In this course we will read one of the greatest works of imaginative literature ever written – Dante’s Divine Comedy – the story of one man’s journey while still alive through the three realms of the medieval Christian afterlife: Inferno, Purgatorio, and Paradiso. Everything he experiences there in the eternal world he connects with our world here, with the result that human existence takes on depths of significance only imaginable from the perspective of eternity. As we accompany Dante on this unique adventure, we are confronted with big questions: Is there a goal to human life? What is the fate of the soul after death? What determines the condition of the soul in the next world? How are the “two worlds” (i.e. this world and the next) related? What is the value of reading? Can a book change one’s life? What is the import of reading about punishments and rewards in the next world? Does reading about spiritual illumination assist us in becoming illuminated? How can a person or society be transformed? What is the role and value of art (including poetry) in leading us to Truth and Beauty and Goodness, or Salvation? Why are humans so driven and what drives them? What is the importance of love in human life? How do we go on if we lose what we love? Do we have to lose what we love in order to find what really fulfills us? What is the relationship between the material, time-bound cosmos and its immaterial, uncreated, eternal source, the latter conceived as beyond time and space? If “heaven” is beyond time and space, where is it? If God has a plan for mankind, why is the character of human history so filled with disorder and tragedy? If everything that exists, including the soul, came forth from God, is there a way to return?