

“The best book literature has ever achieved”
— J. L. Borges

Texts

- Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: Inferno; Purgatorio; Paradiso*. Translated by Allen Mandelbaum. Everyman's Library; One-volume edition. 1995. ISBN: 0679433139.
- Dante Alighieri, *Vita Nuova*. Translated by Mark Musa. Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2008. ISBN: 978-0-19-954065-5.
- Various online study tools (see list at the end of the syllabus)

WHAT DO WE DO IN THIS CLASS?

Participation

A student receives an outstanding participation grade (A) when he or she: is on time, brings readings and necessary materials to class, contributes regularly and in an informed manner to the class discussions, successfully collaborates with others, participates in all class activities, manifests professional behavior (also in email exchanges), avoids distractive use of technology, and helps others to do all of the above.

Travel Logs

During the course of the semester you will become a big creator of marginalia, side notes and comments with thoughts and questions, that you will mark directly on your copy of the *Comedy*. In preparation for each class, you will also organize and elaborate your notes in a travel log journal. The travel log is an essential part of your success in this course, because it's the tool that will allow you to contribute to class discussions and make the most of your Dantean journey. Furthermore, the travel log represents the preliminary research and writing stage for your final essay.

- The first travel log will relate to your reading of *Inferno*.
- The second travel log will relate to your reading of *Purgatory* and your own teaching of specific cantos.

Paradise Group Extravaganzas

For the last Canticle, the travel log will be substituted by a routine of collectively authored pieces. Working in small groups, you will complete a series of critical responses to various cantos of *Paradise* (2-3 pages each). While the writing and submission will take place during class, each student is encouraged to take and organize notes in preparation for class.

Reflective Letter “The Contemplation Bomb”

This letter is an opportunity to think about your course and clarify—for yourself and for me—how your knowledge and awareness of creativity, literature, religion/spirituality, history and culture have grown this semester. Organize your letter in a way that is easy to follow. Be specific and use detailed examples, anecdotes and explanations. Format: 400-600 words (include word count please), your favorite font.

Final Project

After having collected notes and matured ideas about the three canticles of the Divine Comedy through travel logs and class activities, you are now at a vantage point to explore a significant theme connecting different parts of the book. Your final project is therefore the opportunity to identify a theme or issue of importance to you, analyze its appearance throughout the Divine Comedy, and

share with the rest of the class. This investigation will take the form of a well-written, 7-9 page essay, composed in the genre that you find more fitting (argumentative, expository, exploratory, personal narrative, open letter, etc.), establishing and articulating a variety of connections across the three canticles. During finals week, we will meet and conclude the course by listening to each student present their research (please plan to stay within 10 minutes).

Grade Breakdown¹

Class Participation (three-parts)	15%
Inferno Travel Log	15%
Purgatory Travel Log	15%
Purgatory Student-Led Discussion	5%
Paradise Extravaganzas (6)	18%
Reflective Letter (Contemplation Bomb)	5%
Final Project	
—— Presentation	7%
—— Essay	20%
	100%

Absences and Punctuality

You are allowed one unexcused absence. Each additional unexcused absence lowers your grade of 2 percentage points. Two late arrivals (5 minutes or more late) count as one absence. In order to be granted an excused absence, you will need to provide evidence that you were unable to attend for causes beyond your control (illness, accidents, death in family, etc); a general note from Health Center is not considered acceptable documentation. Permission to submit assignments late or make-up examinations will be granted only with absences excused through appropriate documentation (e.g. a doctor's note specifically mentioning the student's inability to attend class). You should contact your instructor with any questions.

OUR SCHEDULE

(Aspects of this calendar might change; always refer to the most recent online version)

INTRODUCTION TO DANTE'S WORLD

WEEK I

Tuesday, February 4. Reading Dante
At home: Review syllabus.

¹ A 100-94; A- 93-90; B+ 89-87; B 86-84; B- 83-80; C+ 79-77; C 76-74; C- 73-70; D+ 69-67; D 66-64; D- 63-60; F 59-0

In class: Introduction to the course.

