me depressed ("did I teach you nothing!").

This is a closed-book, closed-note, open-mind exam. Write legibly.

I. POETRY

40 points _____

For TWO of the following three excerpts,

1) Scan the first five lines directly on to the excerpt

(5 points)

On the space provided below each excerpt, identify the following items related to the excerpt. Do not write outside of the prescribed space.

2) the text (3 pts.);

3) the speaker (4 pts.);

4) a succinct summary relating the excerpt to the context in which it occurs (4 pts.);

5) a short comparison of the themes or forms or images in this excerpt to any other of Milton's texts (4pts.).

A. Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet,

With charm of earliest birds; pleasant the sun

When first on this delightful land he spreads

His orient beams, on herb, tree, fruit, and flower,

B. All is best, though we oft doubt

What th'unsearchable dispose

Of highest wisdom brings about,

And ever best found in the close.

C. However, many books

Wise men have said are wearisome; who reads

Incessantly, and to his reading brings not

A spirit and judgment equal or superior