

Dante's Italy

Italy at the end of the Middle Ages was an intricate patchwork of small states woven together by a vibrant and distinctive culture. We will examine the politics, law, economic life, culture, and spirituality of the independent city states like Florence and Milan, the Papal States (centered on Rome), and the Kingdom of Naples through texts, including selected works by Dante, buildings and city plans, and works of art. Our goal will be to develop a vivid sense of what life was like in the Italy of Dante, Giotto, and Boccaccio.

Contact Information

Victoria Morse, 203B Leighton, x4210, vmorse. Office Hours: TuTh 1:15-2:15, F 9-10 and by appointment. Home Telephone: 645-7807 (please do not call between 7-9pm; 9-11pm is ok). You can reach me most quickly by email during the week and by phone evenings and weekends.

Heather Tompkins, Reference Librarian (History and MARS Liaison), Library 467, x7172, htompkin.

Useful Reference Works

Medieval Italy: An Encyclopedia, ed. Christopher Kleinhenz (Gould Reference)

New Cambridge Medieval History, vol. 5 (c.1198-1300), ed. David Abulafia (Gould Reference)

Penguin Historical Atlas of the Medieval World, ed. Andrew Jotischky and Caroline Hull (Gould Reference)

Atlas Of Medieval Europe, ed. Angus Mackay with David Ditchburn (Gould Reference)

The Cambridge Companion to Dante, ed. Rachel Jacoff (Closed Reserves for Hist 235)

The Medieval and Renaissance Studies (MARS) Subject Guide lists many helpful resources (Library home page=>Find=>Research Help=>Subject Guides).

Course Goals

- 1) To introduce major themes, issues, players, and sources of Italian history in and shortly before Dante's lifetime and to give you a feel for life at that time.
- 2) To introduce you to *The Divine Comedy* and other works by Dante from a historical perspective.
- 3) To work on critical reading of primary sources and secondary literature.
- 4) To work on oral and written communication and research skills.
- 5) To work on skills of visual analysis and the use of visual evidence in constructing historical arguments.

Schedule

Introduction: A Tour of Italy ca. 1200

Week 1

4/1 Many Italies: Introduction to the Course

Reading: Abulafia, *Italy in the Central Middle Ages*(= ICMA), Introduction

- 4/3 The Papal States (Prof. North)
 Readings: *ICMA*, ch. 3; *Deeds of Pope Innocent III*, Sections 1-17 and 123-32, trans. James Powell (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 2004), pp.3-17 and 231-41; Norman Zacour, "The Cardinals' View of the Papacy," in *The Religious Roles of the Papacy: Ideals and Realities, 1150-1300*, ed. Christopher Ryan, *Papers in Mediaeval Studies*, 8 (Toronto: PIMS, 1989), pp.413-38; Innocent III, *Register* I.235, I.349 (1198– Bulls on Forgery) and VIII.105 (1205 – Bull on Heresy in Viterbo), trans. W. L. North from the edition of J.P Migne (ed), *Patrologia latina* 214, cols 202A-203C and 322B-323D and *PL* 215, cols. 673B-674D. (handout via email)

Week 2

- 4/8 The Kingdom of Sicily
 Readings: *ICMA*, ch. 2 and 10; Abulafia, *Frederick II: A Medieval Emperor*, ch. 8 and 12 (251-89 and 375-407).

- 4/10 The City States
 Readings: *ICMA*, ch. 1; Giovanni Codagnello, "Account of 1090," Unpublished translation by William L. North (I will email this to you); Master Rufino, "Life of Raimondo 'Palmario' of Piacenza," in *Saints and Cities in Medieval Italy*, ed. Diana Webb, pp. 65-92; Diana Webb, "Introduction," in *Saints and Cities in Medieval Italy*, ed. Diana Webb, pp. 4-45.