Thursday, February 6. Dante and His Time

At home: Thoroughly explore online study tools. Explore the frescoes of the Baptistry of Florence ([link](#)).

In class: Introductory Lecture

PART ONE: INFERNO, “THE BLIND PRISON UNDER THE EARTH”

*Approach: During the first part of the semester, we will be analyzing the entire first Canticle at the micro level. I will lead the way guiding you through an understanding of the moral order of Dante’s world, the author’s cultural influences, the poetry of the Comedy, and its significance across the centuries. *Begin your first travel log.*

WEEK II

Tuesday, February 11. The Dark Wood.

At home: Read *Inferno* 1 through 3, begin creating your marginalia and taking notes (supplement: *The Aeneid*, Book 6). Memorize the first 9 lines of canto 1.

In class: Discussion 1-3.

Thursday, February 13. Limbo and Lust.

At home: *Inferno* 4-5 (supplement: Augustine’s *Confessions*, book 8).

In class: Discussion 4-5

WEEK III

Tuesday, February 18. To the Citadel of Dis.

At home: Sweep read *Inferno* 6-9 (Don’t get bogged down in the details; rather, try to get the overall feel and idea(s) of these cantos). Also focus on the impasse before the gates of Dis.

In class: Discussion starting from canto 6.

Thursday, February 20. The Order of Hell.

At home: *Inferno* 10-11.

In class: Discussion 10-11.

WEEK IV

Tuesday, February 25. Violence!

At home: *Inferno* 12-16.

In class: Discussion 12-16

Thursday, February 27. Fraud!

At home: *Inferno* 17-20

In class: Discussion 17-20.

WEEK V

Tuesday, March 3. Gargoyle Cantos, Hypocrites.

At home: *Inferno* 21-23.

In class: Discussion 21-23

Thursday, March 5. Thieves.

At home: *Inferno* 24-25.

In class: Discussion 24-25

WEEK VI

Tuesday, March 10. Ulysses.

At home: *Inferno* 26.

In class: Discussion 26.

Thursday, March 12. Guido da Montefeltro. Opening old wounds.

At home: *Inferno* 27-28.

In class: Discussion 27-28.

WEEK VII

Tuesday, March 17. Don't stop! Keep going!

At home: *Inferno* 29-31.

In class: Discussion 29-31.

Thursday, March 19. The Pit.

At home: *Inferno* 32-34. **Perfect your *Inferno* travel log for a grade.**

In class: Discussion 32-34. Circling back.

** SPRING BREAK **

PART TWO: PURGATORY, "CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN OF PURIFICATION OF THE SELF"

*New approach: you now become the Guides along with me. From here on out, everyone will have assigned Cantos that they will have to read and take notes on, as well as specific Cantos to teach on given days. *Begin your second travel log (saving room in your notebooks to take notes on Cantos that will be taught to you. You get a big 'teaching' grade on the discussions that you will lead, and your notebook grade will depend on your taking notes on cantos taught to you.)*

WEEK IX

Tuesday, March 31. Intro to the Purgatory. Proem and Invocation. Ante-Purgatory.

At home: *Purgatory* 1 (and Mandelbaum Notes) with a fine-toothed comb. Continue work on marginalia.

In class: Discussion of *Purgatory* 1

Thursday, April 2. Ante-Purgatory (cont.)

At home: *Purgatory* 2-5

In class: Discussion 2-5

WEEK X

Tuesday, April 7. Ante-Purgatory (cont.)

At home: Everyone reads *Purgatory* canto 8-9.

In class: Students teach 6 and 7. Discussion of 8-9.

Thursday, April 9. First Terrace (The Proudful), Second Terrace (The Envious), Third Terrace (The Wrathful).

At home: Everyone reads *Purgatory* 16-18.

In class: Students teach 10 and 15. Discussion of 16-18.

