

CLC 3334G: Dante's *Purgatorio*

Professor James Miller

Spring 2010



Course Description

“I will sing of that second kingdom where the human spirit is purged and becomes fit to ascend to heaven,” Dante announces at the opening of the *Purgatorio*, the second cantica of *The Divine Comedy*. Like a middle child, the middle poem must address the successes and shortcomings of its forerunner, the *Inferno*, while anticipating the glorious fulfillment of Dante’s poetic ambitions in the *Paradiso*. Dante himself realized how challenging it would be to surpass in imaginative power and moral interest his extraordinary journey through Hell. Poetry itself, he remarked, would have to “rise from the dead” in order to scale the heights of the Holy Mountain. In this course we will be concerned with Dante’s resurrection of poetry – specifically the erotic myths in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* – for the purposes of distinguishing mere “shape-shifting” or alterations in form from the deeper social-sexual-spiritual changes associated with Christian conversion. On Mount Purgatory Dante encounters sinners who suffer the pains of Hell without the despair of eternal damnation. That certainly makes them less depressing company than their infernal counterparts: despite their suffering, the souls of the second kingdom are literally “getting over” their earthly vices and troubles. Mount Purgatory is thus the archetypal site of what we would recognize today as

“therapy” in both its physical and psychological senses.

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Schedule of Readings

January

- 7 – Welcome to the Holy Mountain: canto 1 (Cato)
- 14 – cantos 2, 3 (The Angel Boat, Casella; the Excommunicated, Manfred)
- 21 – cantos 4, 5, 6 (The Late Repentant, Belacqua, Buonconte)
- 28 – cantos 7, 8, 9 (The Vale of Princes, Sordello; the Gate of Purgatory)

February

- 4 – cantos 10, 11, 12 (The Proud, Oderisi, The Carved Pavement)
- 11 – cantos 13, 14, 15 (The Envious, Sapia, Guido del Duca)
- 18 – No class: Conference Week
- 25 – MIDTERM; canto 16 (The Wrathful, Marco Lombardo, Discourses on Love)

March

- 4 – cantos 17, 18, 19 (Discourses on Love, Dream of the Siren)
- 11 – cantos 20, 21, 22 (the Avaricious, Hugh Capet, The Prodigal)
- 18 – cantos 23, 24, 25 (Stattius, The Gluttonous, Discourse on Conception)
- 25 – cantos 26, 27, 28 (The Lustful, Guinizzelli, Arnaut, Earthly Paradise, Matelda)

April

- 1 – cantos 29, 30, 31 (The Procession of the Church, The Arrival of Beatrice)
- 8 – cantos 32, 33 (The Calamities, Giant and Whore, Eunoe): ESSAY DUE

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Course Information

Required Texts

Dante, *Purgatorio* (text, translation, commentary), ed and trans Hollander
Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (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 due date, you'll receive a grade with written comments.
If you hand your essay in after the due date (ultimate deadline: the final exam date),
you'll receive a grade without written comments.

Contact

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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 interdisciplinary half-courses linking the departments of Modern Languages and Literatures, English, and Philosophy. Dante's three-part masterwork *The Divine Comedy* (completed in 1320) has fascinated, challenged, and inspired readers for centuries – never more so than today. Check out *Inferno* (CLC 3333F) for hot tips on where market forces are leading us. Tune into *Purgatorio* (CLC 3334G) for insider advice on diet, exercise, and sex in a popular talk-show format. Then click onto *Paradiso* (CLC 3335F) for divine links to the World Wide Web. Complete the cycle with *Dante Philosophus* (CLC 4495G / Phil 4027G) on the poet's intellectual background and philosophical writings.

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Fall 2009

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 thirty-three cantos of the second cantica of Dante's *Divine Comedy*;
- (2) to have applied Dante's fourfold method of reading allegory to a wide range of passages in the *Purgatorio* in an effort to interpret the second cantica as a radical revision of the first;
- (3) to have explored the major literary and theological sources of the *Purgatorio*, especially Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and the Gospels;
- (4) to have examined the impact of the *Purgatorio* 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 the sacraments, the sins, and the road to salvation.

Canto Presentations: Sign-up Sheet

- Jan. 21** – cantos 4, 5, 6 (The Late Repentant, Belacqua, Buonconte)
4.
5.
6.
- 28** – cantos 7, 8, 9 (The Vale of Princes, Sordello; the Gate of Purgatory)
7.
8.
9.
- Feb. 4** – cantos 10, 11, 12 (The Proud, Oderisi, The Carved Pavement)
10.
11.
12.
- 11** – cantos 13, 14, 15 (The Envious, Sapia, Guido del Duca)
13.
14.
15.
- 25** – MIDTERM; canto 16 (The Wrathful, Marco Lombardo, Discourses on Love)
16. – James
- Mar. 4** – cantos 17, 18, 19 (Discourses on Love, Dream of the Siren)
17.
18.
19.
- 11** – cantos 20, 21, 22 (the Avaricious, Hugh Capet, The Prodigal)
20.
21.
22.
- 18** – cantos 23, 24, 25 (Stattius, The Gluttonous, Discourse on Conception)
23.
24.
25.
- 25** – cantos 26, 27, 28 (The Lustful, Guinizzelli, Arnaut, Earthly Paradise, Matelda)
26.
27.
28.
- Apr. 1** – cantos 29, 30, 31 (The Procession of the Church, The Arrival of Beatrice)
29.
30.
31.
- 8** – cantos 32, 33 (The Calamities, Giant and Whore, Eunoe): ESSAY DUE
32.
33.

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