

La *Divina Commedia* di Dante

**ITAL 415
Fall 2016**

Pennsylvania State University

Prof. Michele Rossi



Contacts and Information

Michele Rossi, Ph.D.

Email: mur38@psu.edu

Office: Burrowes Bldg., Room 044

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 10:30am-11:30am; and by appointment

Class Schedule: Tuesday and Thursday, 12:05pm-1:20pm, Health and Human Development Bldg.

Course Description:

As stated by Italo Calvino, “a classic is a book that has never finished saying what it has to say.” The *Divine Comedy*, Dante’s masterpiece, continues to speak to us even seven centuries after its composition. In this course, we will read Dante’s poem focusing on its famous characters – Francesca da Rimini, Pier delle Vigne, Ulisse, il conte Ugolino, Manfredi, Guido Guinzelli, Virgilio, Beatrice... –, and we will explore different topics: love, power, and literature,

among others. We will also investigate the relationships between the concepts of *metaphor* and *metamorphosis*, with the goal of illuminating Dante's unique and complex poetics. In our journey from Hell to Heaven, we will place the *Divine Comedy* in the cultural, historical, and literary context in which it was conceived (Italy in the Middle Ages), without forgetting its enduring influence today, even in our pop culture, as demonstrated by contemporary books (Dan Brown's *Inferno*), movies (*Seven*), music bands (*The Divine Comedy*), and videogames (*Dante's Inferno*). **The course will be taught in Italian. Prerequisite: any 300-level Italian course.**

Required Book (complete version: *Inferno, Purgatorio, and Paradiso*):

Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, eds. Durling and Martinez, Oxford University Press.

Course Requirements

- **Class Participation (25%).** Class participation is vital in order to complete successfully this course. Highest grades are earned by students who come to class regularly (see the Attendance Policy), participate actively, and are well prepared every time, having read the materials for each class. In class you will also work and present in small groups: it is essential that you provide an effective contribution and collaborate in a positive way with your classmates. The language spoken in this class is Italian: speaking in English will lower your participation grade. Your spoken Italian is not supposed to be perfect, but you need to try to communicate in Italian in every class.
- **VoiceThread (15%).** Every two weeks you will post on VoiceThread about the readings and the topics covered in class. **In order to receive credit for your post, you need to complete it by Sunday at midnight**. You will be required to video-record your oral answer (about 2'). Highest grades are earned by students who provide detailed and thoughtful answers, trying to practice vocabulary and grammar, and also providing original points of view regarding the topics discussed. Once again, your oral Italian is not supposed to be perfect, but you need to try your best in order to communicate effectively in Italian and improve your oral skills during the semester. You are encouraged to assert your opinions and support them with evidence from the text; if you disagree with other students' posts, please express your different point of view in a respectful and polite way.
- **Written Exams (15%).** There will be **two written exams** throughout the semester during class time. Guidelines will be provided.
- **Midterm Project (10%).** Midterm projects are **due on October 6**. Guidelines will be provided. You will write a one-page comment about one

terzina. Highest grades are earned by students who show originality and a deep analysis of the chosen *terzina*.

- **In-class Oral Presentation (15%)**. The last two weeks of our class will be dedicated to individual class presentations. You will decide a topic with the professor and present it in class. Detailed guidelines will be provided.
- **Final Paper / Final Project (20%)**. Final papers/projects are **due on November 17 (first draft) and December 8 (final draft)**. You will write a research paper (about 4 pages, double space, in Italian). If you have different ideas about your final project (for example: film a video, create a graphic novel, etc.), you need to discuss it with me. Your final paper/project needs to be well connected with the readings and the topics we cover and discuss in class. Highest grades are earned by students who submit original, well-finished, and meaningful final papers/projects.

