

Second Midterm Exam Questions
Thursday, April 16
Engl 56A, Spring 2009

Your second midterm examination will look a lot like the first: an essay plus several passages from the Elizabethan and seventeenth-century texts we have read which you will need to identify by title and author and briefly discuss. Your essay will be written on one of the following topics – though you will not find out which one until the exam itself. And don't expect to get your choice this time! Writing an in-class essay on literature is much like writing any other essay on literature, with the exception that you are not expected to be able to quote passages from the texts (and, while it is possible to memorize particularly important passages for use on the exam, and you are encouraged to do so if you wish, such a display of recall will not be graded higher than a detailed description of the same passage). Remember that your essay should include a thesis, arguments in support of that thesis, detailed references to the text, and discussion of those references to explain how they are evidence for your arguments and thesis. In addition, of course, a successful thesis will be well written and clear, and contain a degree of originality or inventiveness. Those qualities—clarity and originality—are just as important in an in-class essay as in any other sort. Keeping that in mind, you should come to the exam (with at least one 8-1/2" x 11" bluebook) prepared to write on one of the following:

A. "Seeming and being" – how appearances often contradict reality – is a favorite subject in literature, but it can be used in many ways. Mistaken appearances in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, for example, lead to quite different results than they do in either Spenser's *Faerie Queene* or Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Choose two or more specific passages from each of two works – the play and one of the epics – in order to show what thematic point each work makes by its presentation of deception.

B. The couple at the center of *The Faerie Queene*, the Redcrosse Knight and Una, are representations of the power of faith and the propensity toward sin; their counterparts in *Paradise Lost*, Adam and Eve, in some ways allow Milton to reverse Spenser's allegorical gender roles. Discuss those roles, especially as played by Una and Eve, and how the resulting contrast helps explain the different achievements of these two Christian epics.

C. The central value of both *Twelfth Night* and *Paradise Lost* is, arguably, love. Discuss at least two different kinds of love in each work, giving specific examples to support your examples. Then decide whether those different kinds of love within a single work are ultimately contradictory or somehow unifying, again tying your reading closely to examples from the texts.