

HIST 422 Course Syllabus Winter 2021 Historical Methodologies: Microhistory

Steven BEDNARSKI

Office Hour: Thursdays, 1:50 – 2:50,
or by appointment

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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 press. 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 explores microhistory, a contested *genre* of historical writing, which focuses intently on a single, remarkable event or moment to shine light on broader contexts. At the same time, microhistorians famously use narrative to (re)construct and (re)present past realities. Students in this course look closely at the uses, abuses, and limitations of the genre, and query the relationship between form and content, even as they consider the broader utility (or futility) of social history. In the final segment of the course, students participate in an original, dynamic, and collaborative microhistorical research project. Many of the texts studied in HIST 422A deal with microhistories rooted in the Europe of the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries. In your personal research, though, you may choose to pursue a microhistorical analysis of *any* time or place.

Grade Breakdown:

Participation	30%
Précis 1 assignment	15%
Précis 2 assignment	15%
Bibliography	10%
Final Essay	30%

MEETINGS: Thursdays 11:30 – 12:50

LOCATION: Zoom

Important Course Dates:

14 Jan.	First class
22 Jan.	Add period ends
29 Jan.	Drop, no penalty period ends
30 Jan.	Drop with WD period begins
4 Feb.	DUE: Précis 1 assignment
18 Feb.	Reading Week: No Class
25 Feb.	DUE: Précis 2 assignment
26 Feb.	Deadline for 50% tuition refund
1 Mar.	DUE: Bibliography
30 Mar.	Drop with WD period ends
8 Apr.	DUE: Final essays

Learning Outcomes / Course Objectives:

OUTCOME / OBJECTIVE:	CORRESPONDING ASSIGNMENTS:
Review and become familiar with some seminal books associated with (early) microhistory.	Readings, discussions
Understand the importance of experts for the expansion and maintenance of a disciplinary sub-field	Readings, discussions
Practice, internalize, and attempt to replicate the working methodology of microhistory	Discussions, précis, bibliography, final essay
Practice, internalize, and attempt to replicate the written, narrative structure of microhistory	Précis, bibliography, final essay
Research and write a technically proficient and persuasive essay to support a microhistory in a short period of time	Final essay .

Discussion & Reading Schedule:

1. 14 January 2021: Introductions

Edward Muir, "Observing Trifles," in *Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe: Selections from Quaderni Storici*, ed. Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991) vii – xxviii.

* available through UW e-reserves; licence limits two users at a time

Steven Bednarski, "Introduction: The Microhistory and Margarida," in *A Poisoned Past: the Life and Times of Margarida de Portu, a Fourteenth-century Accused Poisoner* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013) xvii - .

* available through UW e-reserves; licence limits two users at a time

2. 21 January 2021: Poison in the Archives

Steven Bednarski, *A Poisoned Past: the Life and Times of Margarida de Portu, a Fourteenth-century Accused Poisoner* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013) xvii - .

* available through UW e-reserves; licence limits two users at a time

3. 28 January 2021: On Imposters & Invention

Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984).

* available through UW e-reserves; unlimited user access

* also available through the Hathi Trust; one user at a time & one hour at a time

Natalie Zemon Davis, "On the Lame," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 93, No. 3 (June 1988): 572 – 603.

* available for download via Jstor

Robert Finlay, "The Refashioning of Martin Guerre," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 93, No. 3 (June 1988): 553 – 571.

* available for download via Jstor

4. 4 February 2021: Love it or Hate it?

Gene Brucker, *Giovanni & Lusanna: Love and Marriage in Renaissance Florence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988)

* Available through UW Bookstore

Thomas Kuehn, "Reading Microhistory: The Example of Giovanni and Lusanna," *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 61, No. 3 (Sep. 1989): 512 – 534.

* available for download via Jstor

5. 11 February 2021: Historical Heresy?

Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou: The Promised Land of Error* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979)

* Available through UW Bookstore

6. 18 February 2021: READING WEEK – NO CLASS

7. 25 February 2021: Carnival

Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Carnaval in Romans* (New York: George Braziller, 1980)

* available through Hathi Trust; one user at a time & one hour at a time

8. 4 March 2021: Cheesy Narratives?

Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms* (Baltimore: the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992)

*available through Hathi Trust; one user at a time & one hour at a time

9. 11 March 2021: Witchy Tales

Carlo Ginzburg, *The Night Battles: Witchcraft & Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth & Seventeenth Centuries* (Baltimore: the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992)

* available through UW e-reserves; unlimited user access

10. 18 March 2021: The Name of the Game

Judith Brown, *Immodest Acts: the Life of a Lesbian Nun in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

* Available through UW Bookstore

11. 25 March 2021: Outside of Europe

Jonathan Spence, *The Death of Woman Wang* (New York: Penguin Books, 1979).

* Available through UW Bookstore

12. 1 April 2021: The April Fool Finale

Angela Bourke, *The Burning of Bridget Cleary* (New York: Viking Books, 2000).

* Available through UW Bookstore

Expectations:

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted our lives and our ability to come together normally as a community of scholars and learners. It goes without saying, at this point in the pandemic, that the instructor will make every reasonable effort to accommodate students who experience pandemic-related challenges. This includes technological problems.

Pandemic-related challenges notwithstanding, the expectation if you take this course is that you will plan to attend its weekly discussion sessions and will come to virtual class prepared. This means doing all the readings, thinking of questions or insightful comments in advance, making efforts to provoke or engage in discussions, and, generally, taking an active interest in the course content.

It is all the more important now, given the societal restrictions we all face, that we come together to form meaningful communities. HIST 402 strives to create a safe space to share, learn, and grow through participation.

HIS 422 is an advanced (Honours) university history course. It presumes familiarity with historical events and approaches so that it may delve more deeply into a single methodology. It also presumes a high level of technical proficiency in the research methods required for successful undergraduate study in the Arts. This includes knowing the conventions contained in the *Chicago Manual of Style*, the standard style guide used in the discipline of History in North America. It establishes norms for, among other things, cover pages, footnotes, bibliographic citations, and much more. Students who are unfamiliar with the *Chicago Manual of Style* should obtain a copy and study it closely. Similarly, HIST 422 presumes a high level of written competency. Students who wish to review the norms of essay writing (e.g. the use of a thesis statement, topic sentences, an exposition, and a conclusion), or those who are unfamiliar with the conventions of proficient style (e.g. the horrors of the passive voice, participles, split infinitives, and excessive use of the verb 'to be') should consult Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*, Truss' *Eats, Shoots, and Leaves*, Gordon's *The Transitive Vampire*, and O'Conner's *Woe is I: the Grammarphobe's Guide to Better English in Plain English*. It is unacceptable in an Honours course to submit written work that contains typos, subject-verb or pronoun-verb errors, misspelled words, confused homophones, or other such rudimentary errors. Please proof-read all written submissions. Students who require assistance with written communication may benefit from the resources available through the university Writing and Communication Centre (<https://uwaterloo.ca/writing-and-communication-centre>).

The readings in this course are significant and students who feel ill equipped to process the equivalent of one long book per week will struggle to achieve success.

Participation:

See above for policy on lack of preparation or absences and their impact on participation scores.

The first requirement of participation is attendance. Participation scores reflect from evidence of active student engagement.

The total participation score is derived from oral participation in seminars.

Each week, students have the opportunity to earn up to three participation points. These points reflect the calibre of oral contributions made during discussions. The first point is for being present and showing signs of understanding. The second is for speaking and making a contribution to class discussion. The third is for demonstrating evidence of deeper thought, asking a complex question, making a more sophisticated contribution, etc.

Assignments:

The written assignments in HIST 422 are cumulative and lead to a well-researched written microhistorical essay. All written work must be typed using Times New Roman (or something comparable) at a character pitch of 12. Margins must be 1" on all sides and the assignment must not have a cover page. Students must use footnotes as opposed to endnotes or parenthetical references. They should consult the *Chicago Manual of Style* for further formatting details.

