Dante’s Divine Comedy:  
*to love from justice*

Prof. (nome e cognomen)  
Winter Quarter 2019

**Information and contacts**

**Time and location of meetings:**  
Monday and Wednesday: 10-10:50am – Locy Hall room 301  
Friday (Discussion Section): 10-10:50am — Parkes Hall room 223  
Discussion Sections will be led by (nome e cognome).

**Appointments and contacts:**  
I am available for students: Mondays and Fridays 2:00-3:00 pm; or on appointment.  
Email: 

**Course description**

Dante is the greatest religious poet of Western culture, and his great epic poem, the *Divine Comedy*, offers a remarkable and original synthesis of his views on the fundamental relationship between humans as well as on their understanding of a meaningful existence. The course offers an introduction to Dante’s *Comedy* by focusing on a selection of cantos from the three parts that compose the work, *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*. Following a series of introductory lectures, classes principally concentrate on providing readings of individual cantos. At the same time, broader issues central to Dante’s masterpiece will be discussed. In particular, attention will be paid to Dante’s ties to classical and Christian culture, his political views, his involvement in contemporary intellectual debates, his efforts to use poetry for ethical and religious ends, and his literary experimentation.

**Course goals**

1. Learn to read a great text closely, interpret it deeply, and write incisively about it.

2. Understand key elements of the Western cultural tradition the poem synthesizes, and of the vibrant historical-cultural-spiritual context that spawned the poem, and that it responds to.

3. Reflect on and discuss about the spiritual, philosophical, moral, political, and existential issues raised by this most profound of literary texts.
Required Texts

Dante Alighieri. *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*, translated by Robert and Jean Hollander (New York, Anchor Books). This can also be accessed on: http://etcweb.princeton.edu/dante/pdp/

You can also use the translation and commentary by Durling and Martinez.


Course Format

This course will depend upon both lectures and discussions. Most lectures will be interactive and sometimes they will depend heavily on discussion among all participants, students’ engagement is key to the success of our classes.

**Lectures:** For each lecture you have a Study Task, this usually requires the reading of select cantos from the Comedy. Study the text closely, with the commentary. Since we only read a selection of cantos you are advised to read the summaries of those cantos which are not comprised in our syllabus to be able to follow the development of the story. I also list suggested readings for each lecture: while not required, browsing these critical articles for each class can be stimulating and will help you prepare for assessment. All texts and extracts not included in your textbooks will be provided on Canvas.

**Discussions:** The discussions will focus on the primary sources as indicated in the syllabus. Students are expected to provide a forum for the discussion of the set texts/topics. Discussions generally concentrate on the analysis of several chosen cantos, but this should ultimately serve as the basis for the discussion of broader issues. Suggestions on the issues to discuss in the seminars are offered on Canvas, but the choice of topics belongs to the study groups.

**Reading Suggestions:** please see the suggested reading for each week as well as the general bibliography. You can contact me for further guidance.

Course Requirements

1. **One Paper/Project/Final Exam.** Worth 50% of your final mark.

   **Paper.** A 2000-word final paper, containing at least 5 references to valid secondary sources. This paper cannot cover substantially the same cantos/topics you treated in your Forum Entries. It can be helpful to meet with me, hand me a thesis statement, outline, and bibliography by week 7 at the latest; I can also help with drafts. Submit the paper by email by 22 March 2019 at 9.00 am, in Word, in a consistent academic style.
Exam: You have the option of substituting a final exam for a final paper. The final exam consists of a set of questions on *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*. Please inform me whether you wish to take a final exam: **Exam day and Time:** Thursday, 03/21/2019: 3PM-5PM

Project: You have the option of substituting a project for the final paper. This needs to be discussed by week 6 at the latest with me, please send me an email and book an appointment. Examples of projects that you can undertake:

1. Setting up an exhibition/show on Dante (**deadline to be decided with the student**)
2. Digital Projects. These need to be submitted on Canvas and by email to me on 21 March 2019 at 12.00 am.

All projects need to include a written component, this can be, to give an example, in the form of catalogue or libretto. Students can discuss this with me during preparation.

2. **One short presentation.** Worth 30% of your final mark.

From the second week of the quarter, students will be involved in one 7 to 10 minutes individual or group presentation. This presentation will be linked to a specific canto/theme during Friday Discussions (a calendar for presentations will be prepared in week 1). Every week, one student/group will read the canto(s) for discussion and at least one article in relation to the canto(s), and present its main ideas to the class in a logical, succinct way. Remember to outline the general context of the canto/cantos you deal with as well as their main ideological, philosophical, theological, and rhetorical features. Students can use the material prepared for this presentation towards the preparation of their written work. This work is assessed by both your peers and your lecturer (the lecturer moderates the peers’ mark for fairness and precision).

