



Faculty of Arts  
School of Languages, Linguistics, Literatures and Cultures

ITAL 599  
Dante's *Divine Comedy* in the Context of Medieval European Culture  
Fall 2017

COURSE OUTLINE

**INSTRUCTOR'S NAME:** Dr. Eleonora Buonocore

**OFFICE LOCATION:** CH D 323

**OFFICE HOURS:** M – W 11 am to 12:50 pm or  
by appointment

**TELEPHONE NUMBER:** 403 220-4414

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**DESCRIPTION**

This course focuses on Dante's *Divine Comedy*, a masterpiece of world literature and a crucial text that lays at the foundation of European culture. The course will begin exploring Dante's first work, the *Vita Nuova* (New Life) as the culmination of Dante's poetic education and the springboard for his poetic journey through the afterlife. We will read selections from the three canticles that form the *Comedy*: *Inferno*, *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, with the goal of understanding Dante's intellectual trajectory and his goals in writing his journey through the underworld and into heaven. We will examine the *Comedy's* roots in Classical culture, the role of Virgil as Dante's first guide, as well as the influence of Biblical exegesis. Our approach will focus on the wealth of encyclopaedic knowledge that transpires in the *Comedy*: we will analyze each encounter that Dante makes in his journey as a station in his pilgrimage to understand the human spirit, through sin and redemption. In this context we will pay close attention to Dante's philosophical and theological sources, such as Thomas Aquinas, as well as to the influence that Augustine, Franciscan thought, and Bernard of Clairvaux, the last of Dante's guides exerted on the Florentine poet. We will descend to the frozen hell, and ascend to the last sphere of *Paradiso*, accompanying Dante until his main achievement, his final vision and his ineffable encounter with "that love which moves the heaven and the other stars" in *Paradiso* XXXIII.

**OBJECTIVES**

This course aims to introduce the students to Dante's *Divine Comedy* and to place it in the context of Medieval European History and Literature. The objectives of this course are manifold:

- to explain the context surrounding Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and familiarize the students with Medieval European History of XIII and XIV c.
- to explore Dante's sources in the Classical tradition, including Virgil and Ovid
- to provide the students with the tools to recognize Dante's poetic style, starting from the poetic device of "terza rima."
- to recognize Dante's cosmology, and be able to articulate its relationship to a Ptolemaic world-view and medieval astrology.
- to analyze the crucial theological and philosophical issues at play in the *Comedy*, including Dante's harmonization of a Christian and Aristotelian Ethics in *Inferno*, the ethics of time at play in *Purgatoto*, and his views on salvation in *Paradiso*.
- to discern and interpret the medieval concept of allegory and how it contributes to Dante's creation of meaning in the *Comedy*.



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**OUTCOMES**

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Create short analytic pieces demonstrating their understanding of the principal issues at play in a specific canto of the *Divine Comedy* or comparing two canti, or two characters from the *Comedy*.
- Identify key characters in the *Comedy*, and point out their significance in the context of the poem.
- Be able to follow the development of Dante's intellectual trajectory throughout the text, and acknowledge Dante's sources in the Classical and biblical tradition.
- Reach an understanding of the philosophical and theological basis of the *Comedy* and how they inform Dante's structuring of his work.
- Sustain a discussion on the *Divine Comedy* and its role in Medieval European Literature.
- Be able to present the literary qualities of the *Divine Comedy* as well as the main characters of the text to an audience and be prepared to reply to their questions
- Produce a longer interpretative essay focusing on one canto of the *Comedy* or on a specific issue in the *Comedy* as it relates to medieval culture.

**DISTRIBUTION OF GRADES**

Active class participation 15%

1 Oral Presentation 10%

2 Written Assignments (2 at 10% each) = 20%

2 Written exams (1 at 20% and 1 at 10%) =30%

Final paper 25%

**GRADING SCALE**

A+ = 100-96    A= 95-91    A- =90-86

B+ = 85-81    B =80-76    B- =75-71

C+ = 70-67    C= 66-62    C- =61-58

D+ = 57-54    D= 53-50    F =49%-0%

The official grading system (A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1) will be applied for the calculation of the final mark

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

- 1) Dante. *The Divine Comedy*, trans. John D. Sinclair (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968 (Reissued October 2010)
- 2) Additional material provided in PDF format on D2L.



