

VOICES OF THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE



Hist 177H
Prof. M. Bullard

Course Description

In a seminar setting the class will discuss Renaissance texts (in translation) from Petrarch to Machiavelli and explore their historical and cultural contexts. Traditionally the period from the 14th century to the early 16th century in Italy has been seen as the foundation of modernity, of heroic individualism and consummate artistic expression, but our Renaissance voices also reveal thoughtful men and women struggling to redefine themselves in a changing world, a world increasingly dominated by patronage and patriarchy, by plague, war, and urban unrest, and by challenges to existing political, religious, and intellectual authorities and their systems of representation. In addition to a close reading and discussion of selected Renaissance texts, students will have opportunity to conduct independent research on related topics and present their findings. We will also devote a session to Renaissance art works in the Ackland Museum, viewing them as texts that beckon us to reconstruct their appropriate contexts.

This is a lecture and discussion course offered in a seminar format. Most weeks time will be devoted both to background information and to a close discussion of the assigned texts, and during the last few weeks of the semester, to presentations of student projects. During the semester student teams will help lead class discussions, post and respond to questions on Blackboard, and periodically students will submit short written assignments as part of an on-going reading journal. Each student will be responsible for completing and presenting a research project or equivalent.