UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

**“We Found Love in a Hopeless Place”**

**Boccaccio’s *Decameron***

Honors Program (Un)common Readings

IDH2930 section 2201

Fall 2018

**INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION:**

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| Instructor: Dr. Mary Watt  Office: 2014 Turlington Hall  Phone: (352) 392‑2230  Office Hours: By appointment |  |
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**COURSE INFORMATION:**

**Time & Location:** R 6; HUME 119

**Description**:

This course will take students back to the time of the Black Death (the bubonic plague of 1348), to join ten young men and women as they escape the apocalypse in Florence and take refuge in a Tuscan villa. Students will listen as the group of survivors pass the time telling stories - *novelle* – ten stories a day for ten days and learn about love, death and adventure while mankind teeters on the edge of annihilation. The primary source will be Boccaccio’s *Decameron* but the course will be enhanced with visual materials and will make full use of the many digital resources devoted to the study of Boccaccio and the Middle Ages. Special attention will be paid to the political, historical and religious context in which Boccaccio was writing but the main point of the course will be to give students an appreciation of the art of storytelling and the enduring strength of the human spirit.

Classes will combine student-centered activities with brief lecture style introductions to the day’s reading. Accordingly, students will be expected to have read the assigned reading and be prepared to comment and participate in a meaningful discussion.

**Required texts:**

# Giovanni Boccaccio. *The Decameron*. Trans. Guido Waldman: Oxford UP, 2008.

# Decameron Wed Resource: http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian\_Studies/dweb/texts/DecIndex.php?lang=eng

**Grading Scale:**

The following scale will be used in grading your assignments and in calculating the overall grade for the course:

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| --- | --- | --- |
| ***A = 95 – 100% (4 points)*** | ***B - = 75-79%***  ***(2.67 points)*** | ***D + = 55-59%***  ***(1.33 points)*** |
| ***A - = 90 – 94% (3.67 points)*** | ***C+ = 70 – 74%***  ***(2.33 points)*** | ***D = 50 – 54%***  ***(1.0 point)*** |
| ***B+ = 85 – 89% (3.33 points)*** | ***C = 65 – 69%***  ***(2.0 points)*** | ***D - = 45 – 49% (0.67 points)*** |
| ***B = 80 – 84% (3.0 points)*** | ***C - = 60-64%***  ***(1.67 points)*** | ***E = 40 – 44%***  ***(0 – Failure)*** |

***If you have questions, please, consult:*** [***http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html***](http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html)

**Assignments**:

*Writing Assignment*: (25%)

Students will choose one *novella* from the *Decameron* and consider in what way the story is still relevant in the 21st century.

*Presentation*: (25%)

Each student will be asked to present a particular contextual aspect of the day’s assigned reading: depending upon the number of students this might be done in groups.

*Participation*: (50%)

As noted above, student participation is essential. The class will not be simply a reiteration or summary of the *novelle*, rather, students are expected to know the stories in question and be prepared to discuss the issues they raise. Students must bring the or copies of the *Decameron* to class each day. They will be reading from it.

**CLASSROOM POLICIES**

*Cell phones and gadgets*: Please turn your cell phone off during class as a courtesy to us all. If your cell phone does happen to disturb the class, you are required to treat the class to cookies as reparation for the interruption. Please keep all other gadgets out of sight and sound as well: they are a distraction!

*Attendance and Lateness:*

Students are expected to attend class and have completed all assigned readings and assignments. Attendance will be taken regularly. Students are permitted one unexcused absence, beyond which each additional unexcused absence will result in a lowering of the final grade by one full letter.

A class roll will be passed around at the beginning of the class. If a student is late, he or she will have to sign the roll after the class. Such lateness distracts other students and the instructor and will affect the student’s final participation grade. Students will lose 1% from their final grade each time they arrive late.

*Make‑up Policy:*

There are NO MAKE‑UPs for un-excused absences for assignments. The instructor may allow students to makeup and assignment in certain mitigating circumstances.