## Faculty of Arts

### School of Languages, Linguistics, Literatures and Cultures

#### RECOMMENDED TEXTS AND MATERIALS

Virgil, *Aeneid*, any edition  
Augustine, *The city of God*, any edition

Any textbook of Italian grammar and syntax.  
Any good Italian-English, English-Italian dictionary for advanced students.

#### COURSE NOTES

The course will consist in class readings, writing, and group communicative and interpretative activities: analyses and seminar discussions will be in Italian. Active participation in class will be expected and encouraged. Students will read the text of the *Comedy* in Italian and peruse the footnotes and the end-of-canto summaries to clarify hard points, in addition they might glance at the translation when insecure about the Italian, but they should come to class prepared to discuss the key points of the text in Italian.

Active participation is defined as coming to class prepared to discuss the readings in Italian, and to ask questions about the readings.

Oral Presentations: Students will prepare and deliver one 15-minutes in-class presentations about the class material, including being prepared to answer other students' questions.

Writing Assignments: throughout the term students will write 2 short essays of 500/600 words each on topics of their choice among those covered in class (i.e. the principal issues at play in a specific canto of the *Divine Comedy* or comparing two canti, or two characters of the *Comedy*, etc.)

Written exams: they will evaluate students' knowledge of the key characters and themes as well as of the structure of the *Divine Comedy*. Students will be asked to write a composition and analyze selected passages chosen among those Canti of the *Comedy* read in class.

There will be no final examination.

Final paper: the paper will deal extensively with a theme discussed in class (i.e. focusing on one canto of the *Comedy* or on a specific issue in the *Comedy* as it relates to medieval culture). The topic will be agreed with the instructor. The paper will have a length of 6/8 pages, in Italian.

- Late assignments and missed tests policy:  
Missed tests and missed assignments will be counted as an incomplete and will contribute to the calculation of the mark.
- Electronic submission of assignments: assignments will be submitted in paper copy to the teacher and in word/format via email to [eleonora.buonocore@ucalgary.ca](mailto:eleonora.buonocore@ucalgary.ca) by due deadline.
- The Department's drop-box, located in the foyer area of the third floor in Craigie Hall between blocks D and available for depositing assignments and course work. The material placed in the drop- box will be collected and at the beginning and at the end of the working day.

#### ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

1. **Plagiarism** is a serious offence, the penalty for which is an F on the assignment and possibly also an F in the course, academic probation, or requirement to withdraw. Plagiarism exists when:



## Faculty of Arts

### School of Languages, Linguistics, Literatures and Cultures

- a) the work submitted or presented was done, in whole or in part, by an individual other than the one submitting or presenting the work (this includes having another impersonate the student or otherwise substituting the work of another for one's own in an examination or test);
- b) parts of the work are taken from another source without reference to the original author;
- c) the whole work (e.g., an essay) is copied from another source, and/or
- d) a student submits or presents work in one course which has also been submitted in another course (although it may be completely original with that student) without the knowledge of or prior agreement of the instructor involved.

While it is recognized that scholarly work often involves reference to the ideas, data and conclusions of other scholars, intellectual honesty requires that such references be explicitly and clearly noted."

Plagiarism occurs not only when direct quotations are taken from a source without specific acknowledgement but also when original ideas or data from the source are not acknowledged. A bibliography is insufficient to establish which portions of the student's work are taken from external sources; footnotes or other recognized forms of citation must be used for this purpose.

