This course celebrates the works, the ideas, and the culture of Dante Alighieri, Italy’s most celebrated writer, on the 700th anniversary of his death (1321). In honor of the structure of Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, we offer three major themes to explore from three different perspectives, giving you a multi-disciplinary appreciation of Dante’s world, works, and legacy.

Students will explore Dante’s beloved Florence when the city faced unprecedented urban growth, political unrest, and a cultural and artistic awakening, as well as the other cities in which he found shelter during his painful exile. We will explore his major writings in relationship to his experience of his world. We will read some of his most famous poems, including cantos from the *Divine Comedy*, and compare them to the production of his intellectual network, thus re-examining Dante’s artistic innovations and political intuitions. Finally, this course will consider the reasons behind Dante’s instantaneous fame by exploring the books and artworks that, even as a fictional figure, he inspired over the centuries. No knowledge of Italian required. Instructors will provide all poems and documents in English translation.
There are many fine English translations of the Divine Comedy. We are not requiring a particular translation, or that students read the entire work. Some of these assignments are already here on the syllabus; others will be announced before the lectures. Students may want to purchase an English translation on their own. Nick Jenkins has been teaching a literature course on the Divine Comedy for Continuing Studies, using the Mark Musa translation, so many class members may already have been reading that. Robert Harrison suggests that readers interested in consulting a bilingual printed edition of the Divine Comedy may want to get the Durling-Martinez translation (Oxford University Press), which is extremely accurate although not very poetic, with a generous bilingual page layout, and the most informative notes on the text.

Another option, however, is available online. Columbia University has made a translation of Dante available on their Digital Dante website where you can find both the Italian text and next to it either the translation by Allen Mandelbaum or, when you click on it, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/

There is also a terrific website by the Dartmouth Dante Project where you can find and dip into the vast commentaries on Dante, beginning in 1321: https://dante.dartmouth.edu

Several lecturers have suggested that you might want to read specific cantos before class. They are included here, along with a few other suggested readings.

1. DANTE'S WORLD

3/30  Emanuele Lugli (Art History, Stanford) – Dante’s Life in the Medieval Cities
       Suggested Reading: Paradiso, Canto 16
       Optional reading: Interested class members may want to read a new biography by Alessandro Barbero, Dante, now available in an English translation, but only digitally on a Kindle. It is scheduled to be available in hardback by the end of the course. Be aware that if you ordered the hardback from Amazon now, it would be in Italian.

4/6  Maureen Miller (History, UC Berkeley) – Dante and the Politics of the Inferno
       https://warburg.sas.ac.uk/pdf/hnh1600b2480339.pdf

4/13  Rowan Dorin (History, Stanford) – Dante’s Exile
       Suggested Reading: Condemnation of Dante Alighieri (1302), Dante, Letter, 1315 (no. 12), Excerpt from the Paradiso, Canto 17.
2. DANTE’S WORKS

4/20 Robert Harrison (French and Italian, Stanford) – Dante Gets Underway
   Suggested Reading: *Inferno*, Cantos 1-6

4/27 Nicholas Jenkins (English, Stanford) – Poetic Feet: Why Dante Walks
   Suggested Reading: *Inferno*, Cantos 14-19

5/4 Paula Findlen (History, Stanford) – Philosophers between Heaven and Hell: How Dante Lived Dangerously
   Suggested Reading: *Purgatorio*, Canto 25; and *Paradiso*, Canto 4 and 10
   If you wish to read more, read the *Convivio*, Book 1, Chapter 1, also on the Digital Dante site at Columbia

3. DANTE’S LEGACY

5/11 Christy Junkerman (Art History, San Jose State) – Picturing Hell: Dante and the Renaissance Painters
   Suggested Reading: *Purgatorio*, Canto X

5/18 Sarah Prodan (French and Italian, Stanford) – Dante’s Afterlife in Text and Image
   Suggested Reading: *Inferno* 1, 5, and 13, and *Purgatorio* 30-31

5/25 Fabio Barry (Art History, Stanford) – Dante’s Cosmos and Its Interpreters
   Suggested Reading: tbd

Class sessions will be recorded.

Attendance and Grading

Grade Options:

No Grade Requested – No work is required; no credit will be earned; no proof of attendance can be provided.

Credit/No Credit – Students must attend at least 7 out of 9 class sessions live. Sessions will be recorded, but live attendance is required for students enrolled for credit.

Please contact the Stanford Continuing Studies office with any questions
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