

CLC 3333F: Dante's *Inferno*

Professor James Miller

Fall 2009



Course

“Abandon hope all ye who enter here”: such is the grim warning inscribed over the entrance to Dante’s Hell. Don’t be alarmed: it is not a warning to all who enter this introductory course. In fact, my hope is that all students will abandon whatever fear they may have of medieval allegorical poetry in order to cross the threshold of Dante’s great poem and discover what’s on the Other Side. Whirling adulterers, smouldering heretics, snake-charming thieves, retired Roman poets, and flaming sodomitical professors are but a few of the intriguing souls you’ll meet Down Under.

Though students are not required to have a reading knowledge of the poet’s medieval Tuscan dialect of Italian, I shall be teaching the *Inferno* with the Italian text as well as a modern English prose translation before their eyes. The entire first cantica of the *Divine Comedy* (34 cantos) will be covered along with such background topics as medieval scholastic theology, cosmology, poetics, ecclesiastical history, and imperial politics. I shall be particularly interested in the representations of transgressive eroticism and the fallen body in the Dantean underworld.

CLC 3333F is part one of a continuous cycle of half courses on Dante and the *Divine Comedy*. Part two (to be offered the following term) will focus on *Purgatorio*, and part three (two terms hence) on the *Paradiso*. Appended to the cycle on the *Divine Comedy* is *Dante Philosophus*, a study of Dante’s early works and philosophical treatises. Each half-course may be taken separately or in any combination with the others. Students wishing to take the whole cycle may enter it at any point in the sequence.

Description

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Schedule of Readings

September

10: Introductions; canto 1 – The Dark Wood

17: cantos 2, 3 – The Flashback, The Gate of Hell, The Acheron
Aeneid 1-6 (especially book 6)

24: cantos 4, 5 – The Wood of Limbo, The Whirlwind
Aeneid 1-6 (especially book 6)

October

1: cantos 6, 7, 8 – The Rain, The Clashing Rocks, The Marsh
Aeneid 1-6 (especially book 6)

8: cantos 9, 10, 11 – The City of Dis, The Coffins, The Map

15: cantos 12, 13, 14 – The River of Blood, The Thorn Trees, The Desert

22: cantos 15, 16 – The Desert (cont'd), The Cataract

29: canto 17 – The Winged Monster, The Precipice
MIDTERM

November

5: cantos 18, 19, 20 – Malebolge, rings 1-4: Panders, Flatterers, Simonists, Diviners

12: cantos 21, 22, 23 – Malebolge, rings 5-6: Barrators, Hypocrites

19: cantos 24, 25, 26, 27 – Malebolge, rings 7-8: Thieves, Evil Counselors

26: cantos 28, 29, 30 – Malebolge, rings 9-10: Sowers of Discord, Falsifiers
OFFICIAL DUE DATE FOR ESSAY (grade plus written comments)

December

3: cantos 31, 32, 33, 34 – The Frozen Lake: Traitors, Satan
EXTENSION DEADLINE FOR ESSAY (grade only)

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Course Information

Required Texts

Dante, *Inferno* (text, translation, commentary), ed and trans Hollander
Virgil, *Aeneid* (Penguin classics translation)

Grade Breakdown

Canto Presentation.....10%
Essay.....20%
Midterm.....20%
Final Examination.....50%

Policy on Extensions

If you hand your essay in on the Official Due Date (November 26), you'll receive a grade **with** my written comments. If you hand your essay in by the Extension Deadline (December 3: the last class) you will receive a grade **without** my written comments. No marks will be taken off for papers submitted by the Extension Deadline.

Following the regulations of the Faculty of Arts, I cannot accept essays after the last class without the permission of the Dean's office. If you wish to submit an essay to me after the last class, you must **first** plead your case at the Dean's office.

