

THE DANTE SPEAKERS BUREAU

A service of the Dante Society of America

<https://www.dantesociety.org/education-and-outreach>

The Dante Speakers Bureau is a group of trained, academically qualified speakers who volunteer their time and energies to promoting the study and appreciation of Dante Alighieri by offering talks and presentations to the general public and in pre-collegiate classrooms. The Society is committed to bringing educational programs to all communities and walks of life.

If your institution or association would like to invite a member of the Dante Speakers Bureau to your school or community, please contact DSA Director of Education and Outreach Ronald Herzman (dantesociety@gmail.com) with a brief description of your audience and a suggested format. The Dante Society's Education and Outreach Committee will then put you in touch with an appropriate speaker. Other than this referral service, the Dante Society does not provide financial support for this program. In any case, honoraria are neither encouraged nor expected, as this is an initiative based on volunteers in a local area.

Dante Speakers Bureau volunteer speakers

Listed in alphabetical order; last updated August 14, 2020

Theodore J. Cachey, Jr. (South Bend, Indiana)

Ted Cachey is a professor of Italian Studies at the University of Notre Dame, where he has taught Dante for the last thirty years. He was the co-founder of the Teachers as Scholars Program at Notre Dame, a professional development program for K-12 teachers in the South Bend, Indiana, area school systems, through which teachers gather with colleagues from neighboring school districts to study, discuss, and reflect on scholarly topics and texts, including Dante's *Divine Comedy*. He is the prolific author of books and articles on a range of subjects including Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, the literature and history of travel, the history of cartography, and the history of the Italian language. Professor Cachey directs both the Center for Italian Studies and the Devers Family Program in Dante Studies at Notre Dame. He is currently a councilor of the Dante Society of America.

Danielle Callegari (Hanover, New Hampshire)

Danielle Callegari is Assistant Professor of Italian in the Department of French and Italian at Dartmouth College and Councilor for the Dante Society of America. Her

research and teaching focuses on pre-modern Italian literature and food and wine studies. She has published on a variety of subjects including Dante, medieval food and wine culture, early modern women's writing and religion, and modern Italian food and politics. Her first monograph, *Dante's Gluttons: Food and Society in Medieval Italian Literature*, is forthcoming with Amsterdam University Press. She has taught at UC Berkeley, UC Davis, and New York University, and held fellowships at the Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa and at the UCLA Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies. She is frequently invited to lecture for both academic and non-academic audiences in both the US and in Italy, in particular on the use of the social and cultural values of food in Dante's works.

Daniel Christian (Iowa City, Iowa)

Dan Christian taught at the Gilman School in Baltimore from 1980 until his retirement in 2019. Beginning in 1982 he taught a senior elective every year on the *Divine Comedy*. During this time he also taught Dante extensively to church groups in the area, and his presentations to the Church of the Redeemer in Baltimore have been transcribed and published in *Lingua Romana* at Brigham Young University. He received many awards from Gilman, for both teaching and coaching, including the Meritorious Teaching Award in 1998. Many of his students' essays now appear on line on the Dante Society's Website under "Student Encounters." He has also published two collections of his students' work: *Educating the Eye: Essays by High School Students Inspired by Dante* and *A Harry Chapin and Dante Alighieri Anthology*. In 2017, he was awarded the Robert M. Durling Prize from the Dante Society of America for outstanding teaching of Dante in the pre-collegiate classroom. His talks for both classroom and public presentations integrate both the visual arts and folk music in his approach to Dante.

Elizabeth Coggeshall (Tallahassee, Florida)

Beth Coggeshall is Assistant Professor of Italian at Florida State University. She is the co-curator of the digital archive *Dante Today: Citings and Sightings of Dante's Works in Contemporary Culture*. An expert on the contemporary reception of the *Commedia* in American popular culture, she researches and teaches Dante from the perspectives of ethics, reception history, and media studies. Her presentations for general audiences include "What's Love Got to Do with It: Divine Justice and Human Desire," a discussion of what love might have to do with hell, and "Dante's Friendship Dilemma," part of a book project on how Dante resolves the issue of preferential love in a system that strives for universal affection. She also has given presentations on the seductive vision of love in pop music, both in the Middle Ages and now, with particular reference to the speech of Francesca da Rimini in *Inferno* 5. She has received teaching awards from

Stanford University and from Florida State (the University Teaching Award for the 2018-2019 academic year). She is currently a Councilor of the Dante Society of America.

