Late Renaissance Italy witnessed the emergence of new forms of historical writing. Scholars have long seen writers such as Machiavelli and Guicciardini as among the first to employ modern techniques of historical reading and writing. This course will examine how and why sixteenth-century Italian writers--including Machiavelli, Guicciardini, and Botero--broke from both ancient models such as Livy and Thucidides, as well as from the robust medieval and Renaissance chronicle tradition, to create a new literary form aimed at creating a usable past. The course will emphasize close readings of key texts in historical context.