While Italians did not invent lyric poetry, they certainly invented the sonnet, which, through another Italian, Petrarch, became a major idiom of Europe and, eventually, beyond. This course will cover the Sicilian beginnings of this tradition, with its Occitan imitations and potential Arabic influences, trace its thirteenth-century high points up to and including Dante’s lyric production, to end with a consideration of how Petrarch quintessentialized this Italian genre for easy and far-reaching export.
Students of poetry of all times and places are warmly welcome in this course. Reading knowledge of Italian is helpful but not strictly necessary as all readings can be supplemented by translations.