Alfred Crudale (West Kingston, Rhode Island)

Alfred Crudale has extensive experience teaching Dante and Italian culture at both the high school and the college level, presently at the University of Rhode Island and at Bridgewater State University. At the high school level, he has taught Dante with excerpts from both the *Vita Nuova* and the *Commedia* in Italian Honors and AP classes. His publications and conference papers are wide ranging, including studies of the Italian lyric tradition and its relevance for the present, with special emphasis on Ezra Pound; portrayals of the body in Dante; studies of citizens and citizenship in Dante and other Italian authors; and images of light in the *Divine Comedy*. He has developed and presented PowerPoint talks for local high schools and is eager to expand to elementary and middle schools, libraries, assisted living facilities, and correctional facilities.

Christian Dupont (Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts)

Christian Dupont is Burns Librarian and Associate University Librarian for Special Collections at Boston College. His interest in Dante began in the 1990s while a graduate student in theology and philosophy at the University of Notre Dame, where he became involved in the establishment of the Devers Family Program in Dante Studies and its online initiatives. An expert on the reception of Dante in America and Dante bibliography, he has published a series of articles on the formation of collections of works by and about Dante at American universities. He has also given illustrated talks for community organizations and colleges on Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and the "Dante Club," and on the illustration of *Inferno* from the Middle Ages to the present. He has served as Secretary and Librarian of the Dante Society of America since 2014.

Ronald Herzman (Geneseo, New York, and New York City)

Ron Herzman is Distinguished Teaching Professor Emeritus at the State University of New York, Geneseo. He has also taught Dante at Georgetown University, St. John's College in Santa Fe, New York University, Regis High School, and Attica Correctional Facility. Of the eighteen summer seminars he has directed for schoolteachers through the National Endowment for the Humanities, fifteen have been on Dante. He has followed these teachers into their own classrooms, giving presentations on Dante in schools throughout the country, as well as to church groups, book clubs, faculty workshops, and senior citizens. With his colleague Bill Cook, he teaches the *Divine Comedy* through a twenty-four unit lecture course available through the Great Courses series produced by The Teaching Company. Together with Cook, he was the recipient

of the first CARA Award for Excellence in Teaching Medieval Studies from the Medieval Academy of America. He has written extensively on Dante, on Dante and the Franciscans, and on Dante and the visual arts. He is currently Director of Education and Outreach for the Dante Society of America.

Christopher Kleinhenz (Madison, Wisconsin)

Christopher Kleinhenz is Carol Mason Kirk Professor of Italian Emeritus at the University of Wisconsin. In addition to his home institution, his teaching has included extensive sojourns in Italy. He is a Fellow of the Medieval Academy of America and the first recipient of the Distinguished Service Award from the Dante Society of America. A longtime editor of *Dante Studies*, he has also edited or co-edited sixteen volumes and texts, including *The Dante Encyclopedia* and, most recently, the second edition of *Approaches to Teaching Dante's Divine Comedy* (2020). A prolific scholar and lecturer, he is the author of over one hundred and fifty scholarly articles and reviews. In addition to innumerable lectures for scholarly audiences, throughout his career he has lectured widely on Dante and medieval Italy to continuing education classes, local groups such as the Italian Workman's Club, and the University of Wisconsin Alumni Association, as well as giving many presentations in K-12 schools in Wisconsin. Virtually all of these lectures are accompanied by PowerPoint presentations that situate Dante within his cultural milieu. He is especially interested in the relationship between Dante and the visual arts of his time and how they are incorporated in the *Comedy* and in the long tradition of illustrating Dante's poem.

Anne Leone (Syracuse, New York)

Anne Leone is Assistant Professor of Italian Studies at Syracuse University. She has previously taught at the University of Notre Dame. She teaches courses in medieval literature and religious culture, including courses on Dante's *Comedy* and Boccaccio's *Decameron*, as well as courses that go from the ancient world to the contemporary on such subjects as love in the Italian tradition, and masterpieces of Italian cinema, music, and literature. Her research interests are also broad, encompassing medical, theological, literary, and historical perspectives, with emphasis on Dante's treatment of female figures, the issue of nature in medieval culture, and visual and material culture in the Middle Ages. Her publications on these subjects include a monograph under review entitled *Dante's Blood: Science, Sacrifice, Semiosis*, and articles and reviews in *Italian Studies*, *Le Tre Corone*, *Vertical Readings in Dante's Comedy*, *The University of Toronto Quarterly*, and *Medium Aevum*.

