

# PHIL 190: SEMINAR ON PHILOSOPHICAL CLASSICS

## DANTE'S *DIVINE COMEDY*

FALL 2025 IN PERSON COURSE  
TUESDAYS, 3:00-5:45 PM  
PROFESSOR: JASON ALEKSANDER

“To a greater Power and a better Nature you lie subject and therefore free, and that creates the mind in you, which the heavens do not govern.” *Purgatorio* 16.79-81

Dante's *Divine Comedy* isn't just a masterpiece in the history of literature; it's also a philosophically rich exploration of human nature and the deepest questions of existence. This philosophy seminar will follow Dante's pilgrim through Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise in an exploration of ideas about free will, divine justice, human desire, and the intricate relationship between politics, religion, and ethics.

Alongside traditional research papers, there will also be opportunities to engage in creative projects that capture the poet's legendary wit and sardonic commentary on human failings (e.g., creating maps of our own philosophical journeys modeled on Dante's allegory; developing a Dante insult generator web app; etc.). In other words, this course will involve an intellectual journey that will challenge how you think about morality, human potential, and the complex landscapes of human experience. Are you ready to descend into Hell, climb the mountain of transformation, and ascend toward celestial wisdom?

**Required Texts:** We will be using a specific edition of the *Divine Comedy* that includes an English prose translation, facing pages in Italian, and an excellent English-language commentary. It is important that students obtain the specific assigned version of the *Divine Comedy*, though acceptable formats include e-book, hardback, or paperback editions (ISBNs for the paperback editions are included below).

- *Inferno*, trans. Robert M. Durling (Oxford Univ. Press, 1996). ISBN: 9780195087444
- *Purgatorio*, trans. Robert M. Durling (Oxford Univ. Press, 2003). ISBN: 9780195087451
- *Paradiso*, trans. Robert M. Durling (Oxford Univ. Press, 2010). ISBN: 9780195087468

“JUSTICE MOVED MY HIGH MAKER; DIVINE POWER MADE ME, HIGHEST WISDOM, AND PRIMAL LOVE.... ABANDON EVERY HOPE, YOU WHO ENTER.” *Inferno* 3.4-9