*Grades Disputes***:**

Should a student wish to dispute any grade received in this class (other than simple addition errors), the dispute must be in writing and be submitted to the instructor within a week of receiving the grade. The dispute should set our very clearly, the grade that the student believes the assignment should have received as well as why he or she believes that he or she should have received such a grade.

**ACADEMIC HONESTY:**

Students are expected to follow University of Florida Academic Honesty Guidelines. These can be found at <http://www.aa.ufl.edu/aa/Rules/4017.htm>

Students may also wish to consult The University of Florida Student Guide Standard of Ethical Conduct found at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/stg/>

Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. An academic honesty offense is defined as the act of lying, cheating, or stealing academic information so that one gains academic advantage. Any individual who becomes aware of a violation of the Honor Code is bound by honor to take corrective action.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:**

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

**CLASS SCHEDULE**

The schedule of readings is preliminary and may undergo modifications as the semester progresses. The instructor may also supply students with a variety of handouts and direct them to a variety of web sites from time to time. Students will be provided with supplementary materials well in advance of the class in which they will be discussed. Students should note that the syllabus is a guideline and that there may be changes to the class schedule.

**Week 1: August 23**

Introduction: The Plague of 1348, Thirteenth Century Florence

Look at: Breughel’s Triumph of Death

<http://vintageprintable.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/Medical-Death-Bruegel-The-Triumph-of-Death.jpg>

Explore: Santa Maria Novella

<http://www.chiesasantamarianovella.it/en>

<http://www.chiesasantamarianovella.it/en/all-works-art>

**Week 2: August 30**

Author’s Foreword:

Listen to: If I die young

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7NJqUN9TClM>

**Week 3: September 6**

Day 1 – “The topic for story telling is at the choice of each person.”

Listen to: I don’t want to wait

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YrUa62b0Xyc>

**Week 4: September 13**

Day 2 - “Stories that show how a person who has been thwarted by ill fortune comes to a happy ending that defies his expectations.”

Listen to: You had a bad day

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gH476CxJxfg>

**Week 5: September 20**

Day 3 - “Stories that show how a person uses his wits to acquire something greatly prized, or to recover something lost.”

Listen to: I got you back in arms again

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8O6tEYKNRM>

**Week 6: September 27**

Day 4 - “Stories about people whose love has ended in tears.”

Listen to: It’s a heartache

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPOy7TPjfkE>

**Week 7: October 4**

Day 5 - “Stories about lovers who have suffered the most grievous misfortunes but achieve happiness in the end.”

Listen to: Grenade

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SR6iYWJxHqs>

**Week 8: October 11**

Day 6 - Stories about people who, on being teased, give as good as they get, or who avoid danger, embarrassment, or loss by dint of a prompt rejoinder.”

**Week 10: October 25**

Day 7 – “Stories that show how the tricks women have played on their husbands, whether in pursuit of their amours or to protect themselves, and whether or not they have found out.”

Listen to: You don’t own me

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JDUjeR01wnU>

**Week 11: November 1**

Day 8 - “Stories that show the tricks men play on women day in and day out, and women on men, and that people play on each other.”

Listen to: The Games People Play:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MAGyENr3_44>

**Week 12: November 8**

Day 9 – “Stories about whatever the narrator pleases.”

Listen to: Torn between two lovers:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TzGbvTl4mpg>

**Week 12: November 12**

Day 10 - “Stories about people who have acted in a generous and open-handed manner. Whether in an affair of the heart or otherwise.”

Listen to: Stand by Your man:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f2KP9fYZUWA>

Look at: Lisa and Perdicone miniature. Boccaccio, *Decameron*  (10.7),

Paris, early fourteenth century. Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pal. lat. 1989, fol. 304r.

<http://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft1d5nb0d9&doc.view=popup&fig.ent=http://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/data/13030/d9/ft1d5nb0d9/figures/ft1d5nb0d9_00072.jpg>

**Week 13: November 15**

Boccaccio Workshop

**Week 14: November 29**

Author’s Afterword: Conclusion: Writing Assignments due