Final grades are distribute as follows:

A: 95.0-100.0 **A-:** 90.0-94.9 **B+:** 87.7-89.9 **B:** 83.3-87.6 **B-:** 80.0-83.2
C+: 75.0-79.9 **C:** 70.0-74.9 **D:** 60.0-69.9 **F:** 0.0-59.9

Attendance Policy – Class participation constitutes a substantial part of your final grade (see above), and you cannot participate in class unless you are present. With the exception of absences due to officially documented university-related activities or university-recognized religious observances, **you are permitted to miss two (2) classes**. These days will cover things such as illness, weddings, funerals, job interviews, etc. **These are not free days**; use them wisely. Beginning with the third absence (regardless of the reasons for the first three), *each absence* will deduct 1 whole percentage point from your *final grade*. Moreover, 2 late arrivals of 10 minutes or more are equivalent to one absence. **Be aware that there are no “excused” or “unexcused” absences. In case of absence, you are responsible for any work missed.** If you do miss class, you should get in touch with your instructor or a classmate as soon as possible to find out what assignments you missed. Absence from class is NOT an excuse for the late submission of work. If an **evaluative event** will be missed due to an unavoidable absence, you should contact your instructor as soon as the unavoidable absence is known to discuss ways to make up the work. An instructor *might not consider an unavoidable absence legitimate if you do not contact the instructor beforehand*. Students will be held responsible for using only *legitimate, unavoidable reasons* for requesting a make-up in the event of a missed class or evaluative event ([Policy 42-27](#), see below). Requests for missing class or an evaluative event due to reasons that are based on false claims may be considered violations of the policy on Academic Integrity ([Policy 49-20](#)). [You are required to provide verification from University Health Services or outside clinicians for significant prolonged illnesses or injuries resulting in absences from classes.](#)

Faculty Senate Policy 42-27- Class Attendance

Academic Policies and Procedures for Undergraduate Students

(<http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/health/welcome/illnessVerification/>)

The faculty, staff and other resources of the University are furnished for the education of students who attend the University. A class schedule is provided for students and faculty so that a reasonably orderly arrangement for instruction is facilitated. The fact that classes are scheduled is evidence that the faculty believes class instruction is important. Therefore, class attendance is important for the benefit of students.

A student should attend every class for which the student is scheduled and should be held responsible for all work covered in the courses taken. In each case, the instructor should decide when the class absence constitutes a danger to the student's scholastic attainment and should make this fact known to the student at once. A student whose irregular attendance causes him or her, in the judgment of the instructor, to become deficient scholastically, may run the risk of receiving a failing grade or receiving a lower grade than the student might have secured had the student been in regular attendance.

Instructors shall provide, within reason, opportunity to make up work for students who miss class due to regularly scheduled, University-approved curricular and extracurricular activities. However, if such trips are considered by the instructor to be hurting the student's scholastic performance, the instructor should present such evidence for necessary action to the head of the department in which the course is offered and to the dean of the college in which the student is enrolled, or to the Division of Undergraduate Studies if the student is enrolled in that division.

Instructors should provide, within reason, opportunity to make up work for students who miss classes for other legitimate but unavoidable reasons. Legitimate, unavoidable reasons are those such as illness, injury, family emergency. If an evaluative event will be missed due to an unavoidable absence, the student should contact the instructor as soon as the unavoidable absence is known to discuss ways to make up the work. An instructor might not consider an unavoidable absence legitimate if the student does not contact the instructor before the evaluative event. Students will be held responsible for using only legitimate, unavoidable reasons for requesting a make-up in the event of a missed class or evaluative event. Requests for missing class or an evaluative event due to reasons that are based on false claims may be considered violations of the policy on Academic Integrity (Policy 49-20).

Late Work: Work that is handed in late automatically receives a lower grade.

Academic Integrity - We support active collaboration with classmates. You may share notes and ideas with other students, however, you may not ask tutors, more proficient speakers or classmates to complete your own work, and **you may not use electronic translation programs**. In accordance with *PSU Senate Policy 49-20*, plagiarism, cheating, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor may lead to lowered course

grades, a failing in the course, or more severe measures, depending on the gravity of the individual case according to the judgment of the Academic Integrity Committee. Visit <http://www.psu.edu/dept/oue/aappm/G-9.html> for further information. For other general university policies regarding Academic Code of Conduct, please read <http://www.sa.psu.edu/ja/conduct.shtml>.

Cell Phones: Cell phones are to be turned off and stored before class begins. The professor reserves the right to penalize a student's final grade for continued cell phone interruptions (including sending and receiving text messages).

Laptops/Tablet Computers: Any use of laptops or tablet computers unrelated to coursework is prohibited and the professor reserves the right to penalize a student's final grade for disregarding this policy.

