

English 320: Medieval Literature: Dante

Fall 1998

Prof. McEntire: x 3982; hrs: MW 2:30-3:30, TH 2:30-4:00

This course will be a close reading of Dante's great epic work, *The Divine Comedy*. Besides the primary work, you will also read a short early work of Dante, *The Vita Nuova*, and selected critical essays. The focus of the course will be on situating Dante within the cultural, theological, historical, and literary milieu of thirteenth-century Florence, Italy.

Course objectives:

- To attentively read Dante's *Vita Nuova* and *Divine Comedy*.
- To understand some of the social, religious, and historical issues implicating the text.
- To critique and discuss Dante work.
- To develop through active expression the writing and analytical skills congruent with the major.

Texts:

Dante. *The Divine Comedy Vol I: Inferno*. Trans Mark Musa. Ny: Penguin, 1971.

Dante. *The Divine Comedy Vol I: Purgatory*. Trans Mark Musa. Ny: Penguin, 1981.

Dante. *The Divine Comedy Vol I: Paradise*. Trans Mark Musa. Ny: Penguin, 1984.

Dante. *Vita Nuova*. Trans Mark Musa. Oxford: OUP, 1992.

Jacoff, Rachel, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993.

Course Requirements:

- Regular attendance, preparation, and participation.
- Three short essays.

Grading:

- Three essays: 25% each
- Class grade: 25%

Attendance policy:

Attendance in class is expected. A notable number of absences (more than three) will invite comment and be reflected in your final grade; i.e. for every three absences your grade will drop a partial percent (A to A-, etc.). You could interpret this to mean that you have three excused absences, but athletic events and illness (not to mention mid- and late-semester stress, weariness, and the unexpected) should be factored into such an interpretation.

Writing essays:

An English class, 320 has as its basic grading requirement several essays. These should be handed in on time and at the beginning of class unless otherwise arranged or announced. An A paper is excellent, sophisticated, even elegant; it is carefully thought out, intelligently presented, well organized, crafted in its prose, technically proficient. It also provides textual evidence fluidly and effectively. An essay will earn in the B range if it is a good, competent paper, showing control of the text and the topic, with good prose. It is not a superior piece of work but shows a solid grasp of the material and the elements of argument and language. A C paper is satisfactory, fulfilling basic expectations of organization and argument, indicating basic skills and understanding of the text but while not outstanding is moving toward effectiveness. There are usually one or several problems to be solved in order to improve, whether argumentative, organizational, or technical. D essays are lacking in basic understanding or skills, either in organization, argument, or mechanics of writing. They usually represent haste, inattentiveness to the details of the topic at hand, including textual citation, or misunderstanding of some aspect of expository writing. All essays should be original for this class (see department policy).

Finally, while time and effort do contribute to better work, effort alone will not earn higher grades.

Revising:

Few people write perfect prose at first effort, even advanced majors!. While not required, you may revise an essay that will be substantially improved by so doing. Copying corrections from your graded essay does not constitute a revision and will not be considered. To have a revision accepted, you must meet with me to discuss what changes you are considering to improve the essay, usually in clarifying the argument, adding substantiating textual

evidence, or re-organizing for effectiveness. Verbs and sentence structure are always subject to revision and improvement. The revised essay is due one week after the original papers have been returned and should be handed in with the original essay attached. The graded revised essay will be averaged with the first effort.

**Handing in essays:**

Essays should be typewritten with reasonable margins and double spaced (note: some fonts create a spacing that's 2 1/2 spaces; reduce these to 1 1/2 to equal standard double--or change the font). Indent paragraphs without extra spacing between. Put a title at the top of the first page (no extra title pages needed). Number your pages.

On the **back** of the **last** page of the essay put your name and complete the pledge.

Aug	25	Introduction
	27	<i>Vita Nuova</i>
Sept	1	Barolini, Dante and the Lyric Past” CCD 2 (14-33) Harrison, “Approaching the <i>Vita Nuova</i> ” CCD 3 (34-43)
	3	<i>Inferno</i> , Introduction and Canto I
	8	<i>Inferno</i> II-IV; Mazzotta, “Life of Dante” CCD 1 (1-13)
	10	<i>Inferno</i> V-VIII
	15	<i>Inferno</i> IX-XII; Najemy, “Dante and Florence” CCD 6 (80-99)
	17	<i>Inferno</i> XIII-XVI
	22	<i>Inferno</i> XVII-XXI; Freccero, “An Introduction to <i>Inferno</i> ” CCD 11 (172-191)
	24	<i>Inferno</i> XXII-XXVI
	29	<i>Inferno</i> XXVII-XXX
Oct	1	<i>Inferno</i> XXXI-XXXIV; Essay due
	6	Film and modern representations of evil and hell
	8	<i>Purgatory</i> I-IV; Schnapp, “Introduction to <i>Purgatorio</i> ” CCD 12 (192-207)
	13	<i>Purgatory</i> V-VIII
	15	<i>Purgatory</i> IX-XII
	20	Fall Break
	22	<i>Purgatory</i> XIII-XVII
	27	<i>Purgatory</i> XVIII-XXI; secondary reading, tba
	29	<i>Purgatory</i> XXII-XXV
Nov	3	<i>Purgatory</i> XXVI-XXIX
	5	<i>Purgatory</i> XXX-XXXIII; Essay due
	10	<i>Paradise</i> I-IV; Brownlee, “Dante and the Classical Poets” CCD 7 (100-119)
	12	<i>Paradise</i> V-VIII
	17	<i>Paradise</i> IX-XII; Jacoff, “‘Shadowy Prefaces’: an introduction to <i>Paradiso</i> ” CCD 13 (208-225)
	19	<i>Paradise</i> XIII-XVII
	24	<i>Paradise</i> XVIII-XXI
	26	Thanksgiving
Dec	1	<i>Paradise</i> XXII-XXV; Hawkins, “Dante and the Bible” CCD 8 (120-135)
	3	<i>Paradise</i> XXVI-XXIX
	8	<i>Paradise</i> XXX-XXXIII; Ryan, “The Theology of Dante” CCD 9 (136-152)
	14	Final essay due: 3:30