3. **Participation: 20%**

Participation in class is key to the success of this module. A rubric to understand how we will be assessing this is available on Canvas. Generally, we will consider frequency of your intervention and your attitude in the context of the debate, more than correctness. We will also consider your listening skills. To assess this skill, students will be asked, in turn, to take a journal of the Friday class discussion. The journal will be emailed/given to me on Mondays. There is no need to edit or rewrite the entries, and notes can be taken on paper or on a Word document. When in charge of the journal students can abstain from intervening. If you feel uneasy about talking in public please come and talk to me, you could write Forum Entries instead.

**RUBRICS** that explain how most these assessment tasks are assessed are/will be available on Canvas, if you have doubts about how you will be assessed please come and talk to me.

**Important Dates and deadlines for Assessment**

**Monday of Week 6:** latest date to signal your interest in an ‘alternative project’ by email. A meeting must take place in week 6 to discuss details.
21 March 2019, 3pm-5pm: FINAL EXAM

22 March 2019, 12.00 am: submit one 2500-words paper/project on Canvas and one copy to me by email.

Syllabus and Calendar

Please familiarize yourself with the program structure and calendar.

Week 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Lecture:</th>
<th>Study task:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 Jan</td>
<td>Lost and Found: the Birth of a Prophetic Voice</td>
<td>Inferno 1-2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Suggested readings:

- Zygmunt Baranski, ‘Dante and Medieval Poetics’, in Dante Contemporary Perspectives, ed. by A. Iannucci, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1997, pp. 3-22;

11 Jan Discussion section:

Discussion continues on Inferno 1 and 2 and instructions on Presentations are given.

Week 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Lecture: The Order of Justice in the City of God</th>
<th>Study task: Inferno 1-2- 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Suggested readings:
• John Alcorn, ‘Suffering in Hell. The psychology of emotions in Dante's "Inferno"’, in *Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture*, XIII, (2013), 1, pp. 77-85;

16 Jan  \hspace{1cm} **Lecture: To Hell with Love**

    Study task: *Inferno 5* and *Vita nova* extracts (online).

**Suggested readings:**


18 Jan  \hspace{1cm} **Discussion section:** Presentations Cycle starts

**Presentation 1** (see schedule for details) followed by Discussion on **Love Death and Literature**

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**Week 3**

21 Jan  \hspace{1cm} **MLK day**

23 Jan  \hspace{1cm} **Lecture: A passion for Earthly Matters (**Inferno 10**)**

    Study task: *Inferno 10*

**Suggested readings:**

• Erich Auerbach, ‘Farinata and Cavalcante’, in *Kenyon Review*, XIV (1952), 207-242;
• Glauco Cambon, ‘*Inferno*’
  https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/LD/numbers/02/cambon.html

25 Jan  
**Discussion section:**

**Presentation 2 (see schedule for details)** followed by Discussion *Inferno* on *Dante, Florence and Florentines*.

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**Week 4**

28 Jan  
**Lecture: Imagining Hell: Ancients Ethics and Christian morality**

Study task: *Inferno* 11

Suggested readings:


30 Jan  
**Lecture: Dante the Prophet, the Church and the Corrupted Popes**

Study task: *Inferno* 19

Suggested readings:

• Joan Ferrante, ‘Church and State in the Comedy, The political vision of the Divine Comedy’, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1984, pp. 76-131;

1 Feb  
**Discussion section:**
Presentation 3 (see schedule for details) followed by Discussion Dante, the Popes and the Church.

Week 5

4 Feb  Lecture: **Journeys of Perdition and Salvation: Ulysses v Dante**

Study task: *Inferno* 26

Suggested readings:


6 Feb  Lecture: **At the Heart of Evil: Ugolino and the Art of Lying**

Study task: *Inferno* 32-33

Suggested readings:

- Ronald B. Herzman, ‘Cannibalism and Communion in *Inferno* XXXIII’, *Dante Studies*, 98 (1980), pp. 53-78;

8 Feb  Discussion section:

Study task: *Inferno* 34

Presentation 4 (see schedule for details) followed by Discussion on *Inferno 34*

Week 6

11 Feb  Lecture: **The Creation of Purgatory: Purification, Friendship and Hope**
Study task: *Purgatorio* 1 and 2

**Suggested readings:**


13 Feb   **Lecture: Learning to be humble**

Study task: *Purgatorio* 10-12

**Suggested readings:**


15 Feb   **Discussion section:**

*Presentation 5 (see schedule for details)* followed by Discussion on **Religion, Liturgy and Prayer in Dante**

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**Week 7**

17 Feb   **Lecture: To live is to be a citizen**

Study task: *Purgatorio* 6 and *Purgatorio* 16; *Monarchia* 3, 10 and 3, 15-16

**Suggested readings:**

19 Feb Lecture: Guiding the Will to a Happy Life

Study task: Purgatorio 16-18 and all previous Purgatorio cantos read in class

Suggested readings:

• Kenelm Foster, ‘Dante's Idea of Love’, in From Time to Eternity; Essays on Dante's Divine Comedy, by Thomas G. Bergin, New Haven, Yale UP, 1967;

22 Feb Discussion section:

Presentation 6 (see schedule for details) followed by Discussion on Purgatorio 6 and 16 (Reason v Caos)

Week 8

25 Feb Lecture: Poetry will save us all

Study task: Inferno 4 Purgatorio 21 and 22

Suggested readings:

• Richard Lansing, ‘Statius’s homage to Vergil’, Modern Language Notes, 127, 1 (2012), pp. 91-98;

27 Feb Lecture: The modern vernacular canon

Study task: Purgatorio 21-26

Suggested readings:
• Lino Pertile, ‘*Purgatorio* XXVI’, in *Dante’s Divine Comedy. Purgatorio*, 1993, pp. 380-397;

1 Mar  **Discussion section:**

Study task: *Inferno* 4

**Presentation 6 (see schedule for details)** followed by Discussion on *Purgatorio* 21-22 and *Inferno* 4 (*Pagans, Poetry and Knowledge*)

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Week 9

4 Mar  **Lecture:** *The Birth of the Poet: Beatrice and the Vita Nova*

Study task:

Read extracts on the *Vita nova* (extracts provided by Prof. Nasti)

6 Mar  **Lecture:** *Meeting Beatrice* (1)

Study task: *Purgatorio* 30-33

**Suggested readings:**

• Lino Pertile, ‘Dante’s Comedy beyond the Stilnovo, in *Lectura Dantis*, 12 (Fall, 1993), pp. 47-77;

8 Mar  **Lecture/Discussion section on Purgatorio* 30-33: *Meeting Beatrice* (2)

**Suggested readings:**

• Lino Pertile, ‘Dante’s Comedy beyond the Stilnovo, in *Lectura Dantis*, 12 (Fall, 1993), pp. 47-77;
11 Mar  Lecture and Revision

SOME INSTRUCTIONS ON BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS

1. The Dante bibliography is very vast. A long BIBLIOGRAPHY is/will be available on Canvas. You will be able to discuss with me the most adequate secondary literature for your essay/exam. By way of initial guidance keep the following points in mind:

2. The most important Dante websites are: Dante Online (website of Società Dantesca Italiana: all the works, best bibliography, links, manuscript images) and the Princeton Dante Project (70 commentaries, searchable, all the works in Italian and English, searchable, Hollander translation and commentary, images, reference, maps, links, audio of the Italian).

Other useful sites: Digital Dante (all the works, images, maps, links, resources), d) the World of Dante (text, images, maps, links); Danteworlds (images, audio, commentary, guides); Dante Today (gathers "Citings and Sightings" and bibliography of Dante in the arts and contemporary culture); the Dante Society of America website (information on student essay prizes, publications, events, and the American Dante Bibliography, downloadable).

3. An excellent book on all facets of Dante and his works is John Scott’s Understanding Dante (Notre Dame UP, 2004).

4. Excellent collections of essays are the Cambridge Companion to Dante and the Cambridge Companion to the Divine Comedy.

5. You can find an article on each canto of the Purgatorio and Paradiso in the following volumes (all available in the library):

Lectura Dantis: Purgatorio. Edited by Allen Mandelbaum, Anthony Oldcorn, and Charles Ross (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2008)

Dante's Divine Comedy Introductory Readings II: Purgatorio. [Lectura Dantis Virginiana, II; Dante's Purgatorio: Introductory Readings]. Special Issue of Lectura Dantis (Number 12: Supplement; Spring 1993)

6. Some other collections of articles on Dante (see bibliography for details):

Richard Lansing, *Dante: The Critical Complex* (in 8 volumes, divided by subject)

Amilcare Iannucci, *Dante: Contemporary Perspectives*

Teodolinda Barolini and Wayne Storey, *Dante for the New Millennium*

John Freccero, *Dante: A Collection of Critical Essays*

Giuseppe Mazzotta, *Critical Essays on Dante*

Theodore Cachey, *Dante Now: Current Trends in Dante Studies*

Amilcare Iannucci, *Dante Today*

Dino Cervigni, *Dante and Modern American Criticism*

Jeremy Tambling, *Dante.*

7. A good one-volume encyclopedia in English is *The Dante Encyclopedia*, edited by Richard Lansing (Garland, 2000). Most entries also have brief bibliographies (English-language focus).


10. The main journals on Dante are *Dante Studies* (available also online through the library), *Studi Danteschi*, and *L'Alighieri. Dante Notes* (formerly EBDSA, Electronic Bulletin of the Dante Society of America) publishes up-to-date short contributions (max 1500 words) online, available on the Dante Society of America website. There are of course many other journals that publish on Dante, and a number dedicated only to Dante (*Tre Corone, Rivista di studi danteschi, Dante: Rivista internazionale, Letture Classensi, Deutsches Dante Jahrbuch, Tenzone*).