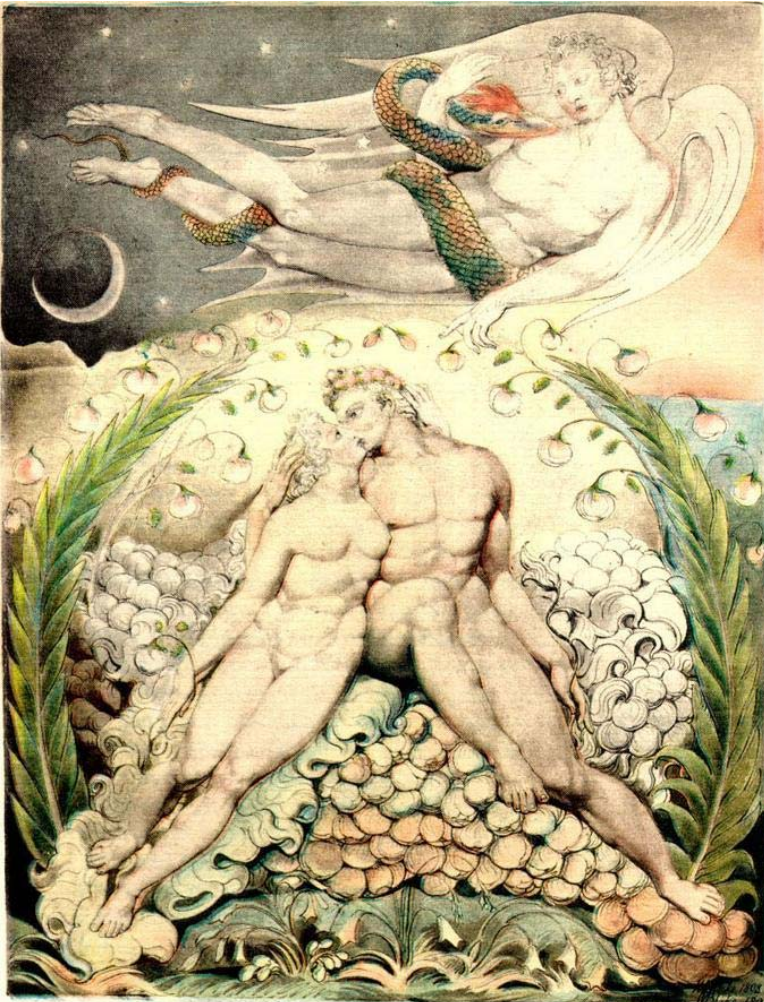


NEW GE CAT I COURSE! NEW GE CAT I COURSE!

Masterpieces and Masterminds: Literature and Thought of the West

COLT 101g, Class #22000R, Fall 2008, Mon & Wed, 10:00-11:50, MHP 101

Select One Discussion Section: Thurs at 9 or 10 or Fri at 9 or 10



William Blake, "Satan Watching the Caresses of Adam and Eve" (1808)

All of us have had the experience of encountering some book that changed our lives. But what does it really mean to be “shaken up” by literature—or, in turn, to try to write literature at times of enormous transformation? The reading list for this class ranges from tragedies, epics, drama, and novels, from the origins of Western Culture to 1800; they represent the world in a strange and new way that allows us to see things differently. These works do not only depict alienation and disorientation, but they retain, across vast expanses of time and through differences of culture, the ability to disturb us, to interest and confuse, to make us ask, who am I, where did I come from, and where am I going?

The metaphor of the transformative journey will pervade our travels together as a class—as will two very different possibilities: a successful return home, or a shipwreck, a catastrophe, a new beginning in a new world. We will begin with Hamlet, a play that opens with a most unexpected journey—a Ghost’s return from that “undiscovered country, from whose bourn no traveller returns.” And then we will follow such voyagers as Odysseus, Jonah, and Aeneas, defeated captives like the Trojan women, pilgrims like Dante’s in The Inferno, daring adventurers like Satan in Paradise Lost, castaways like Robinson Crusoe, and optimists like Candide. We will carry with us on our journey significant works by philosophers and social theorists from Aristotle to Locke and Rousseau, asking what does the experience of literature mean? What is the nature of an heroic life? How is one to live within a social order? And most important as we reach that man-made storm, the French Revolution, how are we to create (and why do we always strive to achieve) a more just, a more reasonable, a more humane world?

This course is an option for the Global Cultures Track of the COLT Minor.

Professor Hilary Schor

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