

College of the Humanities  
Carleton University  
HUMS 4901

**Dante's *Divine Comedy*  
Online Seminar  
Winter 2021**

Course instructor: Dr. Erik Stephenson  
Email address: erik.stephenson@carleton.ca  
Virtual office hours: Mondays, 1pm to 2:30pm

**Course Description:**

Dante's *Divine Comedy* is a love poem dedicated to the memory of his Beloved Lady, Beatrice Portinari. It is equally true to say that it is a poem *about* love. It presents, in poetical form, a comprehensive theory of the nature, origin, function, aim, corruption, and purification of human love. In this course, we will be engaging in a close reading of the *Comedy* in its entirety. We will do so in the aim, first and foremost, of gaining a thorough understanding of its theory of love. Since Dante did not develop his account of love *ex nihilo*, we will be studying the *Comedy* with an eye to the many medieval theories of love that it is clearly indebted to or reacting against. These will include, most notably, the theory of courtly love formalized by Andreas Capellanus, and the many accounts of the metaphysical, ethical, political, and religious dimensions of love put forward by such theologians as Augustine, Hugh of St. Victor, Bernard of Clairvaux, Ibn Sina, and Thomas Aquinas. But since, as has often been said, the *Comedy* is both encyclopaedic in its scope, and yet also firmly rooted in the history and politics of 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century Italy, our study of it will inevitably require that we acquaint ourselves with, among other things: the cosmology, natural science, rhetorical theory, and teaching methods of Dante's day; the origins and history of the mendicant orders; the thirteenth-century struggle between Guelfs and Ghibellines and the longer history of conflict between the Empire and the Papacy to which it is tied; and certain developments in 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> century visual art and architecture.

**Prerequisites:** Fourth-year standing in the Bachelor of Humanities program or special permission from the instructor.

**Seminar sessions:** online *via* Zoom every Friday from 8:35am to 11:25am.

- The permanent link and password for our Zoom meetings will be posted on cuLearn.

### Required Texts:

Dante. *The Divine Comedy: 3 Volumes*. Tr. D. Sayers. London: Penguin, 1949-1962.

We will also be reading Dante's *Vita Nuova*, a good translation of which is available for free online through the Princeton Dante Project:

<http://etcweb.princeton.edu/dante/pdp/>

**Grades:** Grades will be based solely on individual, academic merit as judged against absolute standards. Grades will not be adjusted to achieve a supposedly normal distribution or manipulated in any other way.

Grades for the course will be based on the following:

- (1) Seminar participation, for a total of 20% of the final mark;
  - (2) One annotated bibliography, **due on April 14<sup>th</sup>**, and worth 30% of the final mark; and
  - (3) One take-home examination, 10 to 15 double-spaced pages in length, worth 50% of the final mark, **due on April 27<sup>th</sup>** – i.e., the last day of the April examination period.
- I will distribute separate handouts describing my expectations for: (1) seminar participation; (2) the annotated bibliography; and (3) the take-home examination.
  - At the end of the course, you will be assigned a letter grade corresponding to your final percentage, according to the standard Carleton University grading scale (which can be found in the Undergraduate Calendar)

### Learning Outcomes:

- The *Divine Comedy* is a work of philosophy, theology, history, and – above all – poetry. Students will come away from this course with a thorough understanding of it in terms of these various dimensions.
- Our study of the *Divine Comedy* will thus be resolutely interdisciplinary, and students can expect to finish the course with a deeper understanding of not only the methods of textual analysis deployed by scholars today in the study of works within these various disciplines, but also the methods that would have been employed in Dante's day. Of course, students can also expect to make progress in their own ability to perform such textual analyses.

- Students will gain an appreciation for how works within very different media and disciplines can influence each other within a cultural tradition. They will learn how to read such works in light of each other, and how to identify long-term trends, affiliations and influences, departures, conflicts, novelties, and so on, within a relatively cohesive cultural tradition.
- Students will be introduced to various databases, collections, and research tools relevant to the study of Dante and/or widely used in the study of medieval literature, theology, philosophy, *et alia*.

**Course Requirements at a Glance:**

- To pass this course, you will have to:
  - Regularly attend, and do the readings assigned for, the online seminar sessions; and
  - Complete and submit *both* the annotated bibliography and the take-home examination
- Failure to attend online seminar sessions regularly and/or complete *both* the annotated bibliography and the take-home examination will result in the grade 'F'.

**Attendance:**

- *Attendance and participation are critical components of all courses in the liberal arts. Thus, a pattern of non-attendance will in and of itself constitute sufficient grounds for my awarding a final course grade of 'F'.*
- This means that you must attend online seminar sessions regularly or you will fail the course automatically. If you find yourself having to miss more than two or three sessions, you will have to justify your absences, and the onus will be on you to do so (I will not chase after you). You will not be penalized if there are legitimate reasons for your repeated absences.
- Furthermore, it is your responsibility to stay on top of any materials covered, to find out about and obtain any materials distributed, and to enquire about any announcements made during seminar sessions you must miss for whatever reason.