2. **Cheating** at tests or examinations includes but is not limited to dishonest or attempted dishonest conduct such as speaking to other candidates or communicating with them under any circumstances whatsoever; bringing into the examination room any textbook, notebook, memorandum, other written material or mechanical or electronic device not authorized by the examiner; writing an examination or part of it, or consulting any person or materials outside the confines of the examination room without permission to do so, or leaving answer papers exposed to view, or persistent attempts to read other students' examination papers.

3. **Other academic misconduct** includes, but is not limited to, tampering or attempts to tamper with examination scripts, class work, grades and/or class records; failure to abide by directions by an instructor regarding the individuality of work handed in; the acquisition, attempted acquisition, possession, and/or distribution of examination materials or information not authorized by the instructor; the impersonation of another student in an examination or other class assignment; the falsification or fabrication of clinical or laboratory reports; the non-authorized tape recording of lectures.

4. Any student who voluntarily and consciously aids another student in the commission of one of these offences is also guilty of academic misconduct.

#### **DISABILITIES AND ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION**

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services office at 403-210-6019 or [access@ucalgary.ca](mailto:access@ucalgary.ca); SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit [www.ucalgary.ca/access/](http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/)

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor.

The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at [http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy\\_0.pdf](http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy_0.pdf)

#### **EMERGENCY EVACUATION ASSEMBLY POINTS**

Craigie Hall: Professional Faculties food court (alternate: Education Block food court)  
Education Block and Tower: Scurfield Hall atrium (alternate: Professional Faculties food court)  
Kinesiology: north courtyard, MacEwan Student Centre (alternate: University Theatres lobby)  
For the complete list of assembly points please consult <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

#### **FACULTY OF ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING AND STUDENT INFORMATION RESOURCES**

- Have a question, but not sure where to start? The new Faculty of Arts Program Information Centre (PIC) is your information resource for everything in Arts! Drop in at SS110, call us at 403-220-3580 or email us at [artsads@ucalgary.ca](mailto:artsads@ucalgary.ca). You can also visit the Faculty of Arts



## Faculty of Arts

### School of Languages, Linguistics, Literatures and Cultures

website at <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate> which has detailed information on common academic concerns.

- For program planning and advice, contact the Student Success Centre (formerly the Undergraduate programs Office) at (403) 220-5881 or visit them in their new space on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor of the Taylor Family Digital Library.
- For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Enrolment Services at (403) 210-ROCK [7625] or visit them at the MacKimmie Library Block.

Contact for Students Union Representatives for the Faculty of Arts:

[arts1@su.ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts1@su.ucalgary.ca), [arts2@su.ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts2@su.ucalgary.ca), [arts3@su.ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts3@su.ucalgary.ca), [arts4@su.ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts4@su.ucalgary.ca)

#### **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND PRIVACY (FOIP) ACT**

Graded assignments will be retained by the Department for three months and subsequently sent for confidential shredding. Final examinations will be kept for one calendar year and subsequently sent for confidential shredding. Said material is exclusively available to the student and to the department staff requiring to examine it.

Please see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy> for complete information on the disclosure of personal records.

#### **INTERNET AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION DEVICES**

Devices such as laptops, palmtops and smartbooks are allowed provided that they are used exclusively for instructional purposes and do not cause disruption to the instructor and to fellow students. Cellular telephones, blackberries and other mobile communication tools are not permitted and must be switched off.

#### **SAFEWALK**

To request a Safewalk escort anywhere on campus, 24 hours a day and seven days a week, please call 403-220-5333 or use one of the Help Phones.

Web: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/safewalk>

#### **STUDENT UNION INFORMATION**

Representatives and contact details: <http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/home/contact.html>

Student Ombudsman: <http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/services/student-services/student-rights.html>

#### **WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM**

Writing skills should cross all disciplines. Students are expected to do a substantial amount of writing in their courses and, where appropriate, instructors can and should use writing and the grading thereof as a factor in the evaluation of student work. The services provided by the Writing Centre in the Effective Writing Office (<http://www.efwr.ucalgary.ca/>) can be utilized by all undergraduate and graduate students who feel they require further assistance.