

History 535.002, 615.002, 635.001: Global Microhistories
Spring 2016
Tuesday 7:20-10 pm
Robinson B333
Professor Joan Bristol
Office: Robinson B 348
Email: jbristol@gmu.edu
Office hours: 1:30pm-2:30pm Wednesdays and by appointment

Global Microhistories examines narrative histories written about individuals, groups of people, places, and events from a detailed perspective. We will focus on the Atlantic World (Europe, Africa, Latin America, and British America) in the early modern period (1500-1800) and we will examine the lives of women and men; Native Americans, Africans, Europeans and their descendants; Jews, Muslims, and Christians, and others. Possible readings include Ginzburg's *Cheese and the Worms*, Davis's *Trickster Travels*, Spence's *Question of Hu*, Sparks' *Two Princes of Calabar*, Townsend's *Malintzin's Choices*, and Kierner's *Scandal at Bizarre*. These micro-level histories are engagingly-written narratives that are a joy to read. They allow us to understand larger historical events and processes more fully and give us insight into groups and cultures that are not as well-represented in traditional political histories.

Assignments and grading:

- 1) *Class participation (25% of the final grade)*. Participation will be measured by involvement in class discussions.
- 2) *Class blog (25% of final grade)*: I will send blog invitations after the first class meeting. You will post to the class blog eight times over the course of the semester. You may write about some aspect of the readings that you found interesting or puzzling, you may compare it to other books we have read, you can write about the sources the author used, or you may do something else. The requirement is that you make clear that you have read, understood, and thought about the book and that you are able to assess it in a holistic way and make connections to the larger class theme.
- 3) *Microhistorical project, due at the end of the semester (50% of the final grade)*. Please see the assignment below.

Class policies:

- 1) You are expected to arrive in class on time and stay for the entire class period. If you know that you will be late to class or that you need to leave early please let me know ahead of time.
- 2) Do not eat during class. (You may bring something to drink but don't spill it.)
- 3) If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at (703) 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

Honor Code:

George Mason has an honor code and you are expected to adhere to it. It is as follows:
“To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set forth this honor code: Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.” <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code-2/>

If I suspect plagiarism or other forms of cheating I will submit my findings to the Honor Committee immediately. You are responsible for understanding what constitutes plagiarism and other kinds of cheating. If you do not understand what constitutes plagiarism and cheating ask me for clarification.

Required texts available for purchase in the bookstore and from other booksellers, on reserve in the library, and through WRLC and ILL (in all cases this is the most recent paperback edition):

Cook and Cook, *Good Faith and Truthful Ignorance* (1991)
Davis, *Return of Martin Guerre* (1983)
Davis, *Trickster Travels* (2006)
Ginzburg, *Cheese and the Worms* (1976)
Harms, *The Diligent* (2001)
Kierner, *Scandal at Bizarre* (2004)
Ladurie, *Montaillou* (1975)
Lepore, *Book of Ages* (2013)
Sparks, *Two Princes of Calabar* (2004)
Sweet, *Dominguez Alvares* (2011)
Thornton, *Kongolese Saint Anthony* (1998)
Townsend, *Malintzin's Choices* (2006)
Ulrich, *Midwife's Tale* (1990)

Schedule:

Week 1 (1/19): Introduction

Reading” “What is Microhistory?” History News Network

<http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/23720>

Carlo Ginzburg, “Microhistory: Two or Three Things that I Know About It,” *Critical Inquiry*, 20.1:10-35 Available on JSTOR.

Week 2 (2/26):

Reading: Emmanuel LeRoy Ladurie, *Montaillou*

1/26 is the last day to add classes and the last day to drop without tuition penalty.

Week 3 (2/2):

Reading, Carlo Ginzburg, *Cheese and the Worms*

2/2 is the last day to drop with 33% tuition penalty.

Week 4 (2/9):

Reading: Natalie Zemon Davis, *Return of Martin Guerre*

By tonight you should have identified a source to use in your microhistorical project and emailed the citation and a description to me.

Week 5 (2/16):

Reading: Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Midwife's Tale*

and Jill Lepore, "Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography," *Journal of American History*, 88.1 (June 2001): 129-144. Available on JSTOR.

2/19 is the final drop deadline (67% tuition penalty).

Week 6 (2/23):

Reading: Cook and Cook, *Good Faith and Truthful Ignorance*

Week 7 (3/1):

John Thornton, *Kongolese Saint Anthony*

Week 8 (3/8): Spring break (no class)

Week 9 (3/15):

Reading: Harms, *The Diligent* AND Sparks, *Two Princes of Calabar*

Week 10 (3/22): No class (I will be out of town). Please post a rough description of your paper on the blog this week and please comment on at least three other students' posts. Your post should include a general summary of your project and a comment on how it relates to other microhistories we have read for the class in terms of method, structure, and use of sources. Feel free to discuss any problems you might be having or ask for advice. Your comments to other students should be helpful.

Week 11 (3/29):

Reading: Kierner, *Scandal at Bizarre*

Week 12 (4/5):

Reading: Townsend, *Malintzin's Choices*

Week 13 (4/12):

Reading: Davis, *Trickster Travels*

Week 14 (4/19):

Reading: Sweet, *Dominguez Alvares*

Week 15 (4/26):

Lepore, *Book of Ages*

FINAL PAPER DUE Friday 4/29. Please email them to me in Word.

History 535, 615, 635 Spring 2016 Final paper assignment
Due Friday 4/29. Please email them to me in Word.

The microhistories that we have read this semester use primary sources in