Is excellence the result of breeding or education, of nature or nurture? In *Artifice Embodied: Breeding, Animals, and the Quest to Perfect Renaissance Nature*, Mackenzie Cooley traces how this perennial question engaged thinkers from Europe to the Andes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This talk analyzes how Renaissance elites and their breeders became obsessed with fashioning improved horses. Elites transformed their animals to fit new ideals of nobility through a burgeoning scientific practice of breeding, new training techniques, and refined materials of horsemanship. These animal breeding experiments had important implications for the history of science: the modern idea of race originates on Renaissance stud farms. New bits, saddles, and bridles simultaneously offered ever more control over animals’ movements, enabling riding traditions like dressage. This talk will use the material remains of horse tack to chart the transformation of the Renaissance equine body at the moment of a race’s conception.