Reading List:
The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri,
Edited and Translated by Robert M. Durling with Introduction and Notes by Ronald L. Martinez and Robert M. Durling, Oxford University Press. (Inferno, Purgatorio, Paradiso)

The primary text for the seminar will be Dante’s Commedia: Inferno, Purgatorio, Paradiso, trans. by Robert Durling and Ronald Martinez. With the understanding that most Honors Program students have had some experience reading Dante’s epic poem as freshmen, the seminar will of course be based upon the text while addressing broader topics such as government, religion, poetry, history and the like. The Durling/Martinez translation provides additional rich commentary and bibliography. The Hollander translation will work equally well for those students who may still have their books from freshman year. ¹ Depending upon the individual interests of the students, there may be greater exploration of politics, philosophy, psychology, science, social structure within the context of medieval Florence, supported by additional texts, such as the Vita Nuova, De Monarchia (Dante’s works) and other works by various poets, religious figures from classical times through medieval including contemporary interpretations. ²

Dante, as pilgrim and poet takes us beyond the isolation and despair of the dark wood to a greater understanding of ourselves in order to find a meaningful connection in the challenges of our existence. Each soul’s story, whether damned or saved, offers layers of meaning and enormous opportunity for research and study.

Dante experiences many layers of betrayal and through his narrative poem, engages his readers in similar struggles: in his personal life with his circle of friends and mentors, facing

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¹ Other translations work well in survey courses; however they will not be sufficient for our in-depth study of Dante.
² Each member of the class will choose a topic to be developed for the final paper, which will include one class presentation on the student’s topic of interest.
uncertainty about his poetic vocation and in his political and religious affiliations. What influences and guides us in the choices we make for our lives? Is Dante searching for meaning and justification from God, his fellow men, or from himself? What does Dante learn about the seven deadly sins and the seven virtues? About himself and about all human beings as he presents himself as everyman in the opening line of his narrative? Accepting Dante’s challenge to find the self evolves from medieval scholasticism, steeped in theology and philosophy and delves into the entire experience of the seven deadly sins, all consuming desire, lust for power, revenge, self-love so as to discover purpose and meaning, in all that life holds, purged and transformed in part by the virtues of love and faithfulness, as well as fame and vindication. And yet, politics and religious hypocrisy often dominate the discourse. What was Dante’s purpose in recording his personal narrative? Are the lessons still valuable today?

**Classes:**

**Jan. 12:** Intro and overview (we will be reading and discussing selected *canti* from all three *cantiche* each class, with focus on similar themes)

**Jan. 26**
Canti 1-3 (I, P, P)

**Feb. 2**
Inf 3-5 (classical poets, love misguided), Purg 3-7 (Valley of Princes), Par 19, 20 (salvation of pagans, virtuous heathens)

**Feb. 9**
Inf 5-7 (lust, avarice, gluttony)
Purg 19-26
Par 3, 8

**Feb. 16**
Inf 2 (Lucy reference) 8, 9
(Dis as symbolic of despair of poets in contrast to grace of God (angel)
Purg 9, 19, 27 (dreams of Dante, poetry)
Par 7, 13 (Solomon, creation perfected), 21 (contemplatives) 30, 31 (Beatrice, the symbolism and poetry of the Rose)

**Feb. 23**
Inf 10 (pride) 12 overview, 13 (violence and suicides)
Purg 10-14 (pride, envy)
Par 4, 6, 15-17 (Cacciaguida, Florence)

**Mar. 9**
Inf 15, 16 (Brunetto Latini, poetry, prophecy for Dante, 3 Florentines)
Purg 21 (Statius completes penance) 30, 31 (Dante’s confession)
Par 24-26 (Dante examined by saints)

**Mar. 16**
Outlines/overviews with discussion of student semester projects

**Mar. 23**
Inf 17 (overview) 18-20, 23-25 (usury, fraud, seduction, popes)
Purg 14-19
Par 10-12, 21-22 (degeneracy in religious orders)

**Mar. 30**
- Inf 26-28 (betrayal, treachery: kin, country, benefactors)
- Purg 22, 23, 28
- Par 23, 27, 29 (denunciation of Church and human sinfulness)

**Apr. 6**
- Inf 32-33 (betrayal, treachery: kin, country benefactors)
- Purg 29, 30 (revelation, Beatrice)
- Par 16, 18, 19 (just rulers, Florentine families)

**Apr. 13**
- Inf 30, 31, 34
- Purg 31-33 (Beatrice, pageant)
- Par 31-33 (ascent to Beatific Vision, Love that moves the sun and the stars)

**Apr. 27**
Dante and contemporary interpretations

**Final Exam/Project**
**Thursday, May 7, 9am**

**Format:** class presentation and research paper/mini-thesis developed over the semester. We will define topics, review possible areas of interest, and work out details at our first class.
"I've seen better metaphors in my litter box."