

HIST 422 Course Syllabus Fall 2022
Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe

Prof. Steven Bednarski

Office: DRAGEN Lab or Zoom (your choice each week)
Office Hour: Following class each week
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Please note that the instructor replies to e-mail within 48 hrs., Monday through Friday. E-mail is, therefore, a convenient way to communicate during the week but it should not be relied upon in an emergency or when deadlines are pressing. Please be certain to include first and last name, student number, and course code in the subject line of all e-mail correspondence.

Course Description:

This course borrows its title from the famous collection of essays edited by Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero. It explores how historians use narrative to (re)construct and (re)present past realities. It looks closely at the uses, abuses, and limitations of microhistory as a genre, and exposes students to important trends in social history. Though the bulk of the material deals with Europe in the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries, the course is methodological in nature and is intended for all graduate students of social history. Ultimately, the course explores the relationship between form and content.

Grade Breakdown:

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| Participation | 40% |
| Essay Proposal & Bibliography | 20% |
| Final Essay | 40% |

MEETINGS: Mondays 10:30 to 12:20
LOCATION: STJ1 DRAGEN LAB or ZOOM
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88994562>

Core Texts:

To help prepare us to become even better narrative writers, every student in HIST 422 must gain access to a version of *Strunk & White's Elements of Style*. At the end of each week, we will review different aspects of this seminal writer's tool. Weekly discussions, moreover, revolve around one major book and, often, one or more article(s). The schedule of readings follows. Take note that books listed in red may be unavailable in the university library's online eReserve system and students must acquire copies independently in that case. Items marked in green are recommended, except for students who previously studied Microhistory at the undergraduate level, in which case they are required.

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| Week 1 | 12 Sept: | No class – prepare first book for next week. <i>NB: Prof. Bednarski will be available to meet with you in the DRAGEN Lab on 12 September from 12:15 – 1:00 should you wish to meet for any reason.</i> |
| Week 2 | 19 Sept: | a. Steven Bednarski, <i>A Poisoned Past: The Life and Times of Margarida de Portu, a Fourteenth-Century Accused Poisoner</i> (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013) b. Edward Muir & Guido Ruggiero, "Introduction: Observing Trifles," <i>Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe</i> (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U P, 1991), pp. v – xxviii. c. Brad S. Gregory, "Is Small Beautiful? Microhistory and the History of Everyday Life," <i>History and Theory</i> , Vol. 38, No. 1 (Feb. 1999), p. 100 - 110 |

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| Week 3 | 26 Sept: | a. Natalie Zemon Davis, <i>The Return of Martin Guerre</i> (Harvard: Harvard U P, 1983). b. Robert Finlay, "The Refashioning of Martin Guerre," <i>The American Historical Review</i> , Vol. 93, No. 3 (June 1988), pp. 553 – 571. c. Natalie Zemon Davis, "On the Lame," <i>The American Historical Review</i> , Vol. 93, No. 3 (June 1998), pp. 572 – 603. |
| Week 4 (GW) | 3 Oct: | a. Gene Brucker, <i>Giovanni and Lusanna: Love and Marriage in Renaissance Florence</i> (Berkeley: U of C P, 2004) b. Thomas Kuehn, "Reading Microhistory: The Example of Giovanni and Lusanna," <i>The Journal of Modern History</i> , Vol. 61, No. 3 (Sept. 1989), pp. 512 – 534. |
| READING WEEK: 8 – 16 OCTOBER NO CLASS | | |
| Week 5 | 17 Oct: | a. Emanuel Le Roy Ladurie, <i>Montaillou: The Promised Land of Error</i> (New York: George Braziller, 2008) |
| Week 6 | 24 Feb: | a. Emanuel Le Roy Ladurie, <i>Carnival at Romans</i> (New York: George Braziller, 1979). |
| Week 7 | 31 Oct: | a. Carlo Ginzburg, <i>the Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller</i> (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U P, 2013) |
| Week 8 | 7 Nov: | a. Carlo Ginzburg, <i>the Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries</i> (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U P, 2013) b. Jill Lepore, "Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography," <i>The Journal of American History</i> , June 2001, Vol. 88, No. 1 (June 2001), pp. 129 – 144. |
| Week 9 (GW) | 14 Nov: | a. Angela Bourke, <i>The Burning of Bridget Cleary: A True Story</i> (New York: Penguin Reissue, 2001) |
| Week 10 | 21 Nov: | a. Judith Brown, <i>Immodest Acts: the Life of a Lesbian Nun in Renaissance Rome</i> (Oxford: Oxford U P, 1986) |
| Week 11 | 28 Nov: | a. Jonathan Spence, <i>The Death of Woman Wang</i> (New York: Penguin, 1998). |
| Week 12 | 5 Dec: | Last class: Concluding Trifles |

