

Drew Clark
209 Samford Hall
844-5802
clarkj3@auburn.edu

Fall Semester 2002
Office Hours
TR 9-11
MWF 3-4:30

ENGL 4360: Milton



OBJECTIVES: WHAT WE ARE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH

1. Knowledge and skills for literary study (1): Come to know and appreciate Milton's poetry and prose at a level appropriate to an advanced common reader

Signs: You can (a.) "sight read" a passage from one of Milton's poems, correctly construing his syntax and catching most of his vocabulary; (b.) reason about the significance of a given literary "move" Milton makes (e.g., allusion, enjambment, or rhetorical act), using helps as needed; (c.) explain to someone who knows less about the subject than you do the nature and importance of Milton's literary career; (d.) debate with someone who knows the subject about as well as you do some of the major paradoxes of Milton's writings

2. Knowledge and skills for literary study (2): Learn about the religious ideas, events, and conflicts that affected Milton

Signs: You can (a.) distinguish similarities and differences among the various religious groups of Milton's day; (b.) identify the most serious points of disagreement in doctrine, church government, and religious "style" between the major religious parties of Milton's day; (c.) explain how a religious event that Milton lived through may have affected a poem he wrote; or (d.) place Milton's ideas in the context of the European Reformation.

3. Knowledge and skills for literary study (3): Learn about Milton's reading and how he used it

Signs: You can (a.) explain how Milton adapted classical and biblical literary genres to help give structure to his own poems; (b.) identify ways in which Milton interprets a biblical story in the act of retelling it; (c.) show basic acquaintance with the range and scope of Milton's personal reading list; or (d.) learn how Milton creates "special effects" by calling up his readers' knowledge of classical and biblical stories.

4. Complex thinking: Strengthen your ability to think holistically about an issue, problem, or phenomenon, seeing the whole as well as the parts

Signs: You can (a.) reassemble a "scrambled" list of events from a long poem like *Paradise Lost* so that they are in either chronological order or narrative order, as required; (b.) explain the differences that context makes in the significance of a speech or character; (c.) identify and evaluate ways in which different works of Milton can be linked together into a "development" or a "career"; or (d) discover or critique claims about the continuity among Milton's various writing projects.

5. Academic skills: Strengthen your writing skills

Signs: You can (a.) manage a substantial writing project organized around inquiry; (b.) use short, frequent writing sessions effectively to produce and revise a substantial paper; (c.) vary your writing approach to suit the different needs of different audiences; or (d.) simplify your style while expanding your active vocabulary.

6. Personal development: Strengthen your capacity to think for yourself

Signs: You can (a.) isolate and define some issues that interest you and articulate what makes these issues interesting to you; (b.) sketch the range of typical or available "positions" on these issues that others hold; (c.) explain the "reading ways" that people holding a given position typically practice; or (d.) become aware of your personal touchstones of worth or excellence by which you evaluate Milton's writings.

7. Personal development: Continue to develop a lifelong love of learning

Signs: This outcome will become evident only later, long after this course is over. However, we can look for predictive evidence of this trait in such things as future course selection, personal reading or "book buying" plans, group memberships, or magazine subscriptions.

METHODS: STRATEGIES FOR MEETING OUR OBJECTIVES

1. Personal study of the assigned texts

Taking the long view, language historians call what Milton wrote and spoke Modern English. On first acquaintance, you are not likely to think so. In fact, when we get to Milton's prose, you are likely to think that language historians are mad. With not too much practice, a person can read a page of Milton at speeds approaching a "natural" pace for any serious writing. However, the key to your success as a reader of Milton is personal reading and study of the texts. I mean it. Just turning the pages won't fix anything in your mind.

2. Small group projects

Effective collaboration among students (as among researchers) is a good predictor of academic success. Students learn from each other. This is especially true in areas where there is too much material for any one person to survey in the time available. A lot of what you accomplish this semester will depend on learning to gain "leverage" on an otherwise unmanageable load by collaborating well with others.

You will be assigned to one or more groups for the semester. Your group(s) may want to meet informally for study and review sessions. You will also have formal group assignments. For some projects, I will ask two or more smaller groups to combine forces. When I grade group work, each member will receive the same grade.

3. Class discussion

In a lecture class, class time is used to expose students to facts, ideas, or methods that they have not encountered before. Student study time is used to process and digest what they have heard (usually following class notes that you took during class).

Except on rare days, this is not a lecture class. You will use your individual study time and group sessions to gain your first exposure to the material. We will use class time to apply, analyze, argue, and raise questions about that material (usually starting from notes you have written before class). Therefore “getting the notes” will be a very ineffective method of study.