Style counts when writing! The instructor awards points for smooth prose and deducts them for awkward, or incorrect, use of the English language. Students at every level are encouraged to make use of the University of Waterloo's Writing Centre (<https://uwaterloo.ca/writing-centre/>).

To begin, in the first week or two of the course, each student must select, in consultation with the instructor, an historical "moment" or incident that interests them. This item can come from any place and any time.

Précis Assignments

Next, students must submit two précis packets over the course of the term (see due dates). Each packet will contain four or five one-page summaries of books, chapters, or articles they have read and studied. Please see the sample précis attached to this syllabus for a model. In brief, each précis will:

1. Identify the author and provide some brief context into WHO they are (e.g. academic rank, institutional affiliation, reputation, training, field of study, former mentor)
2. Identify the topic of the piece
3. Identify the methodology used (how did the author work exactly to gather their evidence and perform their analysis? What sources did they use?)
4. Identify any theoretical approaches used (e.g. Marxism, feminist discourse, gender theory)
5. Identify the argument or point of the piece
6. Provide a brief summary of any other pertinent information and explain how this piece will help inform your research project. In particular, note if it provided any additional sources you plan to pursue.

Bibliography

Toward the end of the course (see due dates), each student will submit a comprehensive bibliography of all primary and secondary sources gathered on their research topic.

Final Microhistorical Essay

Students will submit, at the end of the course (see due dates), a research essay that employs microhistorical techniques to tell its story in at least a partially narrative tone. Essays should be between 15 – 20 pages, double spaced.

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.

Deadlines:

The instructor imposes a five per cent late penalty for each day after the due date on all assignments. This includes weekends and holidays.

Please consult the list of important dates at the top of this document for specific assignments' deadlines.

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Check www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/ for more information.

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of their university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read the St. Jerome's University Policy on [Student Petitions and Grievances](#). When in doubt, please be certain to contact the St. Jerome's Advising Specialist, Student Affairs Office, who will provide further assistance.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for their actions. Check www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/ for more information. 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 instructor, academic advisor, or the Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under the St. Jerome's University Policy on [Student Discipline](#). For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to University of Waterloo [Policy 71, Student Discipline](#). For typical penalties, check the [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](#).

Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes they have a ground for an appeal should refer to the St. Jerome's University policy on [Student Appeals](#).

Note for students with disabilities: [AccessAbility Services](#), located in Needles Hall (Room 1401) at the University of Waterloo, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term.

Grading Scale:

The instructor grades written work according to the following scale:

Letter Grade	Numeric Value	Instructor's Description
A+	90-100	Exceptional
A	85-89	Excellent
A-	80-84	Excellent
B+	77-79	Very good
B	73-76	Good
B-	70-72	Good
C+	67-69	Competent
C	63-66	Fairly Competent
C-	60-62	Fairly Competent
F	0 - 59	Failing

According to this system, the instructor intends a grade of C-, C, or C+ indicates that the evaluated work meets the basic requirements of the assignment. In order to achieve a mark above C+, the assignment must demonstrate superior characteristics such as a sophisticated understanding of the topic, an awareness or ability to use more advanced methodologies, a creative approach, etc.

Sample Précis:

Alan Hunt, *Governance of the Consuming Passions: A History of Sumptuary Law* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996). Chapters 1, 2, 9.

This book, by Alan Hunt, a distinguished English Professor of Sociology and Law at Carleton University, explores the limitations of Michel Foucault's approach to social governance by looking to the historical regulation of clothing. Hunt is not a cultural historian and this leads him perhaps to overemphasize written legal texts (which he accesses entirely in their modern English translation, raising the possibility of missed or inaccessible sources). For Hunt, prescriptive sources such as laws provide significant (or exclusive) meaning. As a result, the book argues narrowly that sumptuary laws represent a connected, gradually progressive, cumulative attempt by humans across space and time to codify urban identity, to distinguish and protect social status or rank, and to enforce gender norms. While, historically, this type of deliberate pan-human effort seems unlikely, the book tends to flatten regional, national, and temporal nuance. While the book provides ample evidence on, for example, the economics of regulation or the mechanics of enforcement and repression, it has almost nothing to say on more recent concerns, such as the environmental impact of the textile industry.

