Dante's *Divine Comedy* has left audiences fascinated and shuddering for over 700 years. Dante penned his *Commedia* knowing that everything is interpreted through the eyes of the knower and that we understand everything based on our own personal experiences. With this in mind he created a propaedeutic program for the reader who seeks to transform or educate his/her desire at different levels of his/her own individual experience of his/her human condition by the use of the poetical and literary tropes. His *Inferno* serves as a preparatory stage of the earthly human condition of unchecked desire followed by the education of desire in *Purgatorio*, and finally in *Paradiso* reaching the post-liminal experience of the transformation of the self being in harmony with others and the whole universe.

In this class we will read, analyze, and memorize some of Dante’s *terza rima* in Italian so that we can better understand the lost in translation alliterative vibes of the *Commedia*. Students will be expected to do close readings of specific cantos, not only to produce a short paper but also to help guide class discussion through the literary terrain of the *Inferno, Purgatorio, and Paradiso*. In so doing, students will simulate the role of Virgil, Dante’s guide on his journey, and will become more aware of the role(s) of the poet and the narrator/guide in narrative art. Evaluation of students’ writing will be based on both the quality of literary analysis and the clarity and coherence of expression. Students will also conduct research projects on the different topics central to Dante’s *Commedia*, such as: the mystical and transcendental relationship between *Paradiso* and *The Book of the Zohar*; the influence of Boethius Wheel of Fortune on Dante’s heavenly Rose; the law of the *contrapasso* used by Dante for punishing sinners; the influence of the Jewish Sefirot on Dante’s acrostic; and a visual reconstruction of Dante’s cosmology. Cinematic recreations, documentaries, music and other visual and auditory aids will be used. Field trips to museums will be taken, as appropriate.
Course Goals and Objectives

- Students will learn to analyze literary texts that have influenced *The Commedia* and across a variety of periods or genres.
- Students will demonstrate an awareness of how literary texts inform and are informed by socio-political, economic, cultural, historical, and biographical factors.
- Students will learn to recognize important literary trends, noting key distinctions and continuities among literary texts.
- Students will compose formal essays and research paper which demonstrates their knowledge and understanding of the literature covered in the course.
- Another goal of this class will be to investigate the moral issues connected to *The Commedia*. Students will learn to locate human actions in a historical and philosophical context, students will, moreover, become familiar with the theoretical infrastructure originating cultural production and human experience. This will allow them to view literature in the context of medieval culture(s) and values, and understand the complex interactions of critical interpretation and the creative process.
- Another objective of this course is to introduce students to the *Commedia*, and to the political, religious, and cultural context in which it was written.
- At the end of the course students will be able to account for the development of ideas during Dante’s medieval time and understand the intricate dynamics of a theo-centric world, clashing against the new emerging humanist movement.

Sept. 4: **INTRODUCTION**

*The Middle Ages, Dante's Life and Works “Manon Lascaut”*

Sept. 11: **FLORENCE AND ITALY IN DANTE'S TIME:**

*Dante and Classical Antiquity Inferno 1-3, 5, “Picnic”11*

*Posted on NYU Classes: Concepts of Afterlife: *Odyssey* 11*

Sept. 18: **THE DIVINE COMEDY Fact or Fiction?**

*Hell's Great Sinners (Inferno 8, 10, 15)*

*Posted on NYU Classes: *Aeneid* 3 "Dido’s Lament”*

Sept. 25: **THEOCENTRICITY: INFINITY VS. ETERNITY**

*Inferno 17, 20, 21, 26*

*Posted on NYU Classes: *Confessions*: 20-23, 154, 214-219, 283*

Oct. 2: **POLITICS IN HELL**

*Inferno 6, 28-31 EXAM*

*The Consolation of Philosophy* posted on NYU Classes

Oct. 9: **PITTURA INFAMANTE**: Art and Architecture in Dante's time

*Consolation of Philosophy* posted on blackboard

*Inferno 32-34*

*Oct. 16: NO CLASS: VISIT TO THE CLOISTERS ON SATURDAY Oct. 26th.*

Oct. 23: **MUSIC AND LYRICS IN DANTE'S FLORENCE.**

*AntePurgatory *Purgatorio* 1-2, 6,8,9*

*Oct. 26: VISIT TO THE CLOISTER AND St. JOHN THE DIVINE*

*Reading of the Celestial Rose under St. John’s Stained Glass Rosette *The book of the Zohar* and the Sefirot*

*Paradiso 28-33)*

*Posted on NYU Classes: *The Book of Zohar* (excerpts)*
Oct. 30: **THE EDUCATION OF DESIRE**  
The Question of Love (*Purgatorio* 16-19)  
Politics: Marco Lombardo's Speech and the Monarchia  
Statius (*Purgatorio* 21-23)  

Nov. 6: **THE EARTHLY PARADISE**  
(*Purgatorio* 26-33)  

Nov. 13: **PARADISE AND PARADOX** (*Paradiso* 1-3,7)  
The Heaven of Wisdom (*Paradiso* 9-12)  

*Nov. 20: **READING IMPROVIZATION OF THE COMMEDIA**  
Place to be announced in class  

Nov. 27: **DANTE'S WOMEN**  
The Heaven of Militant Martyrs (*Paradiso* 15-17)  
THE HEAVEN OF WISDOM (*Paradiso* 19 21-23)  

Dec. 4: **TRIAL**  
Dec. 11: **NO CLASS: LEGISLATIVE DAY** (Canto is due)  

**REQUIRED TEXT BOOKS:** Available for purchase at the NYU Book Ce.  
*Inferno, Purgatorio, Paradiso*, Dante; 3 vol. trans. by Mandelbaum  
(Bantam).  