4. Assignments

You will receive several different kinds of assignment in this course – graded and pass/fail, individual and group. Some assignments will emphasize skills such as memory, definition, summary, and organization. Others will emphasize analysis, evaluation, and creativity. I will supply written instructions for each major assignment.

Here’s a synopsis:

Pass/Fail Assignments: (a.) brief written responses to questions about the day’s readings, done before class, or brief factual quizzes over those readings, taken at the beginning of class; (b.) group assignments, done in or out of class, to let the group’s ability to extend your personal reach into the materials; (c.) frequent classroom assessment exercises to help me keep up with how well we’re moving toward our course objectives; (d.) some portions of the study project

Graded Assignments: (a.) two short-answer unit tests, emphasizing memory, summary, and organization; (b.) two brief class presentations, one focused on an aspect of Milton’s religious context and one focused on a connection between his reading and his writing (c.) a semester-long study project, done in parts, that will help you explain to yourself, and perhaps others, something that you don’t understand about Milton; and (d.) a final examination that will allow you to reflect on the most important things you have learned in the course and the most important questions you will be carrying away with you.

ASSESSMENT: HOW WE WILL MEASURE AND SUMMARIZE ACHIEVEMENT

1. System and Rationale

In this course I will be using a modified definitional grading system. You will perform two different kinds of tasks, graded and pass/fail. I will use grades (letter grades that are convertible into the standard 10-percent grade intervals) for infrequent kinds of assignments such as tests, the study project, and the final examination. I will use pass/fail for more frequent kinds of assignments such as reading responses, group assignments, and factual quizzes. Your final grade will reflect the highest defined level you have reached in **both** kinds. For example, if you meet an A standard for graded work and a B standard for pass/fail work, then your final grade will be B, since that is the highest level you reached in both kinds.

This grading system is meant to communicate that both graded and pass/fail assignments are very important to your success. You should not expect good performance in one kind to compensate for poorer performance in the other. Since this is an unusual system of grading, an analogy may help: A basketball player does not automatically score points by putting the ball through the hoop (one requirement). Instead, in order to meet the standard for “two points” the player must both put the ball through the hoop and do so without fouling, traveling, stepping out of bounds, or shooting after time expires (other requirements).

For an important modification of this grading system, see section 3.

2. Standards

<i>Defined level</i>	<i>Graded Work</i>	<i>Pass-fail work</i>
A	Average of at least 90%	Pass for 90% or more of assignments
B	Average of at least 80%	Pass for 85% or more of assignments
C	Average of at least 70%	Pass for 80% or more of assignments
D	Average of at least 60%	Pass for 75% or more of assignments

3. The Fine Print about Grades

Your average for graded work will derive from four values: (a.) the average score of your two unit tests, (b.) the average score of your two class presentations, (c.) the grade of your study project, and (d.) your final exam grade. However, the study project will be weighted **double**, because it is more important than the other graded assignments. To derive your average for graded work, then, you would first add (a.), (b.), (c. * 2), and (d.), then divide by 5.

Your average for pass/fail work will simply be the percentage of total available assignments that you complete on time with a score of "pass." I say "available assignments" here because some assignments (e.g., reading quizzes) missed on account of illness do not count against you. Not so with work missed because of unexcused absences, however.

Finally, one important piece of fine print: A two-grade floor rule will soften the effects of the widest possible gap between graded work and pass-fail work. This applies only to the (I hope) rare instance where one achievement level is "A" and the other is "D" (a three-grade gap). In such a case, the final grade for the course will be C, not D.

POLICIES TO FOSTER LEARNING AND PRESERVE THE COMMON GOOD

1. Homework and Attendance

Time-on-task is one of the best predictors of academic success, especially when you are dealing with unfamiliar or challenging material like Milton's poetry and prose. For that reason I expect you to complete all homework assignments and attend all scheduled classes. I take attendance.

On the other hand, please **do not come to class when you know you are sick**. Return when you're well and offer your excuse at your first class meeting back, if not sooner. Otherwise I'll assume that you took a cut. Also, if you know in advance that you will miss a class, courtesy and self-interest suggest that you let me know in advance, too. I have tried to let you know on this syllabus about my already-scheduled absences.

2. Timely Work and Make-Up Work

If you miss a unit test or the final examination because of a documented illness, I will work with you to schedule a make-up test. You should familiarize yourself with the University's new policy concerning make-up exams. It appears on page 88 of the 2002-2003 *Tiger Cub*, though not yet on the Web version of that book. Basically, the policy requires students who miss tests on account of properly excused absences to initiate plans for a make-up test within one week after the end of the excused absence; it encourages faculty members to schedule the make-up test within two weeks after the student initiates plans for it.