Despite some significant methodological limitations, the book provides a useful catalogue of sumptuary laws that is valuable to my research. Since my microhistory will revolve around the case of a Jew in Nazi Germany who refused to wear the badge, Hunt's evidence helps contextualize one approach to clothing regulation and will allow me to situate my analysis in a broader context of clothing regulation. In his chapter on premodern Europe, Hunt drew very briefly on the work of Diane Owen-Hughes, which will also support my research. I plan now to follow up on that source: Diane Owen-Hughes, "Distinguishing Signs: Ear-Rings, Jews, and Franciscan Rhetoric in the Italian Renaissance City," *Past & Present*, Vol. 112: 3 – 59.

HIST 422A

Name: _____

Final Essay Marking Rubrics

Format:	Poor	Good	Very Good	Excellent
- Margin size				
- Line spacing			- Length (1500 words)	
- First page headers			- Footnotes (Chicago Manual of Style)	
- Page numbers			- Bibliography (Chicago Manual of Style)	
- Font size				

Syntax & Grammar:	Poor	Good	Very Good	Excellent
- Spelling, contractions, homophones (e.g., bear / bare; its / it's; their / there / they're)				
- Apostrophes				
- Subject-verb agreement				
- Noun-pronoun agreement				
- Split infinitives				
- Convoluted syntax				
- Sentence fragments				
- Adjectival hyphens (e.g., fourteenth-century people)				

Style:	Poor	Good	Very Good	Excellent
- Passive voice				
- Dangling modifiers				
- Run-on sentences				
- Weak or missing topic sentences at start of every paragraph				

Quality of Thesis:	Poor lacks focus; unclear argument	Good basic argument	Very Good solid argument	Excellent argument shows awareness of historical methodologies
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Structure:	Poor	Good	Very Good	Excellent
- Development (exposition) of argument (is the argument logically structured?)				
- Persuasiveness of argument (does the argument convince?)				
- Use of historical evidence such as names, dates, events as proof				

Quality of Research:	Poor	Good	Very Good	Excellent
- Consulted a variety of references sources (dictionaries, indices, encyclopaedia, annals, etc.)				
- Located an appropriate mixture of monographs (books) and articles (journals, chapters)				
- Used appropriate scholarly sources				
- Located at least ten relevant secondary sources and at least one primary source				

Other Comments:



How to access ebooks available through the HathiTrust

1. When accessing the ebooks from home, go to: www.lib.uwaterloo.ca
2. Click COURSE RESERVES on the right menu.

QUICK LINKS

Research guides

Databases

My library account

Course Reserves

Get access from anywhere

3. Log in with your QUEST USERNAME and PASSWORD

Course Reserves Logon

*Username:

*Password:

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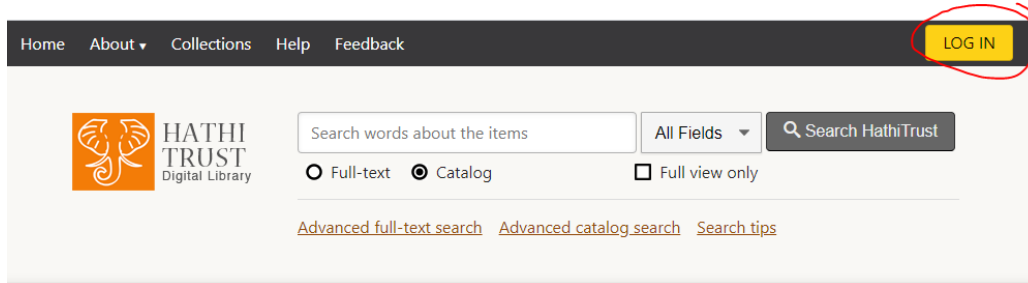
4. Select the course (i.e. HIST422) by clicking on VIEW COURSE.

