



**Italian Literature I:
Dante and Boccaccio
LIT 101**

Instructor: Claudia Marulo

Office Hours: by appointment

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Course Description

Dante and Boccaccio are the fathers of Italian language and literature, the former for what concerns poetry, the latter for prose. The well-known Divine Comedy of Dante is a monumental, fascinating and in some ways difficult text that will surprise the students with its fanciful characters and paths first through Hell, and then on to Purgatory and Heaven. With the expert guide of the teacher, students will be led to discover the contrappasso process by which sinners are punished, and also the beauty and bright light of Heaven. Such a journey relates at the same time to broader human nature, medieval Christian thought and Dante's personal invention.

Students will focus on thematic aspects of the poem by reading it in English, and they will appreciate the formal innovation of Dante's writing by reading it in Italian too.

The discussion will always begin with the text, and students will become familiar with the Comedy exploring the cantos and their content; a strict textual analysis will also permit the students to focus on poetic writing and possibly on interesting matters of translation.

Boccaccio, on the other hand, wrote the masterpiece of early Italian prose, the Decameron: a collection of 100 short tales called "novelle" divided into 10 days. Each day presents a different theme: sad love, happy love, funny tricks, and so on. An initial frame story tells of seven young women and three young men who, wishing to escape from the plague in 1348, seek refuge in the countryside and tell stories to each other, in order to spend their time in a pleasant and useful way.

All the stories are a point of departure to discover the everyday life of the Middle Ages, with the values of the emerging merchant class and typical manners of the era.

These tales will be an exciting way to reflect upon human behaviour, differences between ancient and contemporary life, justice, intelligence, romantic relationships and other topics giving a general idea of what is most important in life.



Prerequisites

No prerequisites.

Course Hours

The course meets twice a week for 3 hours/ week. Total contact hours: 45.

Suggested Credits: 3

Student Learning Expectations

Knowledge of the main thematic and formal aspects of the Comedy by Dante and the Decameron by Boccaccio. Development of literary analysis and interpretation skills.

Course Outline

Week by Week Description:

- Week I* Course presentation.
Introduction to Dante and his work.
Introduction to Hell. Dante begins his journey and meets Virgilio: Canto I. Reading and discussion of a selection from the text.
- Week II* Dante's presentation of real/fictional characters. Dante meets lustful, Paolo e Francesca: Canto V.
The "contrapasso" law and Dante's surprising inventions; Dante meets Pier delle Vigne and suicides: Canto XIII. Reading and discussion of a selection from the text.
- Week III* Knowledge and treachery: Dante meets Ulysses (Canto XXVI) and Ugolino (Canto XXXIII).
The monsters in the Comedy and Lucifer. Reading and discussion of a selection from the text.
- Week IV* Introduction to Purgatory.
Virgil prepares Dante to begin his climb of the Paradise Mountain.
Reading and discussion of a selection from the text.
- Week V* Introduction to Heaven. The ineffable vision of beatitude and God: Canto I and Canto XXXIII.
Against corruption of the Church: Canto XI and Canto XII.
Reading and discussion of a selection from the text.

<i>Week VI</i>	Midterm test on Dante.
<i>Week VII</i>	Introduction to Boccaccio and his work. Introduction to the Decameron. Introduction to the first and the second day; reading and discussion of a novel from those days (to be chosen with the students between the ones proposed by the teacher).
<i>Week VIII</i>	Introduction to the third, the fourth and the fifth day; reading and discussion of a novel from those days (to be chosen with the students between the ones proposed by the teacher).
<i>Week IX</i>	Introduction to the sixth, the seventh and the eighth day; reading and discussion of a novel from those days (to be chosen with the students between the ones proposed by the teacher).
<i>Week X</i>	Introduction to the ninth and the tenth day; reading and discussion of a novel from those days (to be chosen with the students between the ones proposed by the teacher).
<i>Week XI</i>	Projection of the movie by Pier Paolo Pasolini "Il Decameron". Conclusions and review.
<i>Week XII</i>	Exam Week Final test on Boccaccio.

Assignments:

Students will be required to write a weekly summary/analysis of what has been studied in the class.

Textbook and required materials:

English:

Alighieri, Dante, *La Divina commedia*, translated by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, with an introduction and notes by Peter Bondanella; illustrations by Gustave Doré, Barnes & Noble, New York, 2003-2006

Alighieri, Dante, *The comedy*, translated by D. L. Sayers and B. Reynolds, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1973-1974



Alighieri, Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, translated, with a commentary, by Charles S. Singleton, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1980-1982

Alighieri, Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, translated, with a commentary, by John D. Sinclair, Oxford University Press, New York, 1961

Italian:

Alighieri, Dante, *La Commedia*, a cura di Bianca Garavelli con la supervisione di Maria Corti, Bompiani, Milano, 1993

Alighieri, Dante, *La Commedia*, con il commento di Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi, Mondadori, Milano, 1991-1997

Alighieri, Dante, *La Commedia*, Olschki, Firenze, 2011

Alighieri, Dante, *La Divina Commedia*, a cura di Natalino Sapegno, La Nuova Italia, Firenze, 1985

Alighieri, Dante, *La Divina Commedia*, con letture e commento di Vittorio Sermoni, Bruno Mondadori, Milano, 1996

Alighieri, Dante, *La Divina Commedia*, con pagine critiche a cura di Umberto Bosco e Giovanni Reggio, Le Monnier, Firenze, 2002

Alighieri, Dante, *La Divina Commedia: Inferno*, revisione del testo e commento di Giorgio Inglese, Carocci, Roma, 2007

Recommended optional materials/references:

La Divina Commedia di Dante Alighieri: lettura interpretata da Claudio Carini, Recitar leggendo audiolibri, Perugia, 2005 (Audioregistrazione)

La Divina commedia illustrata da Sandro Botticelli, Art Market, Monterotondo (Rm), 1982

Tutto Dante di Roberto Benigni, regia televisiva di Stefano Vicario, Cecchi Gori home video, Campi Bisenzio, 2008 (Videoregistrazione)

Grading System

Attendance	20 %
Weekly homework	30 %
Midterm test	25 %
Final test	25 %

Midterm and Final test

Each student can choose together with the teacher one testing method out of the three following:

- 1) a written paper of 1000 words;
- 2) an oral presentation of 20 minutes (subject to be previously agreed with the teacher);
- 3) oral exam with the teacher consisting of 10 questions on several cantos or subjects discussed during class. Those subjects will be chosen by the teacher and NOT previously agreed with the student.

Mid term and final test do not need to have the same testing method.

Grading scale

98-100	A+	88-89,99	B+	78-79,99	C+	68-69,99	D+
93-97,99	A	83-87,99	B	73-77,99	C	63-67,99	D
90-92,99	A-	80-82,99	B-	70-72,99	C-	60-62,99	D-
<59,99	F						

Course Policy

Attendance

Students are expected to attend all lectures and actively participate in classroom discussions. Only one absence per course is allowed during the 15 weeks of the program. All other absences are considered unexcused. Each unexcused absence will incur an academic penalty of 10% off the overall grade of the course missed. A student having more than 3 unexcused absences will earn an "F" in their course work and if they accumulate such absences in more than one course, will be dismissed from the program.



Retests/makeup tests

N/A

Excursions

N/A