**Submission Guidelines:**

- All written assignments for this course are to be uploaded to a file folder prepared for that purpose in cuLearn.
- Your assignment will be considered submitted when it is uploaded.
- All uploaded documents must be in MS Word (i.e., .doc or .docx) format. Documents in any other file format will not be considered submitted, and late penalties will accrue, until the MS Word document is submitted.

- Do not upload your document a second time in order to fix a minor issue since the second submission date and time will replace the original one. If you need to re-submit, do so by emailing the document to me directly at erik.stephenson@carleton.ca

### **Late Assignments:**

- Assignments will be docked 3% (or one third of a letter grade) for each calendar day after their due-date. Late penalties on assignments accompanied by a medical certificate or other proof of a legitimate reason for lateness will be adjusted accordingly.
- Late assignments will very quickly sink to a grade of 'F'. Hand in your assignments on time.
- Even an assignment that is so late it will merit a grade of 0%(F) must be completed or you will fail the course.

### **Plagiarism:**

- Plagiarism is an academic offence. A professor who suspects a student has plagiarized an assignment is required to turn the matter over to the Dean. Students found guilty of plagiarism can receive a 0% for the assignment or a grade of 'F' for the whole course. In extreme cases, they can even be suspended or expelled from the university.
- If you use ideas or language from secondary sources in your assignments without citing those sources properly, you will have committed plagiarism, and I will have no choice but to hand over your work to the Dean for investigation.
- Submitting the same work as another student also constitutes plagiarism. Therefore, although I encourage you to help each other, if you hand in an assignment that is substantially the same as another student's, I will have to turn both of them in to the Dean to be investigated for plagiarism.
- Please read the full Departmental policy on plagiarism, which can be found on the final page of this course syllabus.

### **Seminar Session and Reading Schedule:**

#	Date	Readings:
1	15 Jan.	<i>Vita Nuova</i>
2	22 Jan.	<i>Inferno</i> , Cantos I-IV
3	29 Jan.	<i>Inferno</i> , Cantos V-XI
4	5 Feb.	<i>Inferno</i> , XII-XXII
5	12 Feb.	<i>Inferno</i> , XXIII-XXXIV
6	26 Feb.	<i>Purgatorio</i> , I-VIII
7	5 Mar.	<i>Purgatorio</i> , IX-XVIII

8	12 Mar.	<i>Purgatorio</i> , XIX-XXVII
9	19 Mar.	<i>Purgatorio</i> , XXVIII-XXXIII
10	26 Mar.	<i>Paradiso</i> , I-V
11	2 Apr.	<i>Paradiso</i> , VI-XIV
12	9 Apr.	<i>Paradiso</i> , XV-XXVII
13	14 Apr.	<i>Paradiso</i> , XXVIII-XXXIII



## University Regulations for All College of the Humanities Courses

### Academic Dates and Deadlines

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This schedule contains the dates prescribed by the University Senate for academic activities. Dates relating to fee payment, cancellation of course selections, late charges, and other fees or charges will be published in the Important Dates and Deadlines section of the Registration Website.

### Online Learning Resources

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While online courses offer flexibility and convenience, they also present unique challenges that traditional face-to-face courses do not. [On this page](#), you will find resources collected by Carleton Online to help you succeed in your online courses; Learning Strategies and Best Practices, Study Skills, Technology and Online Interaction and Engagement.

### Copies of Written Work Submitted

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Always retain for yourself a copy of all essays, term papers, written assignments or take-home tests submitted in your courses.

### Academic Integrity at Carleton

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The University Senate defines **plagiarism** as “*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.*” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without

prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs." Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course

[Academic Integrity Policy](#)

[Academic Integrity Process](#)

## Academic Accommodation Policy

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### Academic Accommodation

Carleton University is committed to providing access to the educational experience in order to promote academic accessibility for all individuals.

**Parental Leave:** The Student Parental Leave Policy is intended to recognize the need for leave at the time of a pregnancy, birth or adoption and to permit a pause in studies in order to provide full-time care in the first year of parenting a child or for health-related parental responsibilities.

**Religious obligation:** Carleton University accommodates students who, by reason of religious obligation, must miss an examination, test, assignment deadline, laboratory or other compulsory academic event.

### **Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:**

Academic accommodation of students with disabilities is available through the [Paul Menton Centre](#) by evaluations that are carried out on an individual basis, in accordance with human rights legislation and University policy, and with the support of relevant, professional/medical documentation.

### **Survivors of Sexual Violence**

Individuals who disclose that they have experienced sexual violence will be provided support services and will be treated with dignity and respect at all times by the University and its representatives. A person affected by sexual violence is not required to report an incident of or make a complaint about sexual violence under the formal complaint process of the Sexual Violence Policy in order to obtain support and services, or in order to receive appropriate accommodation for their needs.

