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. Students will be assessed by means of four oral presentations (one on an article, one on a specific poet in conversation with Dante, and one on a critical work, and one on the paper topic), the first draft of the paper, the final (publishable) paper, a book review, and class participation.

**Syllabus**

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

- **09/02** Introduction. Exile, Poetry, Prayer.
- **09/09** *Vita Nuova*. Paragraphs 1-15
  
- **09/16** *Vita Nuova*. Paragraphs 16-30
  
- **09/23** *Vita Nuova*. Paragraphs 31-42
  
- **09/30** *Divina Commedia*. *Inferno* 1-12
  

10/07 *Divina Commedia. Inferno* 13-25

10/14 *Divina Commedia. Inferno* 26-34

10/21 *Divina Commedia. Purgatorio* 1-12

10/28 *Divina Commedia. Purgatorio* 13-26

11/04 *Divina Commedia. Purgatorio* 27-33

11/11 *Divina Commedia*. 27-33

11/18 *Divina Commedia. Paradiso* 11-17

12/02 *Divina Commedia. Paradiso* 30-33


**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 canvas. Final grades will be based on class participation, four oral presentations, a draft of the final paper, a book review, 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 on a specific poet that you put in conversation
with Dante; this, too, will last approximately 20 minutes; Presentation 4 is a condensation of your final paper and will be delivered during the last class, conference-style; this will last 15 minutes. Presentations 1 and 2 are pretty straightforward. Presentation 3 is on a specific poet, either one of Dante’s contemporaries (Guido Guinizzelli, Guido Cavalcanti, Cino da Pistoia, Iacopo da Lentini, or others included on the Comprehensive Exam Reading List) or poets of subsequent centuries who were influenced by Dante (Foscolo, D’Annunzio, Montale, for example).

The **book review** is an important exercise. You choose a book on a list I will hand out, or you can also choose a book on the International Dante Bibliography and write a book review on it (the book should be relatively new and published in the last two to three years). I will edit your book review and then we’ll publish it in *Italian Quarterly*.

During the first week of October you will meet with me individually to discuss your final paper. A draft of the **final paper** is due on November 15. The final paper is due on the last day of classes, on December 15. 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.