Copies of Assignments:

Students are required to keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments. The instructor may require them to resubmit work at any time.

Academic Integrity:

In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo and its Federated University and Affiliated Colleges are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. For more information, please consult the Academic Integrity Website for the Faculty of Arts (http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html) and the Academic Integrity Office at the University of Waterloo (<http://uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/>).

Discipline:

All students registered in courses at St. Jerome's University are expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for their actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about "rules" for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under St. Jerome's University Academic Discipline Policy and UW Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline, www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm

Grievance:

A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his / her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. In such a case, contact the St. Jerome's University Grievance Officer. Read St. Jerome's University Handbook, Section 4, item 8, www.sju.ca/faculty/SJU_handbook/grievance_policy.html.

Appeals:

A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under St. Jerome's University Academic Discipline Policy or Grievance Policy if a ground for an appeal can be established. In such a case, contact the St. Jerome's University Appeals Officer. Read St. Jerome's University Handbook, Section 6.4, www.sju.ca/faculty/SJU_handbook/examinations_grades_standings_and_appeals.html.

Special Needs:

Students with documented or suspected disabilities (i.e., physical, learning, or sensory disabilities or chronic medical conditions) are encouraged to contact the Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD) to determine eligibility for their services. OPD is located in Needles Hall 1132, 888-4567 ext. 5082.

Essay Plan:

Students must submit an essay plan during the Monday of Reading Week. This essay plan must include:

1. A general topic

Example:

This essay uses the telling criminal trial of a young woman, Margarida de Portu, accused in fourteenth-century Provence of murdering her husband.

2. A sharpened thesis statement in the form of an argument. It must be clear what the essay intends to prove, not simply what the essay is "about."

Example:

By studying the criminal prosecution of Margarida de Portu, historians gain important insights into pre-modern European integration strategies around marriage and the risk posed by alterity. Specifically, through trial testimonies and depositions, we see how the de Portu family, foreigners to Manosque, used marriage as a strategy to promote integration into their new community, thereby gaining economic status and social promotion. At the core of this contractual promotion, however, was acceptance, a determination rendered all the more complex because Margarida was visible different. Her epilepsy complicated and jeopardized her natal family's planned integration into Manosque and their subsequent economic gains. For, when her husband died suddenly, Margarida was particularly vulnerable to accusations of malice. For Margarida, an epileptic, popular assumptions about seizures and the devil augmented the accusation that she had murdered her Manosquin husband to gain his inheritance. In this way, her tale illuminates problems of immigration, integration, and difference.

3. An outline containing the major sections of the essay, the key points to raised in each section, and a general plan for the presentation of evidence to prove the argument.
4. A fairly comprehensive bibliography

Essay:

Students must write a research essay that models the approaches of microhistory. In this, the essay must be focused on a singular event, moment, or object – something “small” from which we understand “bigger” lessons of the world. The essay, moreover, must flow narratively and be beautifully written, grammatically and stylistically sound. It must draw on a primary source of evidence and, through the exposition, incorporate relevant secondary literature.

There is no firm expectation on page length, but students are expected to tell the story thoroughly and not to leave out any relevant research, conclusions, or information. As a rough guide, it typically takes a good microhistorian roughly twenty to thirty pages to write a compelling case study.

Similarly, there is no firm rule about the number of types of sources contained in the bibliography. Rather, the expectation is that the writer has been thorough, not left out relevant information, has consulted primary and secondary sources of a scholarly nature, and drawn upon all manner of academic information – journal articles, monographs, essays in edited volumes, conference papers, maps, online resources, etc.