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## ENGL 380-01, Dante in Translation: The Poetics of the Body, Spring 2009

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ENG 380/ Prof. J. Haas  
Office hrs: T 3-4, W 2-3:30  
& by appt.

## DANTE IN TRANSLATION: THE POETICS OF THE BODY



“Love, which absolves no one beloved from loving, seized me so strongly  
with his charm that, as thou seest, it does not leave me yet.”  
--*Inferno*, Canto V

“I had not thought death had undone so many.”  
--T.S. Eliot, *The Wasteland*

This course will focus on the work of Dante Alighieri, the fourteenth-century Italian poet who translated his vision of the Christian afterlife into his epic poem *The Divine Comedy*, and whose work has had a profound influence on English writers from Chaucer to T.S. Eliot. We will read a few of the works that Dante read—including parts of Virgil’s *Aeneid* and Augustine’s *Confessions*—and we will follow the thread of one of Dante’s preoccupations: the body and its relation to love, language, sin, and salvation. Dante’s poem, in its construction of the saintly Beatrice—Dante’s muse and spiritual guide—as well as its critique of courtly love, provides insight into medieval conceptions of gender and sexuality. In addition to primary texts, the course will include some theoretical readings, medieval and contemporary, on gender, sexuality, and the body. **All readings and discussion will be in English.**

### Required Texts

(available at the Rhodes College Bookstore)

Augustine, *Confessions*. Trans. Pine-Coffin (Penguin Classics)

Dante Alighieri:

*Vita Nuova*. Trans. Musa (Oxford World’s Classics)

*Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*. Trans. Sinclair (Oxford UP)

Virgil, *The Aeneid*. Trans. Mandelbaum (Bantam Classics)

**Moodle (M)** Selected readings. Students are responsible for printing out individual copies of moodle readings and bringing them to class. Make sure you have access to a reliable printer.

### Recommended

MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers

The New Oxford Annotated Bible

**Graded Work** (All writing for this class must make use of the MLA style of documentation and citation)

3 short papers (3-4 pages, 15% each)	45%
1 long paper (10-15 pages)	30%
Group Presentations	5%
Annotated Bibliography and Research proposal	10%
Participation, attendance, quizzes, informal writing	10%

**Grades:** C=satisfactory; B=Good; B+=Very Good; A- =Excellent; A=Extraordinary, a jewel, a perfect synthesis of form and content

**Participation:** This course is an advanced literature seminar. The active and engaged participation of every member of the class is expected. In addition to informal, everyday participation, **each student will sign up in groups of two to present on some aspect of the day's reading.** The presentation should provide a focused discussion of a particular passage.

You may also be asked to post reading responses on Moodle.

**Policies:**

**Timeliness:** All assigned reading and writing is due at the beginning of the class for which it is assigned unless otherwise noted. Always bring the assigned text(s) to class; repeated failure to do so will cause you to be marked absent. I expect you to be on time to class. **Repeated lateness** will also cause you to be marked absent.

Late papers will be penalized **a third of a letter grade per day.** Except in the case of documented illness or family emergency (and by prior arrangement with me), papers more than a week late will receive a failing grade. Under special circumstances I will grant extensions on papers, but I will **only** consider requests made **in advance of the due date.** If you need an extension, you must contact me **at least one class period before** the paper is due; however, this does not guarantee that I will grant you an extension. Requests made for extensions on the day a paper is due will not be entertained.

**Absences:** Because informed participation in class discussion is part of the work of the course, **more than two absences** during the semester will adversely affect your final grade. **More than five absences is grounds for failing the class.** Failure to complete one or more assignments will result in a **failing grade for the course.**

Except for extraordinary circumstances that are *clearly* beyond your control (e.g. hospitalization, death in the family, natural disasters) I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. I assume that if you choose to make use of your three "free" absences, you are doing so for a good reason. *Therefore, I do not wish to be informed about the particular reasons you are absent.* Of course, if you do need to use these free absences, you are still responsible for what you missed, and you should expect that any time you miss a class, there will be a detrimental effect on your learning and on your grade.

The schedule of assignments is subject to change as needed, so **if you miss a class, make sure you check with a classmate to get notes and confirm the next assignment.** Except under extraordinary circumstances, I do not provide notes to students who miss class. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to catch up on what you missed from someone in the class.

