ENGL 56A
Professor A. Eastwood

**Essay Prompt**

Write an essay of 5-6 pages (double spaced, 1 inch margins all around) responding to one of the topics listed below. Your essay should present an academic argument, and it should contain evidence gleaned from a close consideration of the details of the text and the language that each author uses. Do not consult outside sources; your essay should spring from your own engagement with these works.

1. Discuss the constructions of heaven and hell in Marlowe’s *Dr. Faustus*, Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, and the poetry of John Donne. Your essay should attempt to approach the concept using close readings from the various texts.

2. Imagery related to exploration and discovery appears repeatedly in 16th and 17th century literary texts. Explain how these images function in Marlowe’s Dr. Faustus, the Metaphysical and or Cavalier poetry, and Milton’s *Paradise Lost*.

3. Why do you think the sonnet was such an important form in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? Write an essay that takes shape around this question using the sonnets we have read for this course. Take into account the different approaches to the form, and try and come to some conclusions about why each author might have made those choices. Do not produce a report on the sonnet. Your essay should attempt to answer why the sonnet was such a crucial form to 16th and 17th century poets.

4. Discuss the constructions of gender (both masculinity and femininity) in the poetry of Shakespeare, Sidney, Spenser and either Donne or Milton. Your essay should make an argument about how the poet is deploying gendered language to possibly make a broader claim or statement.

5. You may write an essay on a topic of your choice provided that you get approval from me, in writing, before April 6th

**DUE IN CLASS on April 27th**

Some tips:

- Use a title: it helps to focus your paper.
- Number your pages in the upper right-hand corner.
- Make sure your thesis (i.e., your answer to the research question posed by the prompt) is arguable and clearly stated (preferably early in the essay).
- Include the analysis (or close reading) of at least one passage from each author you consider.
- Introduce your quotations; do not “drop in” quotations.
- If you use a long, block quotation, make sure there is a reason for drawing your reader’s attention to that passage. Pay adequate attention to explaining the significance of the quotation to your argument.
- Proofread your work.