En 116: Milton and the Epic Tradition
Fall 2013
George Pigman

*Description*

Epic poetry is a competitive and self-referential genre. Virgil imitates and revises Homer, Dante makes Virgil his guide through hell and most of purgatory before leaving him behind, Spenser combines ancient epic with Italian romance, and Milton transforms the entire epic tradition. Since Milton's engagement with and criticism of the epic are essential elements of *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, we will focus on his dialogue with Homer, Virgil, Spenser, and Dante and their differing conceptions of heroism.

*Requirements and Procedures*

By the morning of each class you must send me by email (gwp@hss.caltech.edu) a question on the reading. I will choose one of the questions for a short quiz, which will take place at the beginning of class.

You must write two papers, each 2,000 words long. I will suggest topics but encourage you to choose your own. If you do choose one, you must send me a short paragraph stating your thesis or at least describing your topic a week before the paper is due. The first paper is due October 25 at 11:59 pm; the second, December 13 at 5 pm. You need to follow the MLA citation style (http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/). Please send me the papers as email attachments (Microsoft Word, OpenOffice/LibreOffice, or LaTeX); name the files with your surname and the number of the paper (e.g. smith1.docx). If you'd like me to read a draft of your paper before submitting it to be graded, I'll try to do so provided that you submit it early enough. I grant extensions but may not comment on late papers; if I'm short on time, I only grade them.

Two-thirds of your grade will be based on the papers, and the other third on the quizzes and class participation. The course may only be taken for grades.

If you wish to bring laptop computers, tablets, etc. to class, please send me an email promising to use them only for classwork. I consider using them, while in class, for email, chatting, surfing, etc. a violation of the Caltech honor code.

The easiest way to communicate with me is by email, but I am happy to speak to you in person or on the phone. My office is 208 Dabney, and my extension, 3601.

*Required Texts*

Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. Allen Mandelbaum (Everyman's Library, 1995).
Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Robert Fagles (Penguin, 1998).
John Milton, *The Major Works*, ed. Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg (Oxford University Press, 2008).
Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene: Book One*, ed. Carol V. Kaske (Hackett, 2006).
Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. Robert Fagles (Penguin, 2010).

*Schedule*

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| October 1 | Introduction; Homer, *Iliad* 1–6 |
| October 3 | Homer, *Iliad* 7–12 |
| October 8 | Homer, *Iliad* 13–18 |
| October 10 | Homer, *Iliad* 19–24 |
| October 15 | Virgil, *Aeneid* 1–3 |
| October 17 | Virgil, *Aeneid* 4–6 |
| October 22 | Virgil, *Aeneid* 7–9 |
| October 24 | Virgil, *Aeneid* 10–12 |
| October 29 | Dante, *Inferno* 1–17 |
| October 31 | Dante, *Inferno* 18–34 |
| November 5 | Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, 1. 1–6 |
| November 7 | Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, 1. 7–12 |
| November 12 | Milton, *Paradise Lost* 1–2 |
| November 14 | Milton, *Paradise Lost* 3–4 |
| November 19 | Milton, *Paradise Lost* 5–6 |
| November 21 | Milton, *Paradise Lost* 7–8 |
| November 26 | Milton, *Paradise Lost* 9–10 |
| December 3 | Milton, *Paradise Lost* 11–12 |
| December 5 | Milton, *Paradise Regained* |