Christian Moevs (Chicago, Illinois)

Christian Moevs taught Dante and medieval literature and culture at the University of Notre Dame for 27 years. He studied philosophy at Harvard and Italian literature at Columbia. His particular interest is how poetry, philosophy, and theology can fuse to become—as in Dante's view—revelatory and life-changing. Hence, besides teaching *Inferno*, he has made a specialty of leading students through Dante's *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*. Many students feel that it is in those two canticles that Dante's medieval Christian/Catholic understanding of reality first comes alive for them in all its profundity and power, and that *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* are actually more gripping, more stunning, than *Inferno*. Moevs was awarded the first Junior Faculty Award for Excellence in Teaching by the Department of Romance Languages, a Kaneb Teaching Award, and the Sheedy Award for Excellence in Teaching in the College of Arts and Letters (Notre Dame's highest teaching award). He is co-editor of the Notre Dame's Devers Series in Dante Studies, and has served on the Council of the Dante Society of America. His book, *The Metaphysics of Dante's Comedy*, won the Modern Language Association's Marraro Prize for Italian Studies, and the American Association for Italian Studies Prize for the best book of 2005. Moevs has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities and from Villa I Tatti, the Harvard University Center for Renaissance Studies in Florence.

Philip F. O'Mara (Lexington, Virginia)

Philip O'Mara, Emeritus, Bridgewater College in Bridgewater, Virginia, has taught the *Divine Comedy* as part of several courses in world literature or medieval literature in translation, at two historically black colleges in Mississippi (Tougaloo College and Jackson State University) as well as Bridgewater College. He has presented several papers on aspects of the *Comedy* at the Medieval Institute, for example the didactic current in the *Comedy*, and kinship and tragic transformation in *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*, and alternatives to the Empire as envisioned in the *Comedy*. He has presented papers on black responses to the *Comedy*, including, most recently, at a Black Studies conference in Rochester, NY, on Derek Walcott's use of stylistic and thematic features of the work in his epic poem *Omeros*. He is currently preparing a paper on the Franciscan spirituality of mourning in the *Vita Nuova*, following on an earlier publication in *The Franciscan Leader*.

Nicole Pagano (Berkeley, California)

Nicole Pagano is Chief of Staff to Saul Perlmutter, Nobel Laureate of Physics at the University of California, Berkeley. In the late 1990s, she first read Dante as an undergraduate at Georgetown University. That formative experience inspired her to

pursue a master's degree in art and religion at the Graduate Theological Union at Berkeley, where her work focused solely on Dante's oeuvre, specifically the historical, philosophical, theological, and biblical underpinnings of the *Divine Comedy*, and the art it has been motivating ever since. In the classroom, she teaches the poem as a liberation text, where students bring their personal experiences into dialog with Dante's words to form a vision of peace for their own lives and communities. She has led workshops in this style at the San Francisco County Jail, Incarnation Monastery, and the School for Applied Theology in the Bay Area. She is currently a member of the Education and Outreach Committee of the Dante Society of America.

Deborah Parker (Charlottesville, Virginia)

Deborah Parker is Professor of Italian at the University of Virginia. She is the author of *Commentary and Ideology: Dante in the Renaissance* (Duke University Press, 1993), general editor of the World of Dante website (*worldofdante.org*), and co-author of *Inferno Revealed: From Dante to Dan Brown* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). In addition, she has published numerous articles on Dante's reception in art and literature. Recent articles includes "Bronzino's Dante" and "JFK's Dante." She has taught courses on Dante's *Inferno* and *Purgatory in Translation* for over 25 years at the University of Virginia. She has also directed an NEH seminar for high school teachers on "Reinventing Dante: Influence, Adaptation and Appropriation" in 2014.

Barbara Ellison Rosenblit (Atlanta, Georgia)

Barbara Ellison Rosenblit studied Dante in Siena as a member of the 2002 NEH Summer Seminar. When she returned, Barbara introduced a year-long course in the *Commedia* at The Weber School, a Jewish high school, where it became a seminal course for 14 years. Barbara has a masters in Jewish Studies from Emory University and one in English Literature from Columbia Teachers College. Interested in the exploring the text in interfaith groups, she and a Catholic colleague received an NEH award in 2003 to teach a Dante course to Catholic and Jewish faculty members at their two schools. The inter-religious faculty liaisons resulted in the development of a Catholic-Jewish-Muslim student group, Peace by Piece, that has been engaging in interfaith dialogue for twenty years. Since leaving the classroom in 2019, Barbara continues to teach groups interested in the *Commedia*. She has won several teaching awards, including The Covenant Award for Exceptional Teaching in 2004 and, in 2016, the first annual Durling Prize for excellence in secondary school teaching of Dante. Many of Barbara's students' works appear on the Dante website under Dante Notes "Student Encounters," and her annotated syllabus appears in the "Pedagogy" section. She is currently chair of the Education and Outreach Committee for the Dante Society of America.

