ENG 3601-001: Dante

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ENG

ENG 3601: Dante
Fall 1998

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Office Hours: Tu 10:45-12; W 9:15-12; and by appointment
Telephone: 581-6980 (office); 330/678-2628 (home, weekends before 7:30 p.m.)

Texts: Dante, The Divine Comedy
Jacoff, Rachel, ed., The Cambridge Companion to Dante
Virgil, The Aeneid

Texts, Topics, and Assignments

August 25: Reading: Inferno 1-2 (in class); Cambridge Companion, Chapter 1
Discussion: Introduction to the course; Dante's life; Medieval conceptions of the afterlife.

September 1: Reading: Virgil, The Aeneid, Books 1-6, 12
Discussion: Virgil's ideas on matters such as love, death, honor, fate, knowledge, and the afterlife.

8: Reading: Dante, Vita Nuova; Cambridge Companion, Chapter 3
Discussion: Dante's early thinking on matters such as love, death, poetry, and autobiography.

15: Reading: Inferno 3-11; Cambridge Companion, Chapter 7
Discussion: Dante and the classical poets. Virgil (esp. The Aeneid); Ovid (esp. Metamorphoses); the unique fate Dante assigns to the great minds of the past.

22: Reading: Inferno 12-17; Cambridge Companion, Chapter 6
Discussion: Dante and Florence. Life and art in Florence (and Italy generally) in the 12C-14C; Giotto; the effect of Dante's peopling Hell with Florentines and other Italians.

29: Reading: Inferno 18-30; Cambridge Companion, Chapter 5
Discussion: Dante and politics. The pope, the Holy Roman Emperor, the King of France, and their relation to turbulent Florentine and Italian politics; Dante's response to his exile; Dante's Monarchia.

October 6: Reading: Inferno 31-34; Cambridge Companion, Chapter 11
Discussion: Overview of Inferno. Ethical, political, literary, and psychological considerations with respect to Dante's construction of Hell.
Writing: Last day to turn in Short Essay #1 ***

13: Reading: Purgatorio 1-9; Cambridge Companion, Chapter 12
Discussion: Introduction to Purgatorio. The notion of a purgatorial world bridging good and evil (and the history of this notion); the meaning of redemption.
20: **Reading:** *Purgatorio* 10-20; *Cambridge Companion*, Chapter 2  
**Discussion:** Dante and the lyric past. The placement of other poets in Hell, Heaven, and especially Purgatory; how Dante uses other poets as guides and models; Dante's role in the development of lyric (and epic) poetry; Dante's sense of his importance.

27: **Reading:** *Purgatorio* 21-27; *Cambridge Companion*, Chapter 8  
**Discussion:** Beatrice. The nature of a symbol; Dante's conceptions of physical and spiritual love and of human and divine reason. Dante and the Bible, Old and New Testaments; Eden and Apocalyptic; Adam and Jesus, Eve and Mary.

November 3: **Reading:** *Purgatorio* 28-33; *Cambridge Companion*, Chapter 10  
**Discussion:** Dante's poetics. Terca rima, the canto, the canticle. Dante's rhetoric: is The Divine Comedy fact or fiction? How Dante uses rhetoric to create the illusion that he is recounting divine truths and not creating a personalized human fiction.  
**Writing:** Last day to turn in Short Essay #2 ***

10: **Reading:** *Paradiso* 1-9; *Cambridge Companion*, Chapter 13  
**Discussion:** Introduction to Paradiso. Dante's cosmology (scientific and spiritual) and his taxonomy of bliss.

17: **Reading:** *Paradiso* 10-22; *Cambridge Companion*, Chapter 9  
**Discussion:** Dante's theology and spirituality. Augustine, Aquinas, and Boethius; Francis and Bonaventure; divine justice and the limits of human knowledge.

24: Thanksgiving Holiday

December 1: **Reading:** *Paradiso* 23-29; *Cambridge Companion*, Chapter 14  
**Discussion:** Dante's heritage and value. His sense of self worth; his commentators; his literary and spiritual influence; Boccaccio's *The Decameron*, Milton's *Paradise Lost.*

8: **Reading:** *Paradiso* 30-33; *Cambridge Companion*, Chapter 15  
**Discussion:** Summary. Personal responses to the Comedy; Dante in English, American translations in poetry and prose from Longfellow to Singleton to Mandelbaum.  
**Writing:** Last day to turn in Short Essay #3 ***

**Final Examination:** Tuesday, December 15, 7:30-9:30 p.m.
Course Policies, Assignments, and Grading

Grading

Final grades will be determined on a 100-point scale:

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<td>Final Exam</td>
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<td>Participation</td>
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Course Grade:  
A=90-100; B=80-89.99; C=70-79.99; D=60-60.99; F=below 60

Note: To pass the course, you must complete all assignments.

Assignments

Papers: You will write three 1000- to 1200-word essays, each exploring in as stimulating a way as possible some one thing you found particularly interesting in the relevant canticle of The Divine Comedy. Begin each essay by focusing on a passage that is important to illustrating your main idea.

Final Examination: The exam will allow you the opportunity to synthesize your understanding of The Divine Comedy as we reflect on the broad scope of Dante's vision.

Course/University Policies

Typing. All essays must be typed (double-spaced with one-inch margins).

Honor Policy. Education depends on trust. Should you cheat and I find out about it, you can expect to fail the course. The University may take additional action.

Plagiarism. If you use other people's words or ideas without citing your sources and indicating when you have quoted, you risk failing an assignment or even the course depending on how serious I deem the offense. If you are not sure what plagiarism is, or whether a particular use of language is plagiarism, ask me before you turn in an assignment.

Students with Disabilities. "If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible."