

Reading *Paradise Lost* with Anne Hall  
Thursdays, IN PERSON at the Rosenbach  
Nov 3, Dec 8, Jan 12, Feb 9, Mar 9  
6:30-8:30pm EST

The plot of Milton's *Paradise Lost* is the story of the Fall, but its heart is Milton's insights into the soul of fallen humanity. When young, Milton did not concentrate on fallenness; he concentrated on freedom. He followed the ancients in holding that happiness lies in the freedom that undergirds the community's strength and dignity and that also undergirds the happiness of the individual. For the community, freedom is freedom from the indignity of slavery. For the individual, freedom is freedom from the intellectual shackles of tradition. It is also the strength that comes from considering ideas that are not in step with tradition. In the *Areopagitica*, Milton's argues against official limitations to both the community's and to the individual's freedom to think. By the time he came to write *Paradise Lost*, however, Milton was no longer sure that the ancient view is the key to human happiness and dignity. In this course, we will read Milton's *Areopagitica* and excerpts from his other prose writings and all of *Paradise Lost*. We will explore how in *Paradise Lost*, Milton reconsiders the ancient view of human happiness. The approach to *Paradise Lost*, then, will be both literary and philosophical.

### **Texts**

John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. David Kastan (Hackett Books; available on Amazon)  
Milton, *Areopagitica and other Writings* (Penguin; available on Amazon)

### **Reading Schedule**

**Nov 3:** *Areopagitica* and other writings. *Paradise Lost*, Books 1 and 2.

**Dec 8:** *Paradise Lost*, Books 3, 4, (5, 6) . We will cover 5 and 6 quickly. I know this is a lot of reading, but we have to save time for the crucial events in Books 8, 9 and 10.

**Jan 12:** *Paradise Lost*, Book 7 (especially lines 386-499), and Book 8. Invocation to Book 9.

**Feb 9:** *Paradise Lost*, Book 9.

**Mar 9:** *Paradise Lost*, Books 10 (11-12 [625- end]).

### **About the instructor**

**Anne Hall** taught for 25 years in the English department at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, another 18 years in the English department at the University of Pennsylvania, and for the Rosenbach, has led courses on Mann's *The Magic Mountain* and *Doktor Faustus*, Henry James' *The Portrait of a Lady* and *The Ambassadors*.

**A more detailed course schedule**

### **Nov 3: *Areopagitica* and other writings.**

Reading for class: the *Areopagitica*.

Note: \*p. 102: “but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself p. 105, bottom: “rake through the entrails of many on old good author”

p. 106: bottom: “piazza of one title-page”

\*p. 110: “God uses not to captivate under a perpetual childhood of prescription”—through page 111, “see and know, and yet abstain.”

p. 12, 3/5 down the page: “with whom is bound up the life of human learning

p. 114 – 4<sup>th</sup> line from the bottom: on Plato

\*p. 117 – top: Many there be that complain of divine providence” to 8 lines from the bottom, “wander beyond all limit and satiety.”

\*p. 120 – just above the middle of the page: “If therefore be loath to dishearten utterly” to “if we have only escaped the ferula, to come under the fescue”

Also on p. 120: Second line from the bottom, “When a man writes to the world,” to p. 121, “to the privilege and dignity of learning”

p. 124 – mentions Galileo

p. 127 – “Well he knows who uses to consider . . .”

\*\*p. 130 - “Truth indeed came once into the world . . .” to the end of the sentence.

\*\*p. 132, 3<sup>rd</sup> line from the top: “Why else was this nation chosen before any other” to “as his manner is, first to his Englishmen . . .”

\*\*p. 134, 6<sup>th</sup> line from the bottom, “For as in a body. . .” to p. 145, end of top paragraph.

\*\*p. 137, first line, “And though all the winds of doctrine . . .” down to “is but weakness and cowardice in the wars of truth.”

We will go over excerpts from other writings during class.

*Reason of Church Government*, p. 7, lines 2-12; p. 26, lines 10-28; p. 27, line 4 – 17 through p. 28, line 2; p. 29, middle of page, “These abilities wheresoever they be found . . .” through p. 30, line 1.

*Of Education*, p. 86 (the goal of learning); p. 90, lines 8 -22.

\*p. 134, 6<sup>th</sup> line from the bottom, “For as in a body. . .” to p. 145, end of top paragraph

*Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, p. 47, lines 2-13.

***Paradise Lost*, Books 1 and 2.** The worst thing in life is to be unhappy all the while pretending yourself and to others that you are not. The next worst thing in life is to mistake for happiness the vigor that accompanies devising vengeance. The third worse thing is constantly to need an audience.

**Dec 8: *Paradise Lost*, Books 3, 4, (5, 6).** We will cover 5 and 6 and 7 quickly. I know this is a lot of reading, but we have to save time for the crucial action in Books 8, 9 and 10.

*Bk 3: Invocation*

It is often thought that going on a dangerous adventure is happiness, because it is “thrilling”.

The justice that God imposes seems to human beings unnecessarily harsh, but God is the law that steadies the universe; if he did not fulfill his promises, his creation would be chaotic and he himself would seem capricious.

*Bk 4:* One element of happiness is mutuality, mutuality with nature’s creatures and with other human beings (“friend with friend,” 5.229). Conversely, misery is to be cut off from that mutuality.

Human beings’ natural response to beauty is the most precarious of ways to the Good because it is enmeshed with the senses and imagination, often called “fancy.”

*Bk. 5:* lines 1-656.

One road to happiness is to appreciate God’s universe and to show that appreciation in song.

It is a wonderful thing to have good teachers. lines 656-end

One road (“way”) to unhappiness is to think that being horrified by evil is lack of sophistication. A true adult knows how to scoff.

*Bk 6:* It is unwise to underrate God’s power or to imagine it can be circumvented. On the other hand, it is good not to be rattled by those who regard faith as the mark of childishness (see Abdiel v. Satan). The only proper “adventure” is to fight in God’s war against evil (line 66). True servitude is serving the unwise (lines 78-79).

Even clever technological advances in artillery are not as powerful as God.

**Jan 12: *Paradise Lost*, Books 7-8, part of 9.**

*Book 7* - \*Invocation. Lines 40-130. Lines 173 and following: the plenitude of creation. It is wonderful thing to live in a world so full of beauty and bounty, “. . . the seat of men / Earth, with her nether ocean circumfused “(line 624).

*Book 8*: On knowledge, 1-240. Adam relates his creation and the creation of Eve (lines 250-529). A problem arises (lines 529-614). Raphael blushes upon being asked about angelic sex (lines 619-620).

It is unwise to underestimate danger or to think that a disagreement about danger is an insult or a struggle for power (lines 205 and following; note line 364 and compare with the arguments in the *Areopagitica*).

Satan tempts Eve. Eve falls. Eve reports to Adam (line 855). Adam falls. Universe reacts (lines 1000-1004). Quarreling.

Book 9 – Invocation\*. Rejection of martial heroism.

**Feb 9:** *Paradise Lost*, Book 9.

*Book 9*: Satan’s envy and “the hateful siege/ of contraries (lines 121-122). Satan plots decides on revenge (lines 49-204).

**Mar 9:** *Paradise Lost*, Books 10 (11-12 [625- end]).

Book 10:

It is hard to admit that life has been changed through one’s own fault and that one can only make the best of a diminished life.