

**ENGL 423/523: Dante**  
**Longwood University**  
**Spring 2012**

**Professor:** Shawn Smith  
**Office:** Grainger B14  
**Office Hours:** MW 2:30-4:00 (and by appointment---use e-mail below)  
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**Web Page:** <http://www.longwoodshakespeare.net>  
**Class meets:** Mondays and Wednesdays, 4:00-5:15, in Grainger G16.

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES**

In this course students will engage in a close reading of the entire *Divine Comedy*, one of the greatest achievements in the Western literary tradition. We will also examine works from later periods inspired by Dante.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS** (available at the University Bookstore)

- Three volume edition of the *Divine Comedy (Inferno, Purgatorio, Paradiso)* translated by Robert Durling (Oxford UP).
- On reserve at the library will be the *Lectura Dantis* commentaries on the *Inferno* and *Purgatorio* (ed. Mandelbaum, Oldcorn, and Ross), and the *Dante Encyclopedia* (ed. Lansing).
- See my online study guide to Dante for links to commentaries and other useful electronic resources on Dante.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING**

- Two short papers of 3-4 pages (20% each).
- A 6-7 page final paper (30%). (Graduate students will write a 10-12 page final paper that incorporates secondary literature; graduate students planning to teach are urged to write a final paper that deals with pedagogy in some way.)
- Final exam (20% of final grade).
- Class preparation and participation (10%). Come to class prepared to discuss the representative sins (or virtues) in each canto, and the representative characters of each canto. You should also be prepared to describe, for each canto, the relevant *contrapasso* (in the case of the *Inferno*), or the penitential sort of *contrapasso* (in the *Purgatorio*), or the relationship between a character's history and his or her position in Heaven in the *Paradiso*. You should also be prepared to share with the class the thing you find most difficult to understand about each canto.
- Graduate students will make a class presentation of ca. 15 minutes.

### **POLICY MATTERS**

It is essential that you read thoroughly and carefully. Underline passages you find especially beautiful or eloquent, or especially disturbing or confusing. You might find it useful to keep a reading journal in which you record your responses to the assigned readings. The works we'll be reading are both thematically and linguistically complicated in a number of ways, and I encourage you to locate these complications and to engage the class in a discussion of them.

Please arrive on time, and be prepared to listen, think, and contribute. Please turn off wireless phones, pagers, headphones, molecular phase inverters, and other electronic devices that might disrupt class. Please treat other

students and your instructor in a civil and respectful manner. Note that classroom disruption is a violation of Longwood University's honor code.

The Longwood University attendance policy in the *Undergraduate Catalog* will be the attendance policy for this course. You will receive an F on work missed because of unexcused absences. Your grade will be lowered by one letter grade if you miss 10 percent of the scheduled class meeting times for unexcused absences. You will receive an F if you miss a total (excused and unexcused) of 25 percent of the scheduled class meeting times. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to obtain notes from a classmate (as well as announcements about syllabus changes or other matters). Exams can be made up only under the most grave circumstances, and with documentation from an MD or a Longwood University official. If you foresee a conflict, I expect you to discuss it with me beforehand. Written assignments handed in late will lose one letter grade for each class day late. Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of intellectual dishonesty will result in an F for the course and referral to the Longwood University Judicial system. For details on Longwood University's honor code and judicial system, direct your web browser to: <http://www.longwood.edu/judicial>.

Please submit all written work for this course to me in hard copy—e-mail attachments will not be accepted. You should keep electronic versions of any work you submit for this class, and the graded work I hand back to you, until after you have received your final grade. In case of inclement weather, continue to read the daily assignments, and check the course web page for announcements.

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability should contact me privately. If you have not already done so, please contact the Office for Disability Services (103 Graham Building, 395-2391) to register for services.

Note: the syllabus may be changed at any time if necessary. The online version of this syllabus is the most current one.

## CALENDAR

18 Jan.: Course introduction: Selections from the *Vita Nuova* and the *Summa Theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas.

23 Jan.: *Inferno* 1-4.

25 Jan.: *Inferno* 5-10.

30 Jan.: *Inferno* 11-15.

1 Feb.: *Inferno* 16-19

6 Feb.: *Inferno* 20-24.

8 Feb.: *Inferno* 25-29.

13 Feb.: *Inferno* 30-34.

15 Feb.: **Paper 1 Due.**

20 Feb.: *Purgatorio* 1-4.

22 Feb.: *Purgatorio* 5-10.

27 Feb.: *Purgatorio* 11-16.

29 Feb.: *Purgatorio* 17-21.

5 Mar.: *Purgatorio* 22-25.

7 Mar.: *Purgatorio* 22-25.

*SPRING BREAK*

19 Mar.: *Purgatorio* 26-29.

21 Mar.: *Purgatorio* 30-33.

26 Mar.: *Paradiso* 1-4.

28 Mar.: No class.

2 Apr.: *Paradiso* 5-10. **Paper 2 Due**

4 Apr.: *Paradiso* 11-14.

9 Apr.: *Paradiso* 15-19.

11 Apr.: *Paradiso* 20-24.

16 Apr.: *Paradiso* 25-29.

18 Apr.: *Paradiso* 30-33.

23 Apr.: Works influenced by Dante, TBA.

25 Apr.: Review for final exam. **Final paper due.**

**FRIDAY, 4 MAY: FINAL EXAM, 3-5:30.**

## Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand the literary, theological, and historical importance of Dante's *Commedia*.
- Apply the techniques of literary analysis to each of the selections we read.

## Grading Scale

90-100 = A

80-89 = B

70-79 = C

0-69 = F