Between the mid-thirteenth and mid-sixteenth centuries, the city of Florence experienced an explosion of wealth, political experimentation, and artistic and literary production that earned it a prominent place in the history of Europe. Students in this class will learn how this typical Italian town came to figure so prominently in the historical imagination. Along the way they will encounter individuals ranging from Dante and Boccaccio to Lorenzo de’Medici, Savonarola, and Machiavelli. Alongside these famous figures they will come to understand the lives of everyday Florentine men and women and explore the limits and contradictions of the city’s famous renaissance period.