Course Description
Is a picture really worth a thousand words? What can the record of a person’s physical appearance tell us about his or her character? During the Italian Renaissance, portraits were test-cases of artistic skill, tools in marriage negotiations, and vehicles for the expression of friendship. They were exchanged between princes and humanists, while writers and artists sought to outdo each other, creating pictures that defied description or verbal portraits whose effects could never be realized in paint or stone. This class will consider the role of portraiture in defining, communicating, and preserving individual identity. Examining the concepts of “portrait” and “self-fashioning” in both the literary and visual spheres, we will read such texts as Castiglione’s Book of the Courtier and look at images as familiar as Leonardo’s Mona Lisa and as obscure as the portrait medals of Renaissance poets. We will define what constitutes a portrait and ask how the visual codes of the past can be interpreted by modern viewers.

Course Requirements
1. **Class participation**: Your active participation in class is essential. You must be present and prepared in order to participate. Unexcused absences and/or chronic lack of preparation will lower your final grade.
2. **Written assignments**: You will conduct a semester-long project on a portrait of your choosing. Several short written assignments will form the foundation of your work.
3. **Presentation**: A ten-minute in-class oral presentation on the portrait you have chosen.
4. **Final paper**: The culmination of your research for the semester will be a final paper, approx. 10 pages.

Grading Policy
1. **Class participation** 20%
2. **Written Assignments** 25%
3. **Presentation** 25%
4. **Final Paper** 30%

Readings and Other Resources
All of the readings for this course are available on course reserve at Fisher Fine Arts Library. Some of the readings will also be accessible on the course’s Blackboard site. Images that we discuss in class will also be made available online each week.
Schedule of Classes

January 11  Introduction

January 18  The Aims and Limits of Portraiture

January 25  Defining the Renaissance
  Assignment #1 Due: Choice of Subject and List of Images

February 1  Identity and Representation

February 8  Portrait Medals

February 15  Female Portraits and the Problem of Gender
  Assignment #2 Due: Subject’s Biography
February 22  The Ideal Courtier—Male Portraits and Masculine Identity
Reading: Baldessare Castiglione, The Book of the Courtier, Book I, parts 12-29; and parts 42-48, pp. 25-49; 67-78.

March 1  Role Playing
Assignment #3 Due: Choice of Image and Artist’s Biography

March 8  NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK

March 15  Portraying the Prince
Reading: Niccolò Machiavelli, The Prince, Chapters 15-19; and Chapter 21.
Assignment #4 Due: Thesis Statement and Bibliography

March 22  Self-Portraits

March 29  Belief and Devotion/Presentations

April 5  NO CLASS

April 12  The Tomb/Presentations

April 19  Out of Italy/ Presentations

*******FRIDAY APRIL 29: FINAL PAPER DUE*******