Friday 4/11 **PSA due 5pm**

Politics and Society in Dante's Italy

Week 3

- 4/14 Angevin Naples
 Readings: Caroline Bruzelius, *Stones of Naples*, ch. 1, pp.11-45 (book is on open reserve); *Towns of Italy in the Later Middle Ages* (on-line resource, access via Bridge), doc. 67
- 4/17 Pope Boniface VIII
 Readings: Kessler and Zacharias, *Rome 1300*, Intro. and ch. ?? (book is on open reserve); Brentano, *Rome before Avignon*, selection

Week 4

- 4/22 Florence
 Readings: Dino Compagni, *Chronicle*; Introduction to *The Portable Dante*; *ICMA*, ch. 8
- 4/24 *Inferno*

Week 5

- 4/29 Economic Life in City and Countryside
 Readings: *ICMA*, 5-7; *Towns Italy in the Later Middle Ages* (on-line resource, access via Bridge), Documents 1, 3, 19-21, 44-46, 49-57
 Presentation: Pisa and the *bacini*

Religious Debates at the Time of Dante

- 5/1 Guest Lecturer: Professor Jennifer Deane, University of Minnesota, Morris
Readings: Katharine Gill, "Open Monasteries for Women in Late Medieval and Early Modern Italy"; Boniface VIII, bulls (handout)

Week 6

- 5/6 Spiritual Franciscans and the Poverty Debate
Readings: Ubertino da Casale, excerpt from *The Tree of the Crucified Life of Jesus*; Angelo Clareno and Peter John Olivi, Letters, from *Apocalyptic Spirituality*; Petrus Iohannis Olivi, Selections from the Apocalypse Commentary, On-line Medieval Sourcebook (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/olivi.html>); Angelo Clareno, "On Torture" (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/clareno-inq.html>)

Discussion Questions: 1) How did these writers understand the institutional church and especially the papacy? 2) What kind of religious life did they seek and what did St. Francis, in particular, exemplify for them? 3) Who were their opponents and what can we deduce about their views by reading between the lines? 4) Do you think Dante was influenced by these (and similar) views? Why?

Presentation: Assisi and the basilica of San Francesco

Turn in research paper topics

Dante's Intellectual World

- 5/8 Art, Patronage, and Urban Design
Readings: Tim Benton, "The Three Cities Compared: Urbanism," in *Siena, Florence and Padua: Art, Society and Religion 1280-1400*, vol. II: Case Studies, ed. Diana Norman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 7-28; David Friedman, "Palaces and the Street in Late-Medieval and Renaissance Italy," in *Urban Landscapes: International Perspectives*, J. W. R. Whitehand and P. J. Larkham (London: Routledge, 1992), 69-113; *Towns of Italy*, doc. 2.

Discussion Questions: 1) What were the practical concerns of urban planning and urban life? 2) What were the aesthetics that guided people's building choices? Did these change over the periods covered by our authors? 3) Choose a building to focus on (one discussed and illustrated in the readings) and be prepared to explain what it tells us about Dante's Italy (comments on style, function, patronage, economics, etc)

Week 7

- 5/12 **Research Paper: Primary Source Papers Due**

- 5/13 Education
Readings: *ICMA*, 9; Charles Davis, "Education in Dante's Italy"; Brunetto Latini, *The Book of the Treasure*, Table of Contents and pp. 1-14, 145-59, 188-215; start *Purgatorio*

Presentation: Perugia and the *fontana maggiore*

Discussion Questions: 1) What was the purpose of education in Dante's times? What topics did it cover? 2) How were moral qualities taught? What made people moral, according to thinkers of the time? 3) Look back at the portrayal of Brunetto in *Inferno* XV. How did Dante want the reader to understand him? 4) What is the role of rhetoric, speech, and writing in the education of the time?

5/15 *Purgatorio*

Discussion Questions: 1) What is the geography of Purgatory? How does it relate to the geography of Hell? How do souls get into each? 2) What happens to souls in Purgatory? By what means are they transformed? Into what? 3) How does the Pilgrim interact with the souls in Purgatory? Compare this with the interactions in the *Inferno*. Why did souls in Hell wish to speak to him? What about souls in Purgatory? 4) Does the *Purgatorio* have a political layer of meaning? What should we learn from it and how does it compare to and contrast with lessons of the *Inferno*? 5) One author describes the *Purgatorio* as "an educational image-bank." What do you think of this characterization? What are the images for?

