

**Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey**  
**Department of Italian**  
**16:560:605:01**  
**Dante Seminar**  
**Spring 2020**

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This course is an investigation of Dante's *Vita Nova* and the *Comedy*. Although only these two of Dante's major works will be read in their entirety, constant references will be made to the others. Besides stylistic and formal analyses, numerous thematic strains will be researched and followed throughout Dante's production. Particular attention will be paid to such concepts as allegory, poetics, self-interpretation, autobiography, prayer, politics, and the ever-changing concept of love.

**Learning goals:** Students will be trained to do a close analysis of literary texts, to put poetic and prose texts in conversation with philosophical ideas, to discern the boundaries of literature, philosophy, and theology. They will be assessed by means of three oral presentations (one on an article, one on a specific topic, and one on the paper topic), the first draft of the paper, the final (publishable) paper, and class participation.

### Syllabus

Texts: *Vita Nova* (any annotated edition); *Divina Commedia* (any annotated edition); secondary materials will be made available on sakai.

01/22 Introduction. Exile, Poetry, Prayer.

01/29 *Vita Nuova*. Paragraphs 1-15

Teodolinda Barolini, "'Cominciandomi dal principio infino a la fine' (V.N. XXIII 15): Forging Anti-Narrative in the *Vita Nuova*," *La gloriosa donna de la mente. A commentary on the Vita Nuova*, ed. Vincent Moleta (Firenze: Olschki, 1994) 119-140.

02/05 *Vita Nuova*. Paragraphs 16-30

Ronald Martinez, "Mourning Beatrice: The Rhetoric of Threnody in the *Vita nuova*," *Modern Language Notes* 113 (1998): 1-29.

02/12 *Vita Nuova*. Paragraphs 31-42

Jeremy Tambling, "Thinking Melancholy: Allegory and the 'Vita Nuova'," *The Romanic Review* Volume 96 Number 1: 85-105.

02/19 *Divina Commedia. Inferno* 1-12

C.S. Lewis, "Allegory," In *The Allegory of Love* (Oxford University Press, 1936) 44-111.  
Robert Hollander, "Dante's Virgil: A Light That Failed," *Lectura Dantis: A Forum for Dante Research and Interpretation* (1989) Spring 4: 3-9.

- 02/26 *Divina Commedia. Inferno* 13-25  
Michael Camille, "The Pose of the Queer. Dante's Gaze, Brunetto Latini's Body," *Queering the Middle Ages*, eds. Glenn Burger and Steven F. Kruger (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001) 57-86.
- 03/04 *Divina Commedia. Inferno* 26-34  
John Freccero, "The Sign of Satan," *Modern Language Notes* 80 (1965): 11-26.
- 03/11 NO CLASS TODAY. CLASS WILL BE MADE UP ON 05/13
- 03/18 SPRING BREAK
- 03/25 *Divina Commedia. Purgatorio* 1-12  
Gino Casagrande, "'Esto visibile parlare': A Synaesthetic Approach to *Purgatorio* 10. 55-63," *Lectura Dantis Newberriana II*, eds. Paolo Cherchi and Antonio C. Mastrobuono (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1990) 21-57. Alessandro Vettori, "Prayer as Art in Movement," *Dante's Prayerful Pilgrimage: Typologies of Prayer in the Comedy* (Leiden: Brill, 2019) 96-127.
- 04/01 *Divina Commedia. Purgatorio* 13-26  
C. S. Lewis, "Dante's Statius," *Medium Aevum* 25 (1956): 133-139.
- 04/08 *Divina Commedia. Purgatorio* 27-33  
Flavia Coassin, "Matelda: Poetic Image or Archetype?," *Visions and Revisions. Women in Italian Culture*, eds. Mirna Cicioni and Nicole Prunster (Providence, RI: Berg, 1993) 3-12. Victoria Kirkham, "XXVIII," *Dante's Divine Comedy. Introductory Readings II: Purgatorio*. Ed. Tibor Wlassics (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, 1993) 411-432.
- 04/15 *Divina Commedia. 27-33*  
Charles Singleton, *Journey to Beatrice* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1958) 3-14. Peter Armour, "Purgatorio XXXII," *Dante's Divine Comedy. Introductory Readings II: Purgatorio*, ed. Tibor Wlassics (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1993) 476-490.
- 04/22 *Divina Commedia. Paradiso* 11-17  
Alessandro Vettori, "Pax et bonum: Dante's Depiction of Francis of Assisi in *Paradiso* XI." In *Dante and the Franciscans*. Ed. Santa Casciani (Leiden, Holland: Brill Publications, 2007) 289-305. Guy Raffa, "Enigmatic 56's: Cicero's Scipio and Dante's *Cacciaguida*," *Dante Studies* 110 (1992): 121-134.
- 04/29 *Divina Commedia. Paradiso* 30-33  
Steven Botterill, "Dante, Bernard, and the Virgin Mary," *Dante and the Mystical Tradition. Bernard Clairvaux in the Commedia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 148-193.
- 05/06 Conclusion. Final paper due. Oral presentations.

**Grading.** This is a seminar and participation is very important; it will constitute a percentage of your final grade. Everyone is expected to do the assigned reading for the date specified on the syllabus. Secondary materials (articles and book chapters) will be posted on the sakai page dedicated to this course. Final grades will be based on class participation, three oral presentations, a draft of the final paper, and the final paper. Of the three oral presentations, Presentation 1 will be on one of the assigned articles, is meant to start class discussion on that article, and should last about 10 minutes; Presentation 2 will be on the topic you intend to write

your paper on and will last approximately 20 minutes; Presentation 3 will be a condensation of your final paper and will be delivered during the last class conference-style. During the last week of February you will meet with me individually to discuss your final paper. A draft of the final paper is due on April 15. The final paper is due on the last day of classes, on May 6. Email a copy of the paper, please.

**Academic Integrity.** Everyone is expected to produce original work. If you borrow a critic's idea, you **MUST** acknowledge it in a footnote. Please, quote your sources, do not plagiarize, do not copy or let anyone copy, and do not submit your paper for more than one class. If you are caught plagiarizing, you will receive an F in this class and you will be reported to the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies for further action. Please, see the link below for Rutgers University's Academic Integrity Policy.

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