

John Leonard UC 3423 Office Hours TBA

Course Location and Time: UC 4415 Fridays 9:30-12:30

PARADISE LOST

ENGLISH 9053B

Is *Paradise Lost* an epic? Is “the grand style” sublime or merely bombastic? Was Milton “of the Devil’s Party without knowing it”? Were Adam and Eve “fallen before the Fall”? Was Milton a misogynist? Questions like these have recurred over the centuries, but they have been asked in different ways, at different times. One eighteenth-century editor was so enthused by fallen Adam’s diatribe against women that he added an icon of a pointing hand in the margin of the text, for fear that readers might miss a valuable gobbet of Miltonic wisdom: “OBSERVE. Here, an excellent Caution, how to rule a Wife.” A few years later, Samuel Johnson deplored Milton’s “Turkish contempt of females.” A few years after that, Mary Wollstonecraft chided Milton not for despising women, but for loving them in the wrong way. In recent times, Joseph Wittreich has lauded Milton as a “feminist.” Early editors believed that Milton’s universe accorded with the post-Copernican model of multiple solar systems, but most critics since the nineteenth century have assumed that Milton adopts the Ptolemaic system, which was obsolete decades before *Paradise Lost* was published. Can all these conclusions follow from the same text? This course will trace a number of controversies over the centuries, exploring the ways in which critics have made one of English literature’s most canonical texts accord with their own

Syllabus

campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.

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