I do not offer make-up opportunities for most pass/fail assignments. If you miss one of those because of an excused absence, it won't count against you. If you miss one for any other reason, it will count as a "fail." Deadlines for assignments other than quizzes and tests are part of the assignments themselves. If you need additional time, you can ask for an extension. Assignments, projects, and presentations that are submitted late without my prior permission will count as zeros.

3. Accommodations

If you need accommodations, please arrange a meeting during office hours the first week of classes or as soon as possible if accommodations are needed immediately. If you have a conflict with my office hours, an alternate time can be arranged. To set up this meeting, please contact me by e-mail. Bring a copy of your Accommodation Memo and an Instructor Verification Form to the meeting. If you do not have an Accommodation Memo but need accommodations, make an appointment with The Program for Students with Disabilities, 1244 Haley Center, 844-2096 (V/TT).

4. Meet Your Teacher (A good rule for all courses)

Although I am a tenured member of the Department of English, which I joined in 1982, since 2001 I have also served full-time in the Office of the Provost as the University's Director of Assessment. I hope that on most days we can just forget about my "day job." (You'll remember when you come see me in Samford Hall instead of Haley Center.) However, I want you to be aware of my somewhat unusual situation, since I will be away from campus occasionally during the semester and since other demands of my administrative job may sometimes be apparent. E-mail is a good way to keep in touch with me.

5. The Three Cardinal Rules of a University

Bring your brain to work – yours, not someone else's; your brain, not your impulses

Bring your whole brain – that's why we have academic rules about alcohol, drugs, etc.

Search for the truth and tell it straight – inquiry and evidence, not dogma and deception

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF MAJOR READING ASSIGNMENTS

On the next page, you will find a list of major reading assignments. Shorter assignments for the days left blank here may be given from time to time by announcement in class or through e-mail. So be sure you keep in touch. All assigned readings are to be completed before class on the days listed.

1	19 Aug	
2	21 Aug	On Shakespeare [1630]
3	23 Aug	On the morning of CHRIST'S Nativity
4	26 Aug	L'Allegro and Il Penseroso
5	28 Aug	Elegy 6 [Latin, to his friend Diodati] and Ad Patrem [Latin, to His Father]
	30 Aug	No Class – Taking my daughter to college
	02 Sep	University Holiday – Labor Day
6	04 Sep	A Mask Presented at Ludlow Castle [Comus]
7	06 Sep	
8	09 Sep	Of Education
9	11 Sep	Lycidas
10	13 Sep	
11	16 Sep	(Class presentations I begin)
12	18 Sep	Areopagitica
13	20 Sep	(Class presentations I end)
	23 Sep	No Class – Commission on Ministry Meeting
14	25 Sep	(Unit Test)
15	27 Sep	Paradise Lost 1
16	30 Sep	Paradise Lost 2
17	02 Oct	Paradise Lost 3
18	04 Oct	(Study project topic statements due)
19	07 Oct	Paradise Lost 4
20	09 Oct	
21	11 Oct	Paradise Lost 5
	14 Oct	No Class – Southern Association for Institutional Research
22	16 Oct	Paradise Lost 6
23	18 Oct	(Study project source list due)
24	21 Oct	Paradise Lost 7-8
25	23 Oct	
26	25 Oct	Paradise Lost 9
27	28 Oct	(Class presentations II begin)
28	30 Oct	Paradise Lost 10
29	01 Nov	(Class presentations II end)
30	04 Nov	Paradise Lost 11-12
31	06 Nov	(Study project introductions due)
	08 Nov	No Class – Commission on Ministry Meeting
32	11 Nov	(Unit Test)
33	13 Nov	Paradise Regained 1
34	15 Nov	Paradise Regained 2
35	18 Nov	Paradise Regained 3
36	20 Nov	Paradise Regained 4
37	22 Nov	(Study projects due)
	25 Nov	University Holiday – Thanksgiving
	27 Nov	University Holiday – Thanksgiving
	29 Nov	University Holiday – Thanksgiving
38	02 Dec	Samson Agonistes (first 1000 lines)
39	04 Dec	Samson Agonistes (rest)
40	06 Dec	Last Day of Classes for Fall 2002
	09 Dec	Out of Town – Annual Meeting of SACS
	11 Dec	Out of Town – Annual Meeting of SACS
	12 Dec	(Final Exam, 11:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.)