Week 8

5/19 **Paper 2 due 5pm; Research Worksheet due**

5/20 Scholasticism and Mysticism
Reading: Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis*

5/22 Dante's Political Theory
Reading: Dante, *On World Government*

Presentation: Cavallini in Rome

Week 9

5/27 *Paradiso*

5/29 Dante's Life and Influence
Readings: Boccaccio, "Life of Dante"

Research papers: draft due

Week 10

6/3 Dante's Italy

Assignments and Grading

Attendance and Participation: The participation grade is based on attendance, class discussion, and various small assignments (like making sketch maps). Attendance and participation will be graded on an A-F scale according to the following guidelines (modified from those used by Princeton's History department):

A: the student attends every class with thoughtful questions or ideas about the readings.

An 'A' discussant engages others about ideas, respects the opinions of others, and consistently elevates the level of discussion; he or she completes all small assignments in a thoughtful and creative manner.

B: the student attends all or almost all classes, but does not always come with questions or ideas about the readings. A 'B' discussant waits for others to raise interesting issues. Some 'B' discussants, while courteous and articulate, do not adequately listen to other participants or relate their comments to the direction of the conversation.

C: the student attends regularly but is an infrequent, unwilling, or marginally courteous participant in discussion.

D or F: the student who fails to attend regularly, who is not adequately prepared for discussion or who is discourteous to fellow students risks a D or F.

Primary Source Analysis (PSA): A PSA consists of two elements. First, it presents a selection from a primary source that we are reading for class that you find interesting, puzzling, problematic, or otherwise significant. This selection should be long enough to be meaningful and short enough to allow you to offer a significant and specific analysis of its contents in two pages. A good rule of thumb is no more than about 10 -15 lines, no less than a complete sentence. Second, it consists of your analysis. This analysis should briefly place the text in the larger context of the work and then proceed to identify a specific element or set of elements in the text that raises questions or problems, brings together the author's larger themes or ideas, etc. In your analysis, you may (and indeed probably should) raise questions but make sure that the questions are a) tied to your text ; and b) specific enough to lead to meaningful answers. Do not be vague, do not do a plot summary.

Presentation: Students will work in small groups to prepare presentations on major Italian cities and their monuments and artifacts. More information will be forthcoming, but some of the key components will be: researching; finding, analyzing, and presenting relevant images; working on presentation style; selecting and producing supporting materials.

Plan A

Papers: Two formal papers (4-6 pages). I will hand out more specific guidelines in class. Please note that I will be happy to read drafts and make suggestions; in all cases, no paper should be submitted without having been read by someone other than yourself whom you can trust to ask at least a few hard questions (a Write Place tutor is ideal). In addition, you should read your paper aloud as a regular part of your editing process.

Final Exam: The final exam will allow you to pull together ideas and insights from the entire course and to think more broadly about the issues we have been pondering over the last ten weeks. You will prepare and write an essay from a list passed out in advance; the essay should be thesis-driven and reasonably well-documented, but may be less formally written than the papers. You will be able to prepare for writing at your own pace (collecting evidence and outlining, for example), but you will be asked to write for only a limited period. There may also be a primary source analysis and/or map component to the final. The final will be due at the end of the finals period.

Grading for Plan A:

Attendance and Participation	15%
PSA	5%

Papers (2 @ 20% each)	40%
Presentation	20%
Final Exam	20%

Plan B

Research Paper: The research paper will be due at the end of finals. More details will follow, but see below for the components of the project that will be due over the course of the term; these will contribute toward the final grade according to the breakdown below.

Please note that if you do not complete the steps in a timely way, you will be asked to move back to Plan A. I strongly encourage you to develop a topic based on the readings for one of the class sessions, ideally one of the Dante readings. For a very helpful introduction to how to write a research paper, including how to develop a topic, see Diethelm Prowe's "How to Write a History Research Paper" at the History Department Website:

<http://apps.carleton.edu/curricular/history/study/writing/>

Components of the research paper project and their weight for the course grade:

Stage 1. Proposal and questions	
Stage 2. Primary Source Discussion (4-5 pages)	15%
Stage 3. Research Worksheet and Annotated Bibliography	15%
Stage 5. Draft	5%
Stage 6. Final Paper	25%

Grading for Plan B:

Attendance and Participation	15%
PSA	5%
Presentation	20%
Research Paper Stages	60%