Sherry Roush (University Park, Pennsylvania)

Sherry Roush is Professor of Italian at Penn State University. She has won two distinguished teaching awards, and her favorite class to teach by far is "Dante in Translation," which she approaches largely in terms of ethical decision-making with a view to Dante's afterlife. She has also incorporated Dante in courses on early Italian ghost storytelling, and Italian translation theory and practice. In addition to presenting her research at national and international conferences she has led discussions at a local high school, at the State College Literary Club (a group of retired life-long learners), to the Bottleworks Cultural Center, to the Penn State Catholic Community, and to UNICO, an Italian American Cultural Community in Pennsylvania. A widely published scholar, she is the author of *Speaking Spirits: Ventriloquizing the Dead in Renaissance Italy* and *Hermes Lyre: Italian Poetic Self Commentary from Dante to Tommaso Campanella*. She has also edited and translated several volumes, and has won several awards for translation from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Eve Salisbury (Rochester, New York)

Eve Salisbury is Professor Emerita of English at Western Michigan University. She has taught Dante in translation to both undergraduate students and graduate students at WMU's Medieval Institute, the home of the annual International Congress on Medieval Studies. Her graduate course brought together the visual and the verbal, imaginatively tying in manuscripts, illustrations and a wide variety of texts, and led to a subsequent undergraduate version called "Holy Road Trips," designed to appeal to first time Dante students, and bringing together Dante's *Inferno*, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, and Paul Simon's *Graceland*. The course encouraged students to address modes of pilgrimage, both sacred and secular. Another class, "Magic, Marvels, and Monsters," used *The Inferno* to enable students to think more seriously about systems of justice, correlations between actions and consequences, and our need for guidance. She has published widely on Chaucer (*Chaucer and the Child*, 2017) and Gower, and is currently working on a study of echoes of Hildegard of Bingen in Dante. She is interested in working in the pre-collegiate classroom, as well as book clubs and community organizations.

Brenda Deen Schildgen (Davis, California)

Brenda Deen Schildgen is Distinguished Professor Emerita of Comparative Literature at the University of California, Davis. She is a prize-winning teacher, having been awarded the UC Davis Prize for Undergraduate Teaching and Scholarly Achievement in 2008, as well as other distinguished teaching awards. She has written about Dante, the Bible, Chaucer, Saint Augustine, and Boccaccio. For ten years, she led a reading

group for retirees that focused on Dante, Virgil, and Augustine. For almost twenty years, she took undergraduate students to Florence for the summer where they focused on Dante, his city, and his major poem. More recently, she led a National Endowment for the Humanities Institute on Dante in Florence that was designed for humanities faculty in community colleges and liberal arts colleges. Among her books are *Divine Providence, A History: Bible, Virgil, Orosius, Augustine, and Dante* (2012); *Dante and the Orient* (2002), translated into Italian (2016) and Arabic (2009); and *Power and Prejudice: The Reception of the Gospel of Mark* (1999). *Violence in Dante's Comedy* is forthcoming from the University of Notre Dame Press.

William Stephany (Burlington, Vermont)

Bill Stephany is Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Vermont, where he taught Dante in various contexts for 35 years, including 3 summers in Assisi, Italy. His research interests and published scholarship include Dante's responses to the visual art of his world, as well as to his literary sources, and he has made many presentations to academic conferences and university colloquia. He has given presentations on Dante to a wide variety of audiences, from Attica Correctional Facility to high school classrooms, church groups, local libraries, and elder enrichment programs. In addition, he has been deeply involved with in-service teachers, having directed or co-directed 16 National Endowment for the Humanities seminars for school teachers on Dante, 11 of them in the city of Siena. Bill is a member of the Education and Outreach Committee for the Dante Society of America.

Mary Watt (Gainesville, Florida)

Mary Watt is a Professor of Italian Studies, Co-Director of the Center for Medieval and Early Modern Studies, and Associate Dean at the University of Florida. In addition to teaching at her home institution, she has also been an invited Goggio Visiting Professor at the University of Toronto. Her professional service includes membership on the Modern Language Association, Executive Committee of the Division on Medieval and Renaissance Italian, and Secretary of the Canadian Association for Italian Studies. She currently serves as a review editor for the journal *Speculum*. She is the author of *The Cross that Dante Bears* and *Dante, Columbus and the Prophetic Tradition*. Her third book, *Dante's Golden Legend*, is forthcoming in spring 2021. She has published more than 50 articles, book chapters and reviews and most recently, one historical fiction novel. In addition to the many lectures she has given on scholarly topics, Mary has given numerous talks on Dante as well as medieval and Renaissance Italy to local groups, including continuing education classes and Italian cultural societies, at venues ranging from embassies to art galleries. She is a lively speaker whose talks are accompanied by visual materials where appropriate and encourages active Q&A opportunities. She is

especially interested in the relationship between Dante and the age of exploration, and how Dante's legacy has shaped our perception of the afterlife.