The Dante Cycle

Western's Faculty of Arts offers undergraduates the rare experience of studying Dante's complete works in translation through an intensive cycle of four consecutive half-courses linking CLC with Philosophy. Completed in 1320, Dante's three-part masterwork *The Divine Comedy* has fascinated, challenged, and inspired readers for centuries – never more so than today. Check out *Inferno* (CLC 3333 F) for hot tips on where “market forces” are leading us. Tune into *Purgatorio* (CLC 3334 G) for insider advice on diet, exercise, and sex in a popular “talk-show” format. Then click onto *Paradiso* (CLC 3335 F) for divine links to the “World Wide Web.” Complete the Circle of Life with *Dante Philosophus* (CLC 4495G / Phil 4026G) on the poet's intellectual background and philosophical writings.

Professor James Miller

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Course Outcomes

By the end of term, students enrolled in the course can expect:

- (1) to have gained a detailed knowledge of the contents of the first thirty-four cantos of Dante's *Divine Comedy*;
- (2) to have applied Dante's fourfold method of reading allegory to a wide range of passages in the *Inferno*;
- (3) to have explored the major literary and theological sources of the *Inferno*, especially Virgil's *Aeneid* and St. John's Apocalypse;
- (4) to have examined the impact of the *Inferno* on post-medieval culture (e.g English poetry, Italian cinema, the intertwining traditions of Dante translation and illustration);
- (5) to have assessed the degree of Dante's transgressive independence from Catholic orthodoxy in his treatment of eroticism, embodiment, and ecclesiology.

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Canto Presentations: Sign-Up Schedule

September

- 10: canto 1: no canto presentation
- 17: cantos 2-3: no canto presentations
- 24: canto 4-5: no canto presentations

October

- 1: canto 6: The Rain.....
- canto 7: The Clashing Rocks.....
- canto 8: The Marsh.....
- 8: canto 9: The City of Dis.....
- canto 10: The Coffins.....
- canto 11: The "Map".....
- 15: canto 12: The River of Blood.....
- canto 13: The Thorn Trees.....
- canto 14: The Desert.....
- 22: canto 15-16: The Desert, The Cataract.....James
- 29: canto 17: no presentation

November

- 5: canto 18: Malebolge: Panders, Seducers, Flatterers.....
- canto 19: Malebolge: Simonists.....
- canto 20: Malebolge: Diviners.....

- 12: canto 21: Malebolge: Barrators.....
- canto 22: Malebolge: Barrators (cont'd).....
- canto 23: Malebolge: Hypocrites.....

- 19: canto 24: Malebolge: Thieves.....
- canto 25: Malebolge: Thieves (cont'd).....
- canto 26: Malebolge: Evil Counselors.....
- canto 27: Malebolge: Evil Counselors.....

- 26: canto 28: Malebolge: Sowers of Discord.....
- canto 29: Malebolge: Sowers (cont'd); Falsifiers.....
- canto 30: Malebolge: Falsifiers (cont'd).....

December

- 3: canto 31: Ninth Circle: Giants.....
- canto 32: Ninth Circle: Traitors.....
- canto 33: Ninth Circle: Traitors (cont'd).....
- canto 34: Satan.....

Prerequisite: CLC 1020, or permission of the Department

Antirequisite: None

Please Note: You are responsible for ensuring that you have successfully completed all course prerequisites (or have special permission from your Dean to waive the prerequisite) and that you have not taken an antirequisite course. If you are not eligible for the course, you may be removed from it at any time, and it will be deleted from your record. In addition, you will receive no adjustment to your fees. These decisions cannot be appealed.

Plagiarism: Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage of text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offense Policy in the Western Academic Calendar). The University of Western Ontario uses plagiarism checking software. Students may be required to submit their written work in electronic form for plagiarism checking.

Absenteeism

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department.

UWO's Policy on Accommodation for Medical

Illness (<https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>)

Downloadable Student Medical Certificate (SMC): <https://studentservices.uwo.ca> under the Medical Documentation heading