Dante and Florence
ACM Florence Program
Fall 2014

“I was born and grew up
on the lovely river Arno, in the great city”
(Inf. XXIII, 94-95)

The purpose of this course is to provide an introduction to Florence and the Divine
Comedy by approaching the text through the theme of Dante’s beloved and lamented city. In and
around Florence we will view art and other visual stimuli that either Dante himself saw or that
was inspired by his work. Reading the Comedy through the lens of Florence will make the place
come alive in a way that is impossible when the text is taught in the United States. Places, people
and social and political conflicts referenced by Dante will be studied from his perspective but also
that of today’s historians in an attempt to understand the development of Florence from a
medieval commune to a Renaissance center for the rebirth of scholarship, literature and the arts
and, finally, to the city we experience today. By the end of this course students should be able to:
1) express an understanding of Dante’s world and the choices he made in composing the Comedy,
2) evaluate Dante’s place in Florence today, and 3) feel a sense of accomplishment after their
journey in all three of Dante’s canticles.
Required Reading Materials

Alighieri, Dante. *The Divine Comedy*. The student is free to choose among the many translations available. Particularly recommended are the editions by Robert and Jean Hollander (3 vol.), Anthony Esolen (3 vol.), and The Princeton Dante Project (www.princeton.edu/Dante)

Course Requirements and Evaluation:

Class Participation (300 points): 200 points are for general participation. Students are expected to attend on time all class meetings and site visits, having prepared the readings and ready to participate with comments and questions. On days when we convene on site instead of in class, you will be asked to write a response to the readings assigned and give it to the professor when we meet on site. In addition, (100 points) there will be specific, individual presentations to complement our site visits.

Analytical Papers (300 points, = 3 x 100): Students will write three analytical papers (ca. 5 pages each).

Final Examination (400 points): The opportunity to bring together all the information and experiences of the semester. There will be a written exam (300 points) and the student’s participation in a class debate (“Should Ravenna return Dante’s remains to Florence?”) (100 points).

At the end of the course, the total number of points will be converted to percentages and the letter grade will correspond to commonly accepted practices (93-100% = A, 90-92% = A-, 88-89 = B+, 83-87 = B, 80-82% = B- etc.)

Policies:

Reading materials: Knowledge of the text of the *Comedy* is crucial for understanding this course. If you wish to own your own copy, you will be expected to purchase it. A few copies will be available in the ACM library and the online Princeton Dante Project contains all of the *Comedy* in addition to other works by Dante.

Class times: (TBA). Refer to the schedule for variations and site visits. When not on site, we will convene in (Aula 3).

Site Visits: When we convene on site, it is important that you be prompt and prepared. Consult a map and plan your travel route and time carefully. Dress for conditions, remembering that the inside of museums are not a lot warmer (and can be colder) than the outside. On days that we convene on site instead of in class, you will submit a written response to the assigned reading.

Attendance: Attendance at all class meetings is mandatory. Please notify the professor in advance in case of an emergency or illness or other situation. One unexcused absence will affect borderline grades; additional unexcused absences will result in the lowering of your grade for each absence. Medical excuse is the only valid reason for absence. Prompt arrival is crucial--class sessions will commence at the declared time. Late arrival negatively impacts your grade and in the case of site visits you may have to pay your own admission fee to ticket sites.

Written and Oral work: In fairness to your peers, late work is not allowed. When the deadline has passed, expect considerable reduction in your grade. To ensure parity, all written assignments
must be presented in hard copy on or before deadline. In order for you to pass the course, all work must be completed before your departure from Florence.

Course Schedule
Some of the class meetings will be site visits to be arranged in conjunction with other ACM Florence courses. Pay attention to the different times in the following schedule.

***(Note, August 2013: With the exception of Santa Maria Novella, which is rather easy to arrange, other site visits will be arranged in 2014, according to availability and the overall ACM program. Sites include, but are not limited to, the Archivio (if we can see Il Libro del Chiodo), various sites for images of Dante (Sante Croce, Santa Maria del Fiore, Piazza del Duomo including “il sasso”, the Baptistry) Bargello chapel, Uffizi gallery loggia), Dante’s “house” and neighborhood, Palazzo Vecchio (death mask), and the various Dante Plaques around town. Although not connected directly to Florence, other sites will illuminate the text such as in Pisa the “Torre della Fame” (Inf 33) in Palazzo dell’Orologio and in Rome the pine cone (now at the Vatican) mentioned by Dante (Inf. 31).***

Note: A complete reading of the Comedy is essential for understanding Dante. However, the student will be especially responsible for particular cantos and passages relating to Florence, which will be indicated by the professor prior to the date due.

Unit I: Inferno

Week 1
Day 1: Introduction to the course. Essential background on Dante and Florence.

   Study of Inf. 1

Day 2: Inf. 2-7

Week 2
Day 1: Inf. 8-17
Day 2: Inf. 18-23

Week 3
Day 1: Inf. 24-30
Day 2: Inf. 31-34

Unit II: Purgatorio

Week 4
Day 1: First Analytical paper due
Day 2: Purg. 1-5

Week 5
Day 1: Purg. 6-12
Day 2: Purg. 13-19

Week 6
Day 1: Purg. 20-25
Day 2: Purg. 26-33
Unit III: Paradiso

Week 7
Day 1: Second Analytical Paper due
Day 2: Par. 1-6

Week 8
Day 1: Par. 7-13
Day 2: Par. 14-20

Week 9
Day 1: Par. 21-27
Day 2: Par. 28-33

Week 10
Day 1: Class Debate (Part I of Final Exam)
Third Analytical Paper due
Day 2: Final Exam (Part II, written)