Inventing Modern Literature:
Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio and XIV Century Florence
3 credits
Spring 2014

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Schedule (class times and day(s): Thursdays 6:30-9:00
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Boston College Mission Statement
Strengthened by more than a century and a half of dedication to academic excellence, Boston College commits itself to the highest standards of teaching and research in undergraduate, graduate and professional programs and to the pursuit of a just society through its own accomplishments, the work of its faculty and staff, and the achievements of its graduates. It seeks both to advance its place among the nation's finest universities and to bring to the company of its distinguished peers and to contemporary society the richness of the Catholic intellectual ideal of a mutually illuminating relationship between religious faith and free intellectual inquiry.

Boston College draws inspiration for its academic societal mission from its distinctive religious tradition. As a Catholic and Jesuit university, it is rooted in a world view that encounters God in all creation and through all human activity, especially in the search for truth in every discipline, in the desire to learn, and in the call to live justly together. In this spirit, the University regards the contribution of different religious traditions and value systems as essential to the fullness of its intellectual life and to the continuous development of its distinctive intellectual heritage.

Course Description
During the period from 1265, Dante’s date of birth, to 1375, when Boccaccio died, one civilization ended and another began. Dante is the last great voice of Medieval Italy. Boccaccio links the medieval way of life to the age of humanism, and Petrarch, torn by unresolved inner conflicts, stands as the first “modern man”. Excerpts from Dante’s Inferno, Boccaccio’s Decameron, and Petrarch’s Canzoniere will be read. All writing assignments, class discussions and readings are in English.

Course Objectives
The student will demonstrate familiarity with the more important works of Dante Alighieri, Francesco Petrarch and Giovanni Boccaccio and the Political and historical environment that affected their writings.
The student will demonstrate knowledge of important literary concepts and genres and reasons that these forms were prevalent in XIV Century Europe.

Students will be able to recognize problems and concerns of society in XIV Italy and relate that life to our own in the XXI Century United States.

The student will demonstrate knowledge across cultural settings and will learn the impact of culture, gender, and age in Medieval Italy and in the writings of Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio in particular.

The student will demonstrate ethical knowledge pertaining to secular and lay thought in Medieval Europe and how it relates to our own time and world.

**Grading**

- 4 Papers: 35%
- 10 Quizzes: (drop lowest 2) 15%
- Classroom Participation: 15%
- Discussions on Blackboard Vista 15%
- Final Exam: 20%

**WCAS Grading System**

The undergraduate grading system consists of twelve categories: A (4.00), A- (3.67), excellent; B+ (3.33), B (3.00), B- (2.67), good; C+ (2.33), C (2.00), C- (1.67), satisfactory; D+ (1.33), D (1.00), D- (.67), passing but unsatisfactory; F (.00), failure; I (.00), incomplete; F (.00), course dropped without notifying office; W (.00), official withdrawal from course.

Grade Reports. All students are required to log into the web through Agora to access their semester grades. Students must utilize their BC username and password to log on. If your username or password is not known, the Student Learning and Support Center in the O’Neill Library Computer Center will issue a new one. The SLSC requires a valid picture ID (a BC ID, driver’s license or passport) to obtain your password.

**Required texts**

- Dante Alighieri – *Inferno* - Focus (Tom Simone trans)
- Giovanni Boccaccio – *Decameron* – Penguin
- Francesco Petrarch – *Selections from the Canzoniere* – Oxford

These texts have been ordered through he BC Bookstore. Consult with me if you are using other editions of the texts.
Important Policies
http://www.bc.edu/content/bc/schools/advstudies/guide/academicinteg.html

Written Work
Students are expected to prepare professional, polished written work. Written materials must be typed in the format required by your instructor. Strive for a thorough, yet concise style. Cite literature appropriately, using APA, MLA, CLA format per instructor’s decision. Develop your thoughts fully, clearly, logically and specifically. Proofread all materials to ensure the use of proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling. You are encouraged to make use of campus resources for refining writing skills as needed [http://www.bc.edu/libraries/help/tutoring.html].

Scholarship and Academic Integrity
It is expected that students will produce original work and cite references appropriately. Failure to reference properly is plagiarism. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not necessarily limited to, plagiarism, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, cheating on examinations or assignments, and submitting the same paper or substantially similar papers to meet the requirements of more than one course without seeking permission of all instructors concerned. Scholastic misconduct may also involve, but is not necessarily limited to, acts that violate the rights of other students, such as depriving another student of course materials or interfering with another student’s work.

Disability Statement
Classroom accommodations will be provided for qualified students with documented disabilities. Students are invited to contact the Connors Family Learning Center office about accommodations for this course. Telephone appointments are available to students as needed. Appointments can be made by calling, 617-552-8903. You may also make an appointment in person. For further information, you can locate the disability resources on the web at http://www.bc.edu/content/bc/libraries/help/tutoring/specialservices.html.

