

COURSE NUMBER AND TITLE: English 4234. 001. Milton. (3).

INSTRUCTOR: Prof. Catherine Martin, Patterson 426, 678-2686

TEXTS:       *The Portable Milton*  
              The Bible (translation optional)

AIMS AND ORGANIZATION:

John Milton is recognized around the world as the author of the greatest European epic ever written since Dante's *Divine Comedy*. His *Paradise Lost* has never been surpassed due to his extraordinarily imaginative vision of Adam and Eve's fall from grace and its cause, the fallen angel Satan, perhaps the most magnificent epic character ever created. This course will prepare students to read this tale in depth by beginning with Milton's early sonnets, his "playlet" (technically a "masque" originally accompanied by music and dance), and his powerful pastoral lament for the death of a close college friend, *Lycidas*. At the end of the course we will also read his final play, a tragedy retelling the story of Samson and Dalila in modern terms. Although Milton has a larger vocabulary and uses longer sentences than most truly modern authors, his English is fully contemporary and relatively easy to read once his radical ideas on free speech, thought, and representative government are grasped. A revolutionary in his own time, his ideas on these subjects, if stated in somewhat old-fashioned terms, have become part of modern liberal culture. We will explore these ideas by reading short excerpts of Milton's prose writing, while throughout the course we will discuss their Judeo-Christian roots; no prior understanding of this context is required. Non-Christians may also read *Paradise Lost* as a proto-science fiction "war of the worlds" drama, not least because so much of it is presented in novelistic dialogue. All students should make use of the excellent website on Milton's works online at Dartmouth College. BELOW: Satan convening the council of Pandaemonium.

