

Course Last Updated 3/22/2024



# Florence and the Florentines in Dante's Comedy and Boccaccio's Decameron

## Section I: Course Overview

**Course Code:** ENG315

**Subject Area(s):** English Language & Literature

**Prerequisites:** One 200 level or two 100 level courses in a relevant field

**Language of Instruction:** English

**Total Contact Hours:** 45

**Credits:** 3

## Course Description

The course will introduce students to the history of Italian Literature, focusing on great masterpieces (in English translation) from the 14th century. A multidisciplinary approach, dealing with social, political, historical and philosophical implications will provide further understanding by placing literary works in a comprehensive cultural context. Special emphasis will be placed on the impact of Italian literature in European culture in pre-modern age, stressing the broad influence of Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Boccaccio's *Decameron*. Literary issues such as the great divide between high and low literature, the question of language, the relation between classical, Christian and chivalric epics, the concept of originality in the Middle Ages, the circulation of books and the development of a reading public will be thoroughly investigated.

## Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, you'll be able to:

- Discuss the impact of the Middle Ages, Humanism and Renaissance historical periods in the urban environment from their examination of relevant literary texts and through their exploration and analysis of the urban environment of their host city

- Critique the ‘personification’ of Florence in Medieval, Humanist and Renaissance works and on the relationship between citizen/author and the urban space he lives in
- Describe diverse philosophies and literary concepts that shaped Medieval and Renaissance culture

## Section II: Instructor & Course Details

### Instructor Details

**Name:** TBC

**Contact Information:** TBC

**Term:** TBC

**Course Day and Time:** TBC

**Office Hours:** By appointment

### Grading & Assessment

The instructor assesses students’ mastery of course learning objectives by using the forms of assessment below. Each of these assessments is weighted toward the final grade. The Assessment Overview section provides further details for each.

**Engagement - 20%**

**Dante’s Plaques Video Project - 10%**

**Mid-Term Exam - 20%**

**Inferno Today Group Project - 10%**

**Boccaccio’s Decameron Presentations - 10%**

**Decameron Today Group Project - 10%**

**Final Exam - 20%**

### Assessment Overview

This section provides a brief description of each form of assessment listed above. Forms of assessment may be slightly modified in the term syllabus.

**Engagement (20%):** Students are expected to be engaged in class, and to have read the [CEA CAPA Engagement Policy](#) and to understand the [Class Engagement Rubric](#) that outlines how engagement is graded.

**Dante’s Plaques Video Project (10%):** For this project, students.

- Choose an itinerary (that should include at least 3 plaques) based on a theme of their choice

- Prepare a short video (between 4 and 7 minutes) where they show and discuss the itinerary, including how each plaque connects to the chosen theme
- Upload their video on YouTube
- Show their video to the class on Session 6

Videos should not be slide presentations with pictures and a voice-over, but filmed in the places where the plaques are located. The theme of the itinerary must be clearly explained in the video.

**Midterm Exam (20%):** For this exam, students answer:

- Three medium-answer questions worth 20 points each
- One long-answer (or short-essay) question worth 40 points

The mid-term exam takes place during the scheduled class time on Session 7. **Makeups are not allowed.** An absence on the mid-term exam day results in a 0 for the mid-term exam grade.

**Inferno Today Group Project (10%):** For this group project, students

- are divided into groups of 3 or 4
- Create their own map of Inferno, with sins that reflect a modern-day scale of values and examples of sinners
- Prepare a 5-minute presentation with the aid of PPT or Google Slides (no notes, flashcards or outlines allowed) to present their own version of Inferno
- Present their project to the class on Session 10

**Boccaccio's Decameron Presentations (10%):** For this presentation, students:

- Read 2 *novelle* from the Decameron, assigned by the course instructor by Session 11
- Prepare an 8-minute presentation with the aid of PPT or Google Slides (no notes, flashcards or outlines allowed) about the assigned stories
- Present their novellas to the class on Session 13

