For centuries, portraiture was one of the dominant genres of European painting, and in the nineteenth century it became a major form in painting and photography worldwide. While contemporary art has relatively little interest in portraits, people today make and use them often in everyday life. The portrait—along with the changes in its forms, popularity, and uses—is a guide into the history of the concept of the human being. This graduate seminar considers the long history of portraiture, with an emphasis on modern and contemporary developments. While looking closely at individual works of art, we will also consider changing beliefs regarding individualism, social collectivity, power, gender, race, soulfulness, belonging, etc. Students are invited to write research essays situated in any time period and any part of the world.