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**“Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not
escape calumny”**

**Mario Equicola’s *Neither by hope nor fear* (1506/1513) and
the author’s fight for a white vest**

Monday, 18 September 2017, 6 pm
Zentrum für Alte Kulturen („Atrium“)
Langer Weg 11, SR 5

In my talk I will introduce the historical context from which the printed edition of Mario Equicola’s (1470-1525) *Neither by fear nor hope* (*Nec spe nec metu*) originated in 1513. Already in 1506, the itinerant courtier had presented a dialogue under the same title as a birthday gift to Isabella d’Este. At its core, famous figures from the Marchesana’s court at Mantua – including authorities such as the Neo-Latin poet and cleric Battista Mantovano – discuss at length the eponymous motto Isabella had recently adopted. In 1508, Equicola finally obtained a steady position as her private tutor.

Soon afterwards, humanists at Ferrara and Rome began to frown at Equicola’s career, as well as the eclectic Latin style of Isabella’s ambitious courtier. By means of slander, forged letters and anonymous publications that insinuated connections between an allegedly dissolute lifestyle and his shady past as an author of erotic poetry, they tried to sabotage both Equicola’s literary integrity as well as the moral respectability that formed a basis of his new appointment at Isabella’s court.

The 1513 edition of the reworked and rededicated *Neither by fear nor hope* marks the author’s own attempt to set the record of his past straight in a battle for moral rehabilitation that escalated the same year. Reconstructing the historical context of the dialogue promises a thrilling episode of sex and crime, literature and slander, as well as rivalry and loyalty among humanists in the early Cinquecento.

