

[French & Italian Languages and Literatures](#)

Dennis Looney

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Tuesday and Thursday 11 a.m.–12:15 p.m.

Italian Cultural Heritage I Italian 80

Course Description

The primary goal of this course is to introduce you to the foundational period of Italian literary and linguistic culture in its historical context, ca. 1200–1400. To that end, we will read poetry and prose from the best known writers in Italian of the medieval and early Renaissance periods.

A secondary, equally important, goal is to examine, to the extent possible, the very process that has encouraged critics to proclaim Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, the “Three Crowns,” that is, to establish them as the cornerstone in the foundation of Italian culture. We will consider how these three authors acquired such status within the Italian literary canon. And we will ponder the question: Does their canonization inhibit us from assuming that other kinds of writers and other types of writings might have a place in the canon? The example of one marginalized author in particular, St. Catherine, will help us pursue this question.

Required texts to buy in the University Book Center (copies will be on reserve in Hillman Library):

- Herder, Harry, with Jonathan Morris. *Italy: A Short History* (HH) (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2nd ed.);
- Dante, *La Vita Nuova*, trans. Dante Gabriel Rossetti (Dover Books);
- Dante, *Inferno*, trans. Robert Pinsky (Noonday Press);
- *The Italian Renaissance Reader* (IRR), eds. J. Bondanella, M. Musa (Meridian Books);
- Catherine of Siena, *Passion for the Truth, Compassion for Humanity* (New City Press);
- Photocopy packet (for the first month of class).

- Aug. 30 **Introduction:** A tour of the syllabus and an introduction to the business of the course.
Meet Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, St. Catherine, and others!
- Sept. 1 **The Classical World** as backdrop for Italy (HH 1-37)
- 6 **THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD** (HH 38-65) and St. Francis, “The Song of the Creatures” (photocopy 7) and “Rule and Testament” (photocopy 8-12).
- 8 Medieval culture and St. Francis, “The Song of the Creatures” (reread HH 38-65, 70-72)
Class held in Heinz Chapel at 11:00 (study in advance: www.discover.pitt.edu/chapel)
- 13 The Franciscan movement: Jacopone da Todi (photocopy 13-16)
- 15 Frederick II and Courtly Love Lyric (photocopy 17-25); (HH 66-70)
- 20 Cielo d'Alcamo (photocopy 26-31); Compiuta Donzella (32-33); Cecco Angiolieri (34-35)
- 22 Lyrics of the *Dolce Stil Novo*: Guinizzelli (photocopy 36) + Cavalcanti (photocopy 37-39)
- 27 The Maturation of the Sweet New Style: Dante, *La Vita Nuova* (read the entire work)
- 29 TEST 1
- Oct. 4 **Italy in the Age of Dante** (HH 72-94).
Read Dante, *Inferno*, Canti 1-2 (pp. 1-17); also read John Freccero, “Foreword,” pp. ix-xvii.
- 6 Read *Inferno*, Canti 3 - 6 (focus on 3 + 5)
11 “ “ “ “ 7 - 11 (focus on 10)
- 13 Re-read Canti 1-11 Some cinematic versions of *Inferno*.
- 18 “ “ “ “ 12 - 16 (focus on 13 + 15)
- 20 “ “ “ “ 17 - 22 (focus on 21 + 22)
- 25 “ “ “ “ 23 - 30 (focus on 26)
- 27 “ “ “ “ 31 - 34 (focus on Ugolino episode in 32-33)
- Nov. 1 TEST 2; WWW assignment due.
- 3 **Humanistic Culture in the Trecento (the 1300s):**
Petrarch, poems 1, 3, 132, 134 (IRR)
- 8 Petrarch, “Mt. Ventoux,” poems 16, 23, 34, 35, 52, 61, 81 (IRR)
- 10 Petrarch, “Letter to Posterity,” poems 126, 129, 264, 365 (IRR)
- 15 St. Catherine of Siena (excerpts from *Passion for the Truth*)
introduction, pp. 7-16; chronology, pp. 139-141; *Letters*, pp. 19-49
- 17 St. Catherine of Siena, *Prayers*, pp. 50-85
- 22 St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue* 86-137
- 29 Boccaccio, *Decameron*, Introduction (IRR, pp. 60-79)
- Dec. 1 Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 4 novelle (IRR, pp. 79-99)
- 6 Boccaccio, *Decameron*, more novelle (IRR, pp. 100-161)
- Dec. 8 **Conclusion: The Beginnings of the Renaissance**

Thursday, FINAL EXAMINATION, in Crawford 169, at 12:00 – 2:00 pm.

Dec. 15 **Please note the date of the final exam and schedule your end-of-term departure accordingly.**

Evaluation

- 20% Test 1
- 20% Test 2
- 25% Final Exam
- 10% World Wide Web: assignment on the WWW and Dante
- 10% Participation and attendance
- 15% Reading quizzes

For most class meetings, you are required to take a brief online quiz on the Course Web site on that day's assigned reading by 10:30 a.m. the day the assignment is due.

It is your responsibility to take the quiz whether or not I remind you. For example, complete the reading on Jacopone da Todi and take the quiz no later than 10:30 a.m. September 13. The quizzes won't be accessible after that time.

I will drop the lowest three quiz grades. If you can't take a quiz for any reason (illness, computer snafu, oversleeping), it will count as one of your three lowest grades to be dropped.

You will find a fuller description of the WWW posted online under "assignments". Locate a Web site dedicated to some aspect of the life, works, and reception of Dante. Write a 2–4 page critical review of the Web site's utility as a potential source of information for students of Dante. Comment on the site's content and design.

Here are Web sites that offer guidelines and some examples of how to review a site:

http://ifets.ieee.org/periodical/website_review_guide.html <http://www.acm.org/crossroads/resources/reviews/webgd.html>

I am willing to make an accommodation on testing and any assignments if you have a legitimate need that requires it. You must first register with the Office of Disability Resources + Services, 216 WPU, 412-624-7890.

Office hours:

Tuesday 10–10:30 a.m. and 12:30–1:30 p.m.;

Thursday 10–10:30 a.m. in CL 1328.

It is also possible to arrange to meet with me at other times that we find mutually convenient. Call me at 624-6264 or contact me by e-mail at looney@pitt.edu to set up a meeting.

Check the course Web site for this course on a regular basis for additional tidbits.

I follow Arts and Sciences policy on cheating/plagiarism as spelled out at: www.cas.pitt.edu/faculty/aissyllabi.htm .