



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

HUMANITIES SEMINARS

Dante as Love Poet: The *Dolce Stil Nuovo* and Dante's *Vita Nova*

Throughout the ages, expressions of passion and commitment have been central to love poets. This course will focus on the medieval foundations of Italian poetry—and by extension, the rebirth of European literature. The movement known as the “dolce stil nuovo” (sweet new style) redefined love in the late Middle Ages; no longer was love simply the pastime of medieval nobles, but it was now elevated to a philosophical or religious plane. The great poet Dante Alighieri (1260-1321), author of the *Divine Comedy*, was at the center of this literary movement, as his youthful experience with love poetry shaped him as an artist. Dante's *Vita Nuova* (*New Life*) probably represents the pinnacle of his love poetry, and very likely the pinnacle of the literature of the “dolce stil nuovo.”

Week One: Introduction to the course

Hour 1: Discussion of topic: this is a “school” defined by Dante (with Dante at its center)

- *Purgatorio* 24: the expression “dolce stil nuovo” and how it's been interpreted
- *De vulgari eloquentia*: how this work also affects our interpretation of the school

Hour 2: Precursors: Provençals and Sicilians

- How to approach a medieval poem
- “Courtly love”: definitions and tropes

Hour 3: Sicilians and Guittone d'Arezzo

- The introduction of “courtly love” to Italy
- Guittone: “Ora parrà” and the crisis of courtly love

Week Two: Guido Guinizzelli and Guido Cavalcanti

Hour 1: Guido Guinizzelli: the “Father” of the movement

- Biography
- Sonnets: changing the definition of love

Hour 2: Guido Guinizzelli

- “Al cor gentile”: Guinizzelli's doctrinal poem

Hour 3: Guido Cavalcanti: the poet-philosopher

- Biography
- Sonnets
- Dante's representation of Guido in *Inferno* 10
- Boccaccio's representation of Guido in *Decameron* 6.9

Week 3: Dante's *Vita Nova*

Hour 1:

- Biography
- Begin *Vita Nova*: changing the definition of love (yet again)

Hours 2-3: Dante: *Vita Nova*:

- With a new definition of love, a new definition of poetry

Week 4: Dante: *Vita Nova*, imitators and reactions

Hour 1: Complete the *Vita Nova*

Hour 2: The formalism of the “dolce stil nuovo”:

- Cino da Pistoia
- Dino Frescobaldi
- Lapo Gianni
- Gianni Alfani

Hour 3: Anti-Stilnovism and re-interpreted stilnovism:

- Cecco Angiolieri
- Lorenzo de' Medici