

## Dante's Dark Wood: Introducing the Divine Comedy

---

**Start date** 4 May 2018**End date** 6 May 2018**Venue** Madingley Hall  
Madingley  
Cambridge**Tutor** Dr Scott Annett**Course code** 1718NRX054**Director of Programmes**

Emma Jennings

**For further information on this  
course, please contact**Public Programme Coordinator, Clare Kerr  
[clare.kerr@ice.cam.ac.uk](mailto:clare.kerr@ice.cam.ac.uk) or 01223 746237**To book** See: [www.ice.cam.ac.uk](http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk) or telephone 01223 746262

---

### Tutor biography

Dr Scott Annett is a College Lecturer and Fellow of Robinson College. He is an experienced teacher of medieval literature, having taught courses in both the Faculty of English and the Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages at the University of Cambridge. He has experience working on authors as diverse as Chaucer, Marie de France, Dante and the Gawain Poet. Indeed, the relationship between medieval English and medieval Italian literature is one of his primary research interests. Dr Annett enjoys working on texts written in various languages (Latin, English, Italian and Anglo-Norman), as well as attending to the complex theological, philosophical and literary questions posed by authors of this time.

---

## Course programme

---

### Friday

Please plan to arrive between 16:30 and 18:30. You can meet other course members in the bar which opens at 18:15. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

19:00	Dinner
20:30 – 22:00	<b>Introducing Dante and the Medieval World</b>
22:00	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

### Saturday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	<b>Cavalcanti, Dante and Love as Sickness</b>
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	<b>Understanding Sin and Suffering in the <i>Commedia</i></b>
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	<b>Pity and Piety in Dante's <i>Commedia</i></b>
18:00 – 18:30	Free
18:30	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	<b>Paradise as Utopia?</b>
21:30	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

### Sunday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	<b>Chaucer's Dante</b>
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	<b>Dante and the Moderns</b>
12:45	Lunch

**The course will disperse after lunch**

---

## Course syllabus

---

### Aims:

The course aims to

- Introduce students to Dante's writing with particular focus on the *Divine Comedy*;
- Enhance critical appreciation of the texts discussed by close reading and practical criticism;
- Encourage awareness of the diversity and complexity of texts from the period, including attention to theological and philosophical perspectives, literary innovations and the wider European context within which the texts were written.

### Content:

This course explores Dante's writing, focusing on the *Divine Comedy*. The texts will be discussed in translation and particular attention will be paid to medieval culture and Dante's influence on English literature, including Chaucer. The final session will examine the impact of Dante's writing upon modern authors, including Samuel Beckett, T S Eliot and Seamus Heaney.

Session 1: Introducing Dante and the Medieval World

Session 2: Cavalcanti, Dante and Love as Sickness

Session 3: Understanding Sin and Suffering in the *Commedia*

Session 4: Pity and Piety in Dante's *Commedia*

Session 5: Paradise as Utopia?

Session 6: Chaucer's Dante

Session 7: Dante and the Moderns

### Presentation of the course:

This course will take place primarily through group discussions, guided by the lecturer. All students will be encouraged to participate fully in discussion of the texts and the issues surrounding them, and may be invited to prepare informal individual presentations on particular aspects of a text or historical issue.

**As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:**

- Develop knowledge and understanding of medieval literature and in particular Dante's *Divine Comedy* within its cultural and historical context;
- Show awareness of critical and theoretical approaches to literature from the period;
- Develop keener close reading skills, particularly when engaging with texts in medieval texts;
- Articulate and discuss the broader concepts of the course and the relationships between the texts, particularly Dante's writing and modern texts.

## Pre-course reading

We will be covering the whole *Commedia* in our discussions so I would suggest students read the following *canti*:

1. Inferno 1
  2. Inferno 5
  3. Inferno 13
  4. Inferno 20
  5. Inferno 27
  6. Purgatorio 1
  7. Purgatorio 13
  8. Purgatorio 30
  9. Purgatorio 31
  10. Paradiso 1
  11. Paradiso 15-18
  12. Paradiso 33
- 

## Reading and resources list

---

Listed below are a number of texts that might be of interest for future reference, but do not need to be bought (or consulted) for the course.

### Primary Texts

- Beckett, Samuel, "Dante and the Lobster" in *More Pricks than Kicks* (London: Picador, 1934, repr. 1974)
- Chaucer, Geoffrey, *The Canterbury Tales* (London: Penguin Classics, 2005)
- *Dante, Divine Comedy*
  - ---, *Inferno*, trans. by Kirkpatrick (London: Penguin Classics, 2006)
  - ---, *Purgatorio*, trans. by Kirkpatrick (London: Penguin Classics, 2007)
  - ---, *Paradiso*, trans. by Kirkpatrick (London: Penguin Classics, 2007)
- Eliot, T.S. *Four Quartets* (London: Faber, 1994)
- Heaney, Seamus, *Station Island* (London: Faber, 1984)

***Additional printouts and material will be made available closer to the commencement of the course. Specific editions of each text are not crucial. Dante will be discussed in translation, though parallel text editions would be helpful so that occasional comparison can be made to specific Italian terms. This course is going to using the Penguin (parallel text) edition by Robin Kirkpatrick.***

### Suggested Secondary Reading

- Boyd, Patrick, *Dante Philomythes and Philosopher: Man in the Cosmos* (Cambridge: CUP, 1983)
- Griffiths, Eric, "Introduction" to *Dante in English*, ed. Griffiths and Reynolds (London: Penguin, 2005)

- Jacoff, R (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Dante* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993)
- Kirkpatrick, Robin, *English and Italian Literature from Dante to Shakespeare* (London: Longman, 1995)
- Scott, J.A., *Understanding Dante* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004)

**Note** Students of the Institute of Continuing Education are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current Institute course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

*Information correct as of:* 04 April 2018