**RECOMMENDED BOOKS:**  
*Aeneid*, Virgil; trans. by Fitzgerald  
Dante, *Vita Nova*  
*Dante*, Thomas G. Bergin (The Orion Press, 1965)  
*Dante Dictionary*, Paget Toynbee (Oxford University Press, 1968)  
*Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages*, Umberto Eco (Yale Un. Press, 1986).  
*The Confessions*, Augustine, Rex Warner trans. (Mentor)  

***Reading is due each week before your section meets.***  

**CINEMATIC RECREATIONS:**  
*Brother Sun and Sister Moon* (Franco Zeffirelli)  
*Picnic* scenes (Joshua Logan)  
*Blade Runner*  

**AUDITORY RECREATIONS:**  
Puccini, *Manon Lascaut*  
Purcell, *Dido’s Lament*  
J.S. Bach, *Cantatas*  
Pergolesi, *Stabat Mater*  
Dvorjak, *Stabat Mater*
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The grade in the course will be based on eight essays, quizzes, an examination, a creative writing of a canto, a research paper, an individual presentation of a canto from the *Commedia*, a trial, a public reading of *Inferno*, museum trip/essay, and class attendance/participation.

There will be a grade-penalty for absences (two absences or more will result in an automatic failure of the class), lateness and for handing in papers late. ONLY HARD COPIES OF ESSAYS, TESTS, AND PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED. NO I-PADS, I-PHONES, I-PODS, BLACK-BERRIES, COMPUTERS (ALL-SORTS), CELL-PHONES AND OTHER (BLUE TOOTH, EAR-PHONES, etc.) WILL BE ALLOWED TO BE USED IN CLASS.

1. ESSAYS, QUIZZES, AND CHARTS: essay questions based on the assigned reading will be posted on blackboard. You are to select one essay question and write a one page response (single or double spaced). In these essays students will address the reading due for that night’s class week, and discuss the thesis of the reading and/or its main points, and its relevance to the class. All papers will be due in class the night the readings are discussed. No late essays or emailed essays will be accepted! Since part of the reason for the papers is to help students prepare for class discussion, students must be in class for their papers to be accepted. Although guideline questions will be posted on blackboard, some questions to keep in mind before writing the essays:

What is the thesis, or what are the main points of this reading? If it is a secondary source, what types of evidence does its author use to support the argument or points he/she is making? If it is a primary source, when was it written, and why? How does this reading illuminate the class topic for the week? So, for example, what would we learn about the nature of the Italian medieval Society from the allegorical interpretation of the three beasts in the first canto of *Inferno*. Papers should be thoughtful and carefully proofread for spelling, grammar and style errors.

Since discussion will form an important part of this seminar, class participation will also be counted in assessing the final grade. Regular and active participation in class discussions can make a difference in the grade of as much half of a grade. Students are urged, therefore, to attend class regularly and to be prepared to discuss the readings. Six essays in addition to pop-up quizzes and charts of each cantica of the *Commedia* [30pts]

2. CANTO PRESENTATION: Students will present and give a literary analysis/ interpretation to the class of an assigned canto from the *Divine Comedy*. [10pts]
3. **READING OF *THE COMMEDIA*** (10pts) time and place to be announced in class.

4. **CLOISTERS & ST. JOHN THE DIVINE ATTENDANCE AND ESSAY:** [10 pts]
   Based on the experience from the Cloisters and St. John the Divine on Oct. 27th, you will write an essay comparing the Jewish Sefirot with Dante’s Heavenly Rosette and the Stained-glass Window at St. John the Divine.

5. **CANTO:** Students will write a creative three to five page dantesque canto (to be discussed in class), due on December 11. [10 pts.]