**Email etiquette:** Compose your email messages with the care that you would bring to writing a formal letter. *Always* proofread your email message before sending. I am happy to answer quick questions over email as my time permits, but you need to make sure that you have used your own resources (like the

syllabus or the college web page) first. *If there is something you need to discuss or negotiate, you need to do it in person or, failing that, over the phone.* In order to prevent email from interrupting my own work, I generally set aside one part of the day to responding to it rather than monitoring it throughout the day. Except under unusual circumstances, I do not respond to student email on weekends and holidays. If you send me an email over the weekend, I will respond to it on Monday. I reserve the right to ignore email messages that fail to abide by the basic rules of etiquette.

**Email is not an appropriate medium for requesting extensions or any other kind of dispensation.**

**Plagiarism** is the borrowing of language or ideas from another writer without proper citation. It may be intended or unintended, but in either case, it constitutes a breach of the Honor Code. If in doubt, see me, see the Writing Center, and/or consult the Honor Council website. It goes without saying **that all work for this class must be done in compliance with the Rhodes Honor Code.**

**Schedule of readings and assignments (subject to revision as needed)**

Th 1/16 Introductions

Tu 1/20 **Love—Courtly and Otherwise**

The Song of Solomon **M**

Bernard of Clairvaux, Commentary on Song of Solomon **M**

Ovid and Andreas Capellanus, on love **M**

Murray, “Hiding Behind the Universal Man: Male Sexuality in the Middle Ages” **M**

Th 1/22 **Language and Desire**

Dante, *De vulgari eloquentia* **M**

Selected poems (Guido Guinizelli and Guido Cavalcanti)

Selected Provençal Courtly Love lyrics ( 2 packets: “Troubadours Men” and “Troubadours Women”) **M**

**Group 1**

Tu 1/27 Augustine, *Confessions* Books I (entire); **II.4-6; III.1-6, 8**

Brundage, “Sex and Canon Law” **M**

**Group 2**

Th 1/29 Augustine, *Confessions* Books **IV.10-14; V.1-8,10, 13-14; VII.1; VIII.6-12; X.1-4**

Payer, “Confession and the Study of Sex in the Middle Ages” **M**

Tu 2/3 Dante, *Vita Nuova*, ch. 1-23

Nelli, “Love’s Rewards” **M**

**Group 3**

Th 2/5 Dante, *Vita Nuova* ch. 24-42

Tu 2/10 **Paper #1 due; class-led discussion on your papers**

Th 2/12 Virgil, *Aeneid* books 1-4 and 6

**Group 4**

Tu 2/17 Dante, *Inferno* 1-2

Hollander, “Allegory in Dante” **M**

[Virgil, Eclogue 4]  
[letter to Can Grande]

Th 2/19 *Inferno* 3-6  
**Group 5**

Tu 2/24 *Inferno* 7-11; Ovid handout

Th 2/26 *Inferno* 12-16;  
Johannsson and Percy, "Homosexuality" **M**  
**Group 6**

Tu 3/3 *Inferno* 17-19; Ovid handout  
**Paper #2 Due**

Th 3/5 *Inferno* 20-26  
Tennyson, "Ulysses"

Tu 3/10 *Inferno* 27-32;  
Bible, 1 Corinthians  
**Group 7**

Th 3/12 *Inferno* 33-34  
Camporesi, "The Consecrated Host" **M**

Tu 3/17 Spring Break

Th 3/19 Spring Break

Tu 3/24 *Purg* 1-9

Th 3/26 *Purg* 10-20  
Tazi, "Celestial Bodies" **M**  
**Group 8**

Tu 3/31 **Paper #3 due**; Reading TBA

Th 4/2 *Purg* 21-30

Tu 4/7 *Purg* 31-33  
Bynum, "The Female Body and Religious Practice in the Later Middle Ages" **M**  
**Group 9**

Th 4/9 Easter recess

Tu 4/14 *Paradiso* 1, 4, 7, 10  
**Group 10**

Th 4/16 *Paradiso* 14, 26, 29

Tu 4/21 *Paradiso* 30-33

Th 4/23 Reading TBA; **Research paper proposals due**

Tu 4/28 Reading TBA; **Annotated bibliographies due**

Th 4/30 Reading TBA

**Final research paper due: Wed. May 6, by 4pm**