Attendance
Class attendance is an important component of learning. Students are expected to attend all classes and to arrive by the beginning of and remain for the entire class period. When an occasion occurs that prevents a student from attending class, it is the student’s obligation to inform the instructor of the conflict before the class meets. The student is still expected to meet all assignment deadlines. If a student knows that he or she will be absent on a particular day, the student is responsible for seeing the instructor beforehand to obtain the assignments for that day. If a student misses a class, he or she is responsible for making up the work by obtaining a classmate's notes and handouts and turning in any assignments due. Furthermore, many instructors give points for participation in class. If you miss class, you cannot make up participation points associated with that class. Types of absences that are not typically excused include weddings, showers, vacations, birthday parties, graduations, etc. Additional assignments, penalties and correctives are at the discretion of the instructor. If circumstances necessitate excessive absence from class, the student should consider withdrawing from the class. In all cases, students are expected to accept the decision of the instructor regarding attendance policies specific to the class.
Consistent with our commitment of creating an academic community that is respectful of and welcoming to persons of differing backgrounds, we believe that every reasonable effort should be made to allow members of the university community to observe their religious holidays without jeopardizing the fulfillment of their academic obligations. It is the responsibility of students to review course syllabi as soon as they are distributed and to consult the faculty member promptly regarding any possible conflicts with observed religious holidays. If asked, the student should provide accurate information about the obligations entailed in the observance of that particular holiday. However, it is the responsibility of the student to complete any and all class requirements for days that are missed due to conflicts due to religious holidays.

There may be circumstances that necessitate a departure from this policy. Feel free to contact the WCAS at 617-552-3900 for consultation.

**Deadlines**
Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the specified dates. Late assignments will be graded accordingly.

**Course Assignments** (readings, exercises and/or experiences)

Class will meet for 2 hours and 30 minutes each week. Each class will begin with a preparatory lecture, followed by a short quiz on the assigned readings. The bulk of the class will be dedicated to discussion of these readings. You should be prepared to participate in discussions, as this will comprise part of the final grade. Between readings, quizzes, papers and, Blackboard discussions and test preparation, students should expect to spend about 7-8 hours per week in course preparation.

**Papers**
There will be four papers due during the semester: two on Dante and one each on Petrarch and Boccaccio. These papers are to be typed double space from 3-4 pages and will be in response to posted questions on the Blackboard Vista course. You will not need to do outside research to complete the papers: the responses should come directly from the readings and class discussions and presentations as well.

**Quizzes**
In order to ensure that students are keeping up with the reading assignments, there will be a quiz at the beginning of each class. These short, multiple-choice quizzes will be based on the content of that class’ reading assignment. At the end of the semester, two quiz scores can be dropped.

**Blackboard Vista discussions**
An instructor-led discussion will be present on the Blackboard Vista page for this course. After you have partially or fully completed the readings for the week, you should participate in the on-line discussion before going to class. There will always be several discussions available for each week’s lesson. You can choose the one of most interest to
you. You should spend at least 1 hour per week on the discussion boards.

**Participation**  
This portion of the grade is partially attendance and partially preparation. In order to participate in class and to complete assignments, it is imperative that students keep up with the reading. Discussion topics to be covered in class will be published on Blackboard Vista at least four days before the class. At some point in each class students will be asked to prepare answers to the discussion questions in small groups and present their results to the class.

**Final Exam**  
The Final Exam will be held in class on the last day of class (May 9). It will consist of two parts: short identifications and essay questions. The essay questions will be posted in advance.

**Course schedule**

1. **January 16:** Introduction to the course.  
2. **January 23:** Dante: Introduction and Cantos 1-4; Quiz 1  
   *summary of *Aeneid* Book VI (BBVista)*  
3. **January 30:** Dante Cantos 5-10; Quiz 2  
4. **February 6:** Dante Cantos 11-16; Quiz 3  
   *February 13: Holiday. No class*  
5. **February 20:** Dante Cantos 17-22; Quiz 4; Paper 1 due  
6. **February 27:** Dante Cantos 23-28; Quiz 5  
   *March 6: Spring Break. No class*  
7. **March 13:** Dante Cantos 29-34; Quiz 6  
8. **March 20:** Petrarch; Quiz 7; Paper 2 due  
9. **March 27:** Petrarch; Quiz 8  
10. **April 3:** Boccaccio; Quiz 9; Paper 3 due  
11. **April 10:** Boccaccio; Quiz 10  
   *April 17: Holy Thursday. No class*  
12. **April 24:** Boccaccio; Quiz 11  
13. **May 1:** Quiz 12; Paper 4 due  
14. **May 8:** Final Exam