Contents should include, per story: a summary of the plot, an analysis of the main characters and a reflection on the main themes

**Decameron Today Group Project (10%):** For this group project, students:

- are divided into groups of 3 or 4
- Rewrite one of Decameron's *novelle* as if it was set in modern-day Italy (1000-1200 words, Arial font, size 12)
- Prepare a 5-minute presentation with the aid of PPT or Google Slides (no notes, flashcards or outlines allowed) to present their own *novella*
- Present their project to the class on Session 14
- Submit their *novella* via Canvas by Session 14

**Final Exam (20%):** For this exam, students will answer to

- Three medium-answer questions worth 20 points each
- One long-answer (or short-essay) question worth 40 points

The final exam takes place during the scheduled class time on Session 15. **Makeups are not allowed.** An absence on the final exam day results in a 0 for the mid-term exam grade.

## Active Learning

Experiential learning is an essential component of education abroad, and participation in field activities is a required part of coursework. In this course, you explore the city in which you are studying using a variety of tools. This provides the opportunity to gain nuance and context on your context and the subject you are studying, as well as to collect information and resources for assigned exams, projects, and presentations.

- Visit to Museo Casa di Dante
- Dante's Florence Walking Tour
- Visit to the Basilica of Santa Maria Novella

## Readings and Resources

The below readings and resources are representative of what will be assigned as required in this course, but may vary slightly in the term syllabus.

All students are given access to the online library of the University of New Haven (UNH), accessible [here](#), and are expected to comply with [UNH Policies](#) regarding library usage.

Wherever possible, required readings are made accessible through the online library or Canvas. Students are responsible for obtaining all required readings.

Each course utilizes Canvas as its LMS. Students are expected to check Canvas regularly for updates and deadlines. Canvas is also the primary platform for contacting your instructor in case of questions or concerns about the course.

### Required

Alighieri, Dante. *The Vita Nuova* (<https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/text/library/la-vita-nuova-frisardi>)

Alighieri, Dante. *The Divine Comedy* (<https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/> )

Barański, Zygmunt G. *Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio. Literature, Doctrine, Reality*, MHRA, 2020

Boccaccio, Giovanni. *The Decameron*. Translated by Wayne A. Rebhorn. WW Norton & Company, 2014

Boccaccio, Giovanni. *The Decameron*. Project by Brown University ([https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian\\_Studies/dweb/texts/](https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/texts/) )

Boccaccio, Giovanni. *The Life of Dante*. London: Hesperus Press, 2002

Niccolai, Foresto. *The Dante plaques: a Florentine itinerary from the Divine comedy*, translated by Mark Roberts. Florence: NT, 1999

Pertile, Lino. "Narrative Structure". *The Cambridge Companion to Dante's 'Commedia'* edited by Zygmunt Barański. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018, pp. 4-27

### Recommended

Barolini, Teodolinda "Dante and The Lyric Past." *The Cambridge Companion To Dante*, Cambridge University Press edited by Rachel Jacoff. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993, pp. 14-34

Pogue Harrison, Robert "Approaching The Vita Nuova". *The Cambridge Companion To Dante*, Cambridge University Press edited by Rachel Jacoff. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993, pp. 35-45

Dante in Translation with Giuseppe Mazzotta:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLD1450DFDA859F694>

## Course Calendar

Session 1	
Topics	<b>Course Overview</b> Europe & Italy in the Middle Ages Introduction to Dante and Boccaccio Dante's Plaques
Activity	Lecture & Discussion
Readings & Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barański, pp. 1-18</li> <li>• Boccaccio, <i>The Life of Dante</i>, chapters I, II, III, VI, IX, XI</li> </ul>