WEEK XI

Tuesday, April 14. Fourth Terrace (The Slothful), Fifth Terrace (The Avaricious & the Prodigal), Sixth Terrace (The Gluttonous), Seventh Terrace (The Lustful), Threshold of the Earthly Paradise

At home: Everyone reads *Purgatory* 21 and 27.

In class: Students teach 22 and 27. Discussion of canto 21.

Thursday, April 16. The Story of Our Love

At home: Read *Vita Nova* 1-19.

In class: Discussion of *Vita Nova*.

WEEK XII

Tuesday, April 21. The story of Our Love (cont.)

At home: Read *Vita Nova* 20-42.

In class: Continue discussion of *Vita Nova* and its relationship to *The Comedy*.

Thursday, April 23. Divine Forest, Lethe, Golden Age, The Earthly Paradise,

At home: Everyone reads *Purgatory* 29, 30 and 33. **Perfect your *Purgatory* travel log for a grade.**

In class: Students teach 31 and 32. Discussion of canto 29, 30 and 33.

PART THREE: PARADISE, “ASCENSION. THE GREATNESS AND FULLNESS OF LIFE”

New Approach: In the third Cantic you will be your own guides almost exclusively. You will be assigned only certain cantos (you have access to online synopsis of all cantos) for which you will be keeping up your travel log notebook. In class, you will be completing on your own in pairs, as I hover around elaborate, close reading and thought questions on sweeps of Cantos.

WEEK XIII

Tuesday, April 28. Paradise Intro. Ascent, First Heaven: the Sphere of the Moon.

At home: *Paradise* 1-5.

In class: *Paradise* at a glance PDF. Group work on extravaganza 1-5 (submit via email).

Thursday, April 30. Second Heaven: the Sphere of Mercury, Third Heaven: the Sphere of Venus.

At home: *Paradise* 6-8.

In class: Preliminary remarks. Group work on extravaganza 6-8 (submit via email).

WEEK XIV

Tuesday, May 5. Fourth Heaven: the Sphere of the Sun.

At home: *Paradise* 10, 11 and 13.

In class: Preliminary remarks. Group work on extravaganza 10, 11 and 13 (submit via email).

Thursday, May 7.

At home: *Paradise* 15 and 17. Fifth Heaven: the Sphere of Mars.

In class: Preliminary remarks. Group work on extravaganza 15 and 17 (submit via email).

WEEK XIV

Tuesday, May 12.

At home: *Paradise* 28 through 30. Sixth through Eighth Heavens, Ninth Heaven: the Primum Mobile.

In class: Preliminary remarks. Group work on extravaganza 28-30 (submit via email).

Thursday, May 14.

At home: *Paradise* 31 through 33. Tenth Heaven: the Empyrean.

In class: Preliminary remarks. Group work on extravaganza 31-33 (submit via email). Course evaluations. **Reflective Letter due.**

Finals Week

May 19, 4:15 - 6:45 PM

Final presentation and project due.

Online study tools

- **Danteworlds** (University of Texas at Austin) <http://danteworlds.laits.utexas.edu/>
A quick reference guide enriched by brief audio samples and visuals to better understand general meaning and key figures from all three books.
- **Digital Dante** (Columbia University) <http://digitaldante.columbia.edu/>
A sophisticated scholarly tool which provides: an in-depth commentary of the entire *Comedy*, comparisons between the Italian and Maudelbaum and Longfellows translations, an effective system to explore intertextual connections between the *Comedy* and its sources, reproductions of manuscripts, and more.
- **The World of Dante** (University of Virginia) <http://www.worldofdante.org/>
A good archive of charts, maps, musical references and timelines to learn about the context of Dante and his *Comedy*.
- **The Dante Society of America** <https://www.dantesociety.org/>
A large site showing the multifarious activities of the Dante Society. Among its highlights, this site presents the comprehensive bibliography of Dante's study (<https://www.dantesociety.org/publications/american-dante-bibliography>, also available in PDF in our class site).
- **Mapping Dante:** <http://www.mappingdante.com>
A wonderful interactive map to study the places that influenced and are mentioned in the *Comedy*.
- **Image Archive:** <http://divinecomedy.library.cornell.edu/index.html>
A comprehensive archive of illustrations and more.
- **13th century Moralized Bible:**
 - https://iconographic.warburg.sas.ac.uk/vpc/VPC_search/subcats.php?cat_1=14&cat_2=28&cat_3=2568&cat_4=5381 (De Laborde edition as well as the Oxford/Paris manuscript, black and white but organized by themes).
 - http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Harley_MS_1526 (British Library, HD in color)

