

MEDIEVAL ITALIAN LITERATURE: FRAGMENTS OF A LOVER’S DISCOURSE IN MEDIEVAL ITALY

Course ID and 7-digit Number: ITAL5300-401 / COML5300-401

Instructor: Francesco Marco Aresu (faresu@sas.upenn.edu)

Course Description

In the *Vita nova*, the “first book” of Italian literature, Dante Alighieri polemically proposes love as the unique subject matter for vernacular poetry. In this course, we will explore the various modes in which love and poetry—in their multifarious instantiations—intersect in medieval and early modern Italian literature. We will examine how the discourse on love articulated in the courts of France is read and rewritten in Italian courts and *comuni*. We will observe the intertextual practices and cultural exchanges between the various areas of the Romance sphere. We will study the dialogic and eminently social nature of early Italian poetry and its relationship to orality and literacy. Through close readings of texts—as they were preserved in manuscript form and early printed editions—by such authors as Guido Cavalcanti, Dante Alighieri, and Francesco Petrarca, we will investigate the material and textual dynamics of composition, circulation, transmission, and reception of medieval and early modern poetry. And we will unveil the process of selection and exclusion through which the canon of Italian literature is formed and formalized. This course is intended both as an introduction to the instruments and questions of philology and as a more focused investigation into the themes and forms—textual and material—of medieval and early modern Italian literature.

This course focuses on medieval Italian society, art, intellectual and political history. It provides the necessary coverage for the training of graduate students in Italian Studies with regard to medieval and early modern literature and culture. The course counts toward the Minor in Global Medieval Studies and the Graduate Certificate in Global Medieval and Renaissance Studies.

Prerequisites

Reading knowledge of Italian is required.

Class Structure for Spring 2024

Students will attend class Wednesdays, 1:45 PM – 3:44 PM.

Outline of Assignments and Assessments

Course Citizenship: Preparation, Attendance, Participation (25%)

Midterm Paper (20%)

Oral Presentation (20%)

Research Paper (35%)

Essential Course Policies

All course materials will be provided by the instructor. Materials from the Rare Books and Manuscript Library will be used throughout the course.