Session 2	
Topics	Life of Dante
Activity	Lecture & Discussion Visit to Museo Casa di Dante
Readings & Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alighieri, <i>The Vita Nuova</i>, chapters I through XII (except VIII) + XXIII and XXVI) (<a href="https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/text/library/la-vita-nuova-frisardi/">https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/text/library/la-vita-nuova-frisardi/</a> )</li> </ul> Find a reference to Dante in Florence: take a picture to show and comment in class for Session 3

Session 3	
Topics	Dante Today - Picture show & tell Early Italian Lyric Schools Dante's <i>Vita Nuova</i>
Activity	Lecture & Discussion
Readings & Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alighieri, <i>The Divine Comedy. Inferno</i>, Cantos I-II-III (<a href="https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/">https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/</a> )</li> </ul>

Session 4	
Topics	Medieval Florence First three cantos from <i>Inferno</i>
Activity	Lecture & Discussion Dante's Florence Walking Tour
Readings & Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alighieri, <i>The Divine Comedy. Inferno</i>, Cantos IV-V-VI (<a href="https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/">https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/</a> )</li> </ul>

Session 5	
Topics	The Divine Comedy
Activity	Lecture & Discussion
Readings & Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foresto, pp. 50-75</li> </ul> Prepare Dante's Plaques Video Project

Session 6	
Topics	Dante's Plaques Video Project Mid-Term Exam Review
Activity	Discussion & Review
Readings & Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alighieri, <i>The Divine Comedy. Inferno</i>, Cantos X-XV-XIX-XXIV-XXVI-XXXIII (<a href="https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/">https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/</a>)</li> </ul>

Session 7	
<b>Mid-Term Exam</b>	

Session 8	
Topics	Major themes in the Comedy
Activity	Lecture & Discussion
Readings & Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pertile, pp. 4-27</li> </ul> Assignment of Group Project Prepare Inferno Today Group Project

Session 9	
Topics	Middle Ages VS Renaissance
Activity	Lecture & Discussion
Readings & Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boccaccio, <i>The Decameron</i> - Proem (<a href="https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/texts/">https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/texts/</a>)</li> </ul> Inferno Today Group Project

Session 10	
Topics	Life of Boccaccio

	The Decameron & Assignment of <i>novelle</i>
Activity	Lecture & Discussion Visit to Santa Maria Novella
Readings & Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Boccaccio, <i>The Decameron</i>, Introduction to the First Day, pp. 4-23</li> </ul>

Session 11	
Topics	<i>Maraviglioso Boccaccio</i> , directed by Paolo & Vittorio Taviani, 2015.
Activity	Movie Screening & Discussion
Readings & Assignments	Presentations of assigned <i>novelle</i> ( <a href="https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/texts/">https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/texts/</a> )

Session 12	
Topics	<i>Maraviglioso Boccaccio</i> , directed by Paolo & Vittorio Taviani, 2015. Cont'd
Activity	Movie Screening & Discussion
Readings & Assignments	Presentations of assigned <i>novelle</i> ( <a href="https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/texts/">https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/texts/</a> )

Session 13	
Boccaccio's Decameron Oral Presentations	
Assignment of Group Project	
Prepare Decameron Today Group Project	

Session 14	
Decameron Today Group Project	
Final Exam Review	

Session 15	
Final exam	

### Section III: Academic Policies and Standards

## Academic Policies

Students are expected to review and understand all CEA CAPA student policies, including our [Academic Policies](#) and [Engagement Policy](#). CEA CAPA reserves the right to change, update, revise, or amend existing policies and/or procedures at any time. Additional requirements that may be associated with a specific course or program are addressed in the term syllabus.

## Student Learning & Development Objectives

CEA CAPA has identified [Student Learning and Development Objectives \(SLDOs\)](#) for all programs in all locations: content in context, navigating differences, power and equity, critical thinking and intellectual curiosity, career and professional development, and sustainability and migration.

These are meta-level learning objectives that transcend coursework and are infused across all elements of program delivery, beyond specifics of course offerings, addressing student learning holistically and framing it a larger learning context.