[Supports and services available at the University to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support.](#)

### **Accommodation for Student Activities**

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. [More information.](#)

## Grading System at Carleton University

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Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor, subject to the approval of the faculty Dean. Standing in courses will be shown by alphabetical grades. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean."

The [system of grades](#) used, with corresponding grade points and the percentage conversion, is listed below. Grade points indicated are for courses with 1.0 credit value.

## Course Sharing Websites and Copyright

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Classroom teaching and learning activities, including lectures, discussions, presentations, etc., by both instructors and students, are copy protected and remain the intellectual property of their respective author(s). All course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, outlines, and other materials, are also protected by copyright and remain the intellectual property of their respective author(s).

Students registered in the course may take notes and make copies of course materials for their own educational use only. Students are not permitted to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly for commercial or non-commercial purposes without express written consent from the copyright holder(s).

[More information](#)

## Student Rights and Responsibilities at Carleton

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Carleton University strives to provide a safe environment conducive to personal and intellectual growth, free of injustice and characterized by understanding respect, peace, trust, and fairness.

The [Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy](#) governs the non-academic behaviour of students. Carleton University is committed to building a campus that promotes personal growth through the establishment and promotion of transparent and fair academic and non-academic responsibilities.

[7 Student Rights and Responsibilities](#)



## Deferred Term Work

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In some situations, students are unable to complete term work because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control, which forces them to delay submission of the work.

1. Students who claim illness, injury or other extraordinary circumstances beyond their control as a reason for missed term work are held responsible for immediately informing the instructor concerned and for making alternate arrangements with the instructor and in all cases this must occur no later than three (3.0) working days after the term work was due. The alternate arrangement must be made before the last day of classes in the term as published in the academic schedule. Normally, any deferred term work will be completed by the last day of term. In all cases, formative evaluations providing feedback to the student should be replaced with formative evaluations. In the event the altered due date must extend beyond the last day of classes in the term, the instructor will assign a grade of zero for the work not submitted and submit the student's earned grade accordingly; the instructor may submit a change of grade at a later date. Term work cannot be deferred by the Registrar.
2. In cases where a student is not able to complete term work due to illness or injury for a significant period of time/or long term, the instructor and/or student may elect to consult with the Registrar's Office (undergraduate courses) or Graduate Registrar (graduate courses) to determine appropriate action.

[More information of deferred Term Work](#)

## Deferred Final Exams

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Students who are unable to write a final examination because of a serious illness/emergency or other circumstances beyond their control may apply for accommodation. Normally, the accommodation for a missed final examination will be granting the student the opportunity to write a deferred examination. In specific cases when it is not possible to offer a deferred examination, and with the approval of the Dean, an alternate accommodation may be made.

The application for a deferral must:

1. be made in writing to the Registrar's Office no later than three working days after the original final examination or the due date of the take-home examination; and,
2. be fully supported by appropriate documentation and, in cases of illness, by a medical certificate dated no later than one working day after the examination, or by appropriate documents in other cases. Medical documents must specify the date of the onset of the illness, the (expected) date of recovery, and the extent to which the student was/is incapacitated during the time of the examination.

[More information on Final Exam Deferrals  
Registrar's Office "Defer an Exam" page](#)

## Financial vs. Academic Withdrawal

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Withdrawn. No academic credit, no impact on the CGPA. WDN is a permanent notation that appears on the official transcript for students who withdraw after the full fee adjustment date in each term (noted in the Academic Year section of the Calendar each term). Students may withdraw on or before the last day of classes.

Important dates can be found [here](#). Make sure that you are aware of the separate deadlines for Financial and Academic withdrawal!

Making registration decisions in Carleton Central involves making a financial and academic commitment for the courses you choose, regardless of attendance. If you do not attend – you must withdraw in Carleton Central within the published deadlines to cancel your registration. You can do this via the [MyCarleton Portal](#). A fee adjustment is dependent on registration being canceled within the published [fee deadlines](#) and dependent on your course load.

## Department Contact Information

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*Bachelor of the Humanities* 300 Paterson Hall  
[CollegeOfHumanities@cunet.carleton.ca](mailto:CollegeOfHumanities@cunet.carleton.ca)

*Greek and Roman Studies* 300 Paterson Hall  
[GreekAndRomanStudies@cunet.carleton.ca](mailto:GreekAndRomanStudies@cunet.carleton.ca)

*Religion* 2A39 Paterson Hall  
[Religion@cunet.carleton.ca](mailto:Religion@cunet.carleton.ca)

*Digital Humanities (Graduate)* 2A39 Paterson Hall  
[digitalhumanities@carleton.ca](mailto:digitalhumanities@carleton.ca)

*Digital Humanities (Undergraduate Minor)* 300 Paterson Hall  
[digitalhumanities@carleton.ca](mailto:digitalhumanities@carleton.ca)

*MEMS (Undergraduate Minor)* 300 Paterson Hall  
[CollegeOfHumanities@cunet.carleton.ca](mailto:CollegeOfHumanities@cunet.carleton.ca)