University Policy on Disabilities – Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. If you have a disability-related need for reasonable academic adjustments, contact the Office for Disability Services (ODS) at 814-863-1807(V/TTY). For further information regarding ODS, please visit the Office for Disability Services website at <http://equity.psu.edu/ods/>. In order to receive consideration for course accommodations, you must contact ODS and provide documentation (see the documentation guidelines at <http://equity.psu.edu/ods/guidelines/documentation-guidelines>). If the documentation supports the need for academic adjustments, ODS will provide a letter identifying appropriate academic adjustments. Please share this letter and discuss the adjustments with your instructor as early in the course as possible. You must contact ODS and request academic adjustment letters at the beginning of each semester.

CLASS SCHEDULE

(note: this is a tentative schedule. You will find updated versions of this syllabus on Angel)

SETTIMANA 1

Introduzione. *“Il poema sacro al quale ha posto mano e cielo e terra”*: la struttura della *Divina Commedia*

Martedì 23 agosto: presentazione del corso

Giovedì 25 agosto: *Inferno I*

SETTIMANA 2

“Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita”: l'inizio della *Divina Commedia*

Martedì 30 agosto: *Inferno I*. **Voicethread 1 due.**

Giovedì 1 settembre: *Inferno II*

SETTIMANA 3

“Sì ch'io fui sesto tra cotanto senno”: il Limbo e la bella scola dei poeti

Martedì 6 settembre: *Inferno III*

Giovedì 8 settembre: *Inferno IV*

SETTIMANA 4

“Galeotto fu 'l libro e chi lo scrisse”: Francesca da Rimini tra letteratura, amore e morte

Martedì 13 settembre: *Inferno V*. **Voicethread 2 due.**

Giovedì 15 settembre: *Inferno V*

SETTIMANA 5

“Uomini fummo, e or siam fatti sterpi”: il canto di Pier delle Vigne

Martedì 20 settembre: **Exam 1.**

Giovedì 22 settembre: *Inferno XIII*

SETTIMANA 6

Dante e Brunetto Latini

Martedì 27 settembre: *Inferno XV*. **Voicethread 3 due.**

Giovedì 29 settembre: *Inferno XV*

SETTIMANA 7

Il folle volo di Ulisse

Martedì 4 ottobre: *Inferno XXVI*

Giovedì 6 ottobre: *Inferno XXVI*. **Midterm project due.**

SETTIMANA 8

“E quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle”: il conte Ugolino e l'ultimo canto dell'*Inferno*

Martedì 11 ottobre: *Inferno XXXIII*. **Voicethread 4 due.**

Giovedì 13 ottobre: *Inferno XXXIV*

SETTIMANA 9

Il Purgatorio

Martedì 18 ottobre: **Exam 2.**

Giovedì 20 ottobre: *Purgatorio I*

SETTIMANA 10

“Biondo era e bello e di gentile aspetto”: Dante e Manfredi. *Il dolce stil novo*

Martedì 25 ottobre: *Purgatorio III*. **Voicethread 5 due.**

Giovedì 27 ottobre: *Purgatorio XXIV*. **Start to work on you final project: discuss your topic with me!**

SETTIMANA 11

Amore, lussuria e gloria letteraria: Guido Guinizelli. La fine del Purgatorio

Martedì 1 novembre: *Purgatorio XXVI*

Giovedì 3 novembre: *Purgatorio XXXIII*

SETTIMANA 12

“Stairway to Heaven”: Dante in Paradiso. *L’esilio di Dante: la profezia di Cacciaguida*

Martedì 8 novembre: *Paradiso I*

Giovedì 10 novembre: *Paradiso XVII*

SETTIMANA 13

“L’amor che move il sole e l’altre stelle”: la fine del Paradiso

Martedì 15 novembre: *Paradiso XXXIII*

Giovedì 17 novembre: *Paradiso XXXIII*. **Final paper/project (first draft) due.**

martedì 21 novembre e giovedì 22 novembre: no classes!
(Thanksgiving break)

SETTIMANA 14

Martedì 29 novembre: Presentazioni finali

Giovedì 1 dicembre: Presentazioni finali

SETTIMANA 15

Martedì 6 dicembre: Presentazioni finali

Giovedì 8 dicembre: Presentazioni finali. **Final paper/project (final draft) due.**