

ITAL 310 Dante in Translation
Professor Giuseppe Mazzotta
Paper Topics

The following is a list of possible topics for your final papers. You are also welcome to pursue a topic of your own choosing (subject to approval by November 15).

1. Compare the theory of love Dante develops in the *Vita nuova* with those of his medieval precursors and contemporaries (e.g. Chrétien de Troyes, Andreas Capellanus, Cavalcanti).
2. What is Dante's position on vengeance in the poem? Is it ever justified?
3. In Inferno 4 Dante places himself within the *bella scola* of classical poets (Homer, Ovid, Horace, Lucan, Virgil). Focus on the presence of any one of these authors in the poem to explore where Dante situates himself vis-à-vis the classical tradition
4. Assess Machiavelli's debt to Dante in the *Prince*.
5. Explore the various reincarnations of Francesca da Rimini in Romantic art, literature and/or music.
6. How is Dante's understanding of humility shaped by the theology St. Francis embraces in Cantic of the Creatures?
7. Read/reread Boccaccio's first tale for Day One of the *Decameron*. How would Dante treat the lead character? Take into consideration the ending of *Paradiso* 13.
8. Discuss Dante's development of a theory of the "political counselor."
9. Examine Dante's view of Islam. Do its representatives fare better or worse than wayward Christians (or pagans) do?
10. In the episode of Paolo and Francesca, Dante-pilgrim is overcome by the passion of the two lovers whom Dante-poet condemns to hell. Discuss the discrepancy between the perspectives of the pilgrim and the poet. How does it evolve over the course of the poem?
11. Discuss Dante's encounter with Cacciaguida in light of Cicero's *Dream of Scipio*.
12. How would you characterize Dante's treatment of fathers and sons?
13. Compare pictorial representations of a particular episode by the *Comedy's* various illustrators (e.g. Botticelli, Blake, Dore, Dali)
14. Consider *Inferno* 19 as an intertext for James Joyce's *The Sisters*.
15. Examine the presence of Guido da Montefeltro in T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"
16. What is the thrust of Dante's invectives against the Papacy? Can he be called a "proto-Protestant"?
17. Explore Dante's ties to the *pastorella* tradition.
18. Your choice.