

Religion 235.002, 003 Religion and Literature. Lovers, Villains, and Saints: Dante's *Divine Comedy*

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Robinson B 445; 993-2054 (o)

Office Hours: MW 4:30-5:30 pm or by appointment

Class: Section 002: 1:30-2:45 pm SNDBGE 107

Section 003: 3:00-4:00 pm RB 202

Description

Late medieval Italy was filled with great romance, villainy, and heroic virtue, all captured in Dante's *Divine Comedy*. This course takes you inside the world of the famous Florentine poet with a special emphasis on the philosophical and theological ideas that shape the structure of the masterwork. Texts will be read in English translation.

Course Goals

To provide students with an introduction to a great literary classic

To provide students with an introduction to literary criticism

To illuminate the theological and philosophical context of the *Commedia*

Texts

The Portable Dante, trans. Mark Musa. (New York: Penguin Classics, 2004). **Required.**

You must own this book and bring it to class each session.

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Resources at 703.993.2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

Honor Code

George Mason University has an Honor Code that requires all members of this community to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity.

Cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing are all prohibited. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee. See honorcode.gmu.edu for more detailed information.

Enrollment Requirements

Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes.

After the last day to drop a class, withdrawing from this class requires the approval of the dean and is only allowed for nonacademic reasons. Undergraduate students may choose to exercise a selective withdrawal. See the Schedule of Classes for selective withdrawal procedures and fees.

Grading and Assessments

Class Participation and Short Assignments: 20 %. You are expected to attend class for each session and to come prepared to discuss the texts.

Short Assignments. You will have three short assignments that will require you to respond to sections of the text of the *Comedy* which you have read and which have been discussed in class. Your responses may be written, in which case, they should be approximately 750 words each. Some students may choose other mediums. I have had students compose original music, paintings, films, or theatrical presentations, for example. All these short assignments are part of your class participation grade. The writing assignments will be graded on the following scale: zero or check. However, doing them carefully is crucial for exam preparation and for receiving a good class participation grade.

Mid-Term Exam: 40%. A written in-class examination. Date TBA.

Final Exam. 40%. A written, take-home examination. Must be completed by Dec. 14 at 4:00 pm. Must be submitted in hard copy to the Religious Studies Office, RB 465.

Classroom Etiquette

This is a discussion-based course that will require your complete participation in class. Any use of computers, cell phones, pda's, etc. to send or receive any form of electronic communication during class is strictly prohibited as is any web surfing, Facebook viewing, tweeting, etc. One violation of these prohibitions will result in a loss of credit for class participation. **All cell phones must be off or in airplane mode during class. None can be visible to you during class.**

Important Dates

First Class: August 29

Labor Day no class: September 5

Last Day to Drop: September 6

Cristoforo Columbo Day no class: October 10. Class meets October 11

Thanksgiving Holiday no class: November 25

Last Class: December 7

Final Due: December 15

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Class Meetings and Reading Assignments

All readings are from *The Portable Dante*.

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Dante's World. Canti 1-3
- 2.1 Inferno, Canti 4-7
- 2.2 Inferno, Canti 8-11.
- 3.1 Inferno, Canti 12-15
- 3.2 Inferno, Canti 16-20
- 4.1 Inferno, Canti 21-24

- 4.2 Inferno, Canti 25-30
- 5.1 Inferno, Canti 31-33. Writing Assignment 1 due.
- 6.1 Mid-term Exam take home
- 7.1 Purgatorio, Canti 1-5
- 7.2 Purgatorio, Canti 6-10
- 8.1 Purgatorio, Canti 11-15
- 9.1 Purgatorio, Canti 16-19.
- 9.2 Purgatorio, Canti 20-25
- 10.1 Purgatorio, Canti 26-30
- 10.2 Purgatorio, Canti 31-33. Writing Assignment 2 due.
- 11. 1 Paradiso, Canti 1-4
- 11.2 Paradiso, Canti 5-10
- 12.1 Paradiso, Canti 11-13.
- 12.2 Paradiso, Canti 14-19
- 13.1 Paradiso, Canti 20-25
- 13.2 Paradiso, Canti 26-30.
- 14.1 Paradiso, Canti 31-33. Writing Assignment 3 due.
- 14.2 Summary

Disclaimer

The professor reserves the right to change any part of this syllabus at any time by oral or written notice at his sole discretion.