

DI/SPERARE: HOPE AND DESPAIR IN MACHIAVELLI

THURSDAY, MAY 21, 12pm EDT / 6pm CET

International Machiavelli Society

2026 Lecture Series, Third session

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Chair: Alessandro Mulieri

Fernanda Salgueiro

Hope and Inequality in the Formation of Civic Desires

This paper defends the hypothesis according to which, in Machiavelli's work, the formation of the popular desire not to be dominated—an indispensable condition for the constitution of civil life—depends, in order to persist, on two conditions: inequality between the two parts of the city and the hope of popular security. On the one hand, inequality between the great and the people, present to some degree in all cities, appears to Machiavelli to be “naturale.” On the other hand, the hope of popular security can only be experienced under certain circumstances, and these circumstances vary depending on the degree of inequality found in the city. Through the articulation of these two factors, the people come to perceive two things. First, that they themselves cannot appropriate the *libertà* of the city, since the great possess not only the desire to dominate but also the means to do so. Second, they hope that non-domination is achievable. Hence, in the face of the actual or potential threat posed by the great, the people manifest the desire not to be dominated. And when there is no hope of security?

Fernanda Salgueiro is a PhD candidate in Philosophy at the University of São Paulo and was a visiting doctoral researcher at Paris 8 University. Her research focuses on the role of the people in Machiavelli's thought.