Objectives

Honors Program Learning Outcomes

Upon completing a course in the University Honors Program students will have:

- a. obtained a starting point for integrative exploration of the development of cultures and intellectual achievements through a variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives;
- b. sharpened their ability to critically analyze and synthesize a broad range of knowledge through the study of primary texts and through engagement in active learning with fellow students, faculty, and texts (broadly understood);
- c. understood how to apply more integrative and interdisciplinary forms of understanding in the advancement of knowledge and in addressing complex challenges shaping the world;
- d. developed effective communication skills.

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this course students will be able to:

- Complete the entire reading of the *Comedy* for literal meaning and aesthetic pleasure.
- Demonstrate ability to analyze selected passages in connection to major to central critical and theoretical issues.
- Discuss relevance of Dante's *Divine Comedy* across disciplines.
- Investigate and interpret the influence of Dante's *Divine Comedy* in contemporary global culture and media.
- Improve critical thinking, reading, writing skills while examining some episodes of the poem using a variety of approaches and media.

Content

- Defining features of the cultural, religious and political context for Dante's work.
- Theological, literary, geographic, and historical references in Dante's *Divine Comedy*.
- Aims and layers of Dante's narrative and poetic style.
- The structure of Dante's afterlife and its religious and philosophic basis.
- Digital humanities approaches to the study of literature and Dante's *Divine Comedy* in particular.
- Adaptations of Dante's *Divine Comedy* in various media and its contemporary cultural influence.

Artistic Inquiry Learning Outcome

Composes critical or creative works that embody or analyze conceptually an artistic form at a baccalaureate / pre-professional level.

Social Inquiry Learning Outcome

Students identify, frame and analyze social and/or historical structures and institutions in the world today.

University Policy

Chapman University Academic Integrity Policy

Chapman University is a community of scholars which emphasizes the mutual responsibility of all members to seek knowledge honestly and in good faith. Students are responsible for doing their own work, and academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated anywhere in the university

Use of Technology

The mis-use of laptops is prohibited since it distracts fellow students and creates a barrier between me and you during class. Cellphones must be turned off and stored away. Distractive use of technology is considered unprofessional behavior and negatively affects your participation grade. This course employs features of Blackboard, some of which are directly connected to your success in the course. It is your responsibility to learn to use all the web functions which are relevant to this course ahead of time. You can access Blackboard through "My Chapman" on the Chapman University homepage. The course homepage also contains the updated version of the syllabus, which I recommend you refer to during the semester.

Students with Disabilities Policy

In compliance with ADA guidelines, students who have any condition, either permanent or temporary, that might affect their ability to perform in this class are encouraged to inform the instructor at the beginning of the term. The University, through the Center for Academic Success, will work with the appropriate faculty member who is asked to provide the accommodations for a student in determining what accommodations are suitable based on the documentation and the individual student needs. The granting of any accommodation will not be retroactive and cannot jeopardize the academic standards or integrity of the course.

Equity and Diversity

Chapman University is committed to ensuring equality and valuing diversity. Students and professors are reminded to show respect at all times as outlined in Chapman's Harassment and Discrimination Policy: <http://tinyurl.com/CUHarassment-Discrimination>. Any violations of this policy should be discussed with the professor, the Dean of Students and/or otherwise reported in accordance with this policy.