

**EN 4/6533 Milton**  
**Dr. Lara Dodds**  
**Fall 2013 T/ Th 11:00-12:15**



**Can it be sin to know,  
Can it be death? And do they only stand  
By ignorance, is that their happy state,  
The proof of their obedience and their faith? (*Paradise Lost* 4.517-20)**

Milton's Satan asked whether Adam and Eve's happiness was a result of their ignorance. With this question, *Paradise Lost* signals a radical engagement with the ethical, theological, and political problems associated with the myth of the Fall: what are the limits of knowledge? why did God put a prohibition on the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil anyway? Were Adam and Eve strong enough to resist Satan's temptation? What do they lose and what do they gain with the Fall? Milton's treatment of this theme is powerful, original, and controversial. Romantic readers thought Milton was "of the devil's party," perhaps against his own will, while others find in Milton's poetry an inspirational model of Christian faith.

In this course we will engage with these questions through a thorough reading of Milton's major poetry and selected prose. In the first half of the semester, we will begin by looking at how Milton's early poetry and prose defined the political and religious themes that he returned to throughout his career before moving on to a slow and careful reading of *Paradise Lost* that engages the theological, political, literary, and philosophical contexts of Milton's epic. In the second half of the semester we will look at three "rewritings" of *Paradise Lost* and ask how each re-vision the central myth of Adam and Eve's Fall. In *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*, Milton himself turns to Biblical history to write two alternate versions of the temptation. In *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley revises *Paradise Lost* in a way that demonstrates Milton's continuing relevance for our own culture.

**Required Texts:**

*The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton*. Ed. William Kerrigan, John Rumrich, and Stephen M. Fallon. Random House: New York, 2007.

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (1818 Text). Ed. Marilyn Butler. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993. ISBN 9780192833662

Assignments in this course may include: 4 brief (1-2 page) writing and research exercises; one 3-5 page essay; Mid-term and final exams; 10-12 page research essay; A reading journal and/or occasional quizzes. **Graduate students will have additional requirements.**