

En 116: Milton and the Epic Tradition
Spring 2010
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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, 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, 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, on topics of your choosing. You must send me a short paragraph stating your thesis or at least describing your topic a week before the paper is due. Pick a topic that has not been extensively discussed in class unless you have something original to say about it. The first paper is due April 30 at 5 pm; the second, which must be on *Paradise Lost* and/or *Paradise Regained*, is due June 11 at 5 pm. Please send the papers to me as email attachments, preferably in Microsoft Word format; name the files with your surname and the number of the paper (e.g. smith1.doc). If you'd like me to read a draft of your paper before submitting it to be graded, I'll be happy to do so (provided you submit it early enough). I grant extensions but do not comment on late papers; 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.

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, 1995).

Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Robert Fagles (Penguin, 1998).

John Milton, *The Major Works*, ed. Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg (Oxford University Press, 2003).

Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. Stanley Lombardo (Hackett, 2005).

Schedule

March 30	Introduction.
April 1	Homer, <i>Iliad</i> 1–8
April 6	Homer, <i>Iliad</i> 9–16
April 8	Homer, <i>Iliad</i> 17–24
April 13	Virgil, <i>Aeneid</i> 1–3
April 15	Virgil, <i>Aeneid</i> 4–6
April 20	Virgil, <i>Aeneid</i> 7–9
April 22	Virgil, <i>Aeneid</i> 10–12
April 27	Dante, <i>Inferno</i> 1–17
April 29	Dante, <i>Inferno</i> 18–34
May 4	Dante, <i>Purgatorio</i> 1–17
May 6	Dante, <i>Purgatorio</i> 18–33
May 11	Dante, <i>Paradiso</i> 1–17
May 13	Dante, <i>Paradiso</i> 18–33
May 18	Milton, <i>Paradise Lost</i> 1–2
May 20	Milton, <i>Paradise Lost</i> 3–5
May 25	Milton, <i>Paradise Lost</i> 6–8
May 27	Milton, <i>Paradise Lost</i> 9–10
June 1	Milton, <i>Paradise Lost</i> 11–12
June 3	Milton, <i>Paradise Regained</i>

If you don't have time to read all of the *Iliad*, read books 1, 2. 1–493 (Fagles, p. 115), 3–4, 6, 9, 16, 18–24.