View Course	HIST422.041	041	BEDNARSKI, Steven	8
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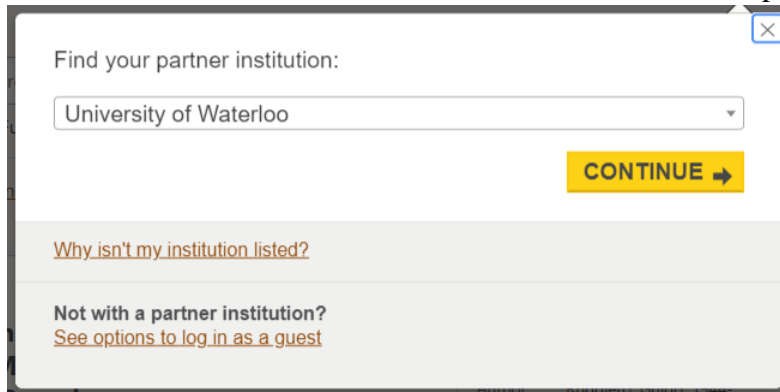
5. Choose the reading by selecting VIEW ITEM (ie. Microhistory and the lost people of Europe)

Show Details View Item	<input type="checkbox"/>	A Poisoned Past
Show Details View Item	<input type="checkbox"/>	A Poisoned Past
Show Details View Item	<input type="checkbox"/>	Carnival in Romans
Show Details View Item	<input type="checkbox"/>	Microhistory and the lost people of Europe Introduction
Show Details View Item	<input type="checkbox"/>	The cheese and the worms : the cosmos of a sixteenth-century miller

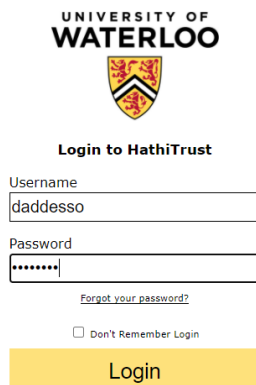
6. You will be taken to the HathiTrust website. In the upper right hand corner, click LOG IN



7. Choose UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO from the list of option, click, CONTINUE



8. Enter you QUEST USERNAME and PASSWORD, click LOGIN



9. At the bottom of the screen, click on TEMPORARY ACCESS to access the ebook

Viewability

Item Link	Original Source
Temporary access	University of Michigan

10. Click on CHECK OUT to access the ebook for ONE HOUR

Access to this work is provided through the [Emergency Temporary Access Service](#). [Check Out](#)

11. At the top of the screen, you will see the time and date when the book must be returned. You may also return the book earlier than this time if you are finished with it by clicking on RETURN EARLY.

NOTE: you will have one hour with the book. If no one else is waiting to access the book, you may check it out for another hour. However, if another patron is waiting to access the ebook then you won't be able to check out the book for the following hour.

The screenshot shows the HathiTrust interface for the book 'Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe'. At the top, a navigation bar includes 'Home', 'About', 'My Collections', 'Collections', 'Help', 'Feedback', 'Search HathiTrust', 'Member', and 'Log out'. Below this, a yellow banner states: 'This work is checked out to you until 11:15AM January 11 and may automatically renew. Access to this work is provided through the Emergency Temporary Access Service.' A 'Return Early' button is circled in red on the right side of this banner. The main content area features the book title 'Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe' by Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero, translated by Eren Branch. On the left, there are links for 'About this Book', 'View full catalog record', 'Rights', 'Get this Book', 'Download', and 'Text Only Views'. The bottom of the interface shows a search bar, navigation controls, and a page indicator '7 / 250'.

12. If you have any questions, please contact Deb Adesso daddesso@uwaterloo.ca