

Call for Papers

International Machiavelli Society
2026 Lecture Series

Di/sperare: Hope and Despair in Machiavelli

Over the last two decades, passions and/or emotions have taken center stage in scholarly and public debates. Hate and fear, for instance, have been playing a crucial role as both sources of political consensus and connecting links between online and offline politics. Hope and despair, on the other hand, have been strongly elicited by economic crises as well as by climate change and the Covid-pandemic. Finally, the impressive surge of conflict of the last few years, with its unfathomable degree of violence and death, has sparked indignation, rage and fear across societies, casting doubt on our collective understanding of the future.

However, passions' political power is anything but something new or a kind of recent discovery. Throughout the history of ideas and political thought, passions have been conceived of as political and military driving forces to be reckoned with. This is particularly true for Machiavelli's writings, where references to passions and their impact on human decision-making processes and actions are abundant and significant. Although scholars have paid attention to some of these references, such as those concerning fear, hatred, and love, others are still largely neglected and overlooked.

Hope and despair are a case in point. Except for a few essays, both passions have not yet received the attention they deserve, even though Machiavelli is clear and straightforward about not only their psycho-political relevance, but also their entanglement with one another. Furthermore, Machiavelli views hope as a double-faced passion, which can have positive and negative effects according to circumstances, whereas he sees despair in a negative light, as a dangerous passion that leads humans on a path of hetero- and self-destruction.

Following its 2nd conference in Paris, the *International Machiavelli Society* calls Ph.D. students and early career, or not yet established scholars, for proposals on hope and despair in Machiavelli's work. The proposals will be discussed in online seminars held between Spring and Fall 2026. The seminars will take place once a month, hosting two talks of around 20 minutes each, plus 20 minutes of Q&As with the first seminar tentatively scheduled for mid-March. Particularly welcome are contributions, both in Italian and in English, from different disciplines and methodologies, that focus on the roles of hope and despair not only in Machiavelli's chief works, but also in his epistolary, diplomatic, and literary writings.

One of the primary aims of the lecture series is to bring the contributions together in an edited volume, with a publication proposal to be submitted to an international publisher.

Please submit your proposals (200 words) by February 15, 2026 to:

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Proposals will be considered on a rolling basis.