6. **PAPER/TRIAL:** You will choose or be assigned a character from the *Commedia* and asked to investigate and explain why he/she was selected by Dante to be immortalized in the dantesque cosmos. The following are possible characters to be assigned: Frederick II, Chiara, Paolo da Verruchio, Francesca da Rimini, Bernard of Clairvaux, P. Vergilius Maro (Vergil), Beatrice Portinari, Boniface VIII, Ulysses, Count Ugolino, Thomas d'Aquinas, Eve, Guido Cavalcanti, Rachel, Cangrande della Scala, Christ, Persephone, Farinata degli Uberti, Francesco Bernardone (St. Francis), Boethius, Costanza, Cacciaguida, Pier delle Vigne, Augustine, Pia dei Tolomei, Bonaventure, Dante, Matilda, Gianni Schicchi, Publius Papinius (Statius), B. V. Mary, Aeneas, Meister Eckhart, Aristotle, Marcia, Henry VII (of Luxemburg), Frederick Barbarossa, Urban IV, Manfred, Clio, Giotto di Bondone, Angelica, Lucifer, Liber Arbitrio, Mechtild of Magdeburg, Marco Lombardo, Saint Lucy, Minos, and Saint Nicholas.
   Paper is due on **December 4th** on the day of the TRIAL where you will represent your character and defended against the specific charges of the *contrapasso*. Papers should be typed, double-spaced, between five and eight pages long. Footnotes or endnotes may be in any accepted style (MLA, Chicago Manual, Turabian, APA) provided it is used consistently and correctly. (10 points for the paper and 10 points for the TRIAL)

**Content and Structure in Research Papers (General Guidelines)**

**Citations:**

- As a general rule, you should have at least one citation (footnote or endnote, Chicago Manual of Style) per paragraph except for interpretive paragraphs in the introduction and conclusion. You should also have about as many sources as you have pages of the paper.
- You should try to have two or more sources per footnote. In other words, you should not have a series of notes drawn from one source only, followed by another series drawn from another source. Rather, you should have multiple sources to support most sections of your argument. After all, the one book upon which you are basing six pages of the paper could be dead wrong!
- You should always give a full citation of a source the first time it is cited. After that you can use an abbreviated citation (author, short title, page).
- You also must include a bibliography, also following Turabian or the Chicago Manual.
- Do not confine citations only to quotations; cite paragraphs where you synthesize information from several sources also.
Annotate your bibliography, and especially the more significant sources (this means that under the sources you write one to three sentences describing the source and its role in your research.)

As a rule, four or five quotations in a twenty page paper is plenty, especially if the quotations are from secondary sources.

Content and Structure:

Your paper should be structured as an argument answering a question. You should begin, therefore, with an introduction in which you state the question or problem you address, lay out your argument, its significance or how it fits into the context of the topic you are studying, and explain how you intend to go about answering the question using your sources. ("This paper is a study of women’s hair styles in early modern Europe. Its purpose it to understand why women’s hairstyles changed, and how those changes reflected the changing work status of early modern women. This question is important, because it gives us an understanding of how much manual labor women from various classes performed. My sources are drawn primarily from . . . ). This section of the paper is about 1-3 paragraphs for a paper under eight pages, about 3-5 paragraphs for a paper of eight to twelve pages, and about three to five pages for a paper longer than twelve pages.

The body of the paper is where you lay out the evidence and construct the argument you are using to answer the question. You should not, therefore, be merely reciting "facts" you have found in your sources. Rather you should construct an argument (because - therefore). Use subheadings that reflect the sections (premises) of your argument that you are supporting in this section of the paper to be sure that you have covered all the material necessary and offered all the evidence possible to support your conclusions.

Your paper should conclude with a conclusion in which you recap your question and argument, and show how your evidence supports the answers you have offered the original question you asked. You may want to use subtitles or asterisks to separate the sections of your paper and thus ensure that you have all the needed components of your argument. Outlines can also help to ensure that your paper is well structured and coherent.

Another good clue to whether or not your have actually built an argument is to see whether you use words like "because" and "therefore" in the paper, and whether or not you can summarize your basic argument in a paragraph or so. If you haven’t and you can’t, your paper probably rambles and does not include an argument or support it effectively.

Organization:

Every paragraph must have a topic sentence. Every sentence in the paragraph must relate directly to that topic sentence. Avoid rambling paragraphs with multiple topics, or no topic at all.

Paragraphs one or two sentences long are probably too short and should be integrated with another paragraph, or lengthened. Paragraphs longer than one side of the page probably need to be broken into two or more paragraphs.

Paragraphs should relate to the topic of the paper or of the subsection they are in as sentences relate to the topic sentence of the paragraph. In other words, you should build your paper with a distinct structure that includes an introduction, a body of evidence divided with subheadings, and a distinct conclusion. Each of your paragraphs should build on the previous paragraphs to construct your argument. Paragraphs should not be placed randomly! Your paper should not read as if you shuffled the paragraphs like a deck of cards or tossed the pages down the stairs.

To avoid problems 1-3, use conjunctive adverbs such as because, therefore, thus, since, although, and however to organize your ideas and evidence, and to transition between ideas. These words show cause and effect and thus are essential to building an argument. Use an outline to organize your ideas into coherent paragraphs and sections of the paper.

7. CLASS ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION is necessary since we will be covering a lot of material. Your grade will be penalized for absences and
lateness. Please clear with me absences for religious holidays and other important events. (10pts.)

**OFFICE HOURS:** I will see students before class on Wednesdays 2:30 - 3:30 in my office room 608 1 Washington Place. If a problem arises do not hesitate to email me at ar31@nyu.edu. Syllabus, Exams, readings, announcements, weekly communications will be posted on NYU CLASSES.

**GALLATIN POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGIARISM:**
As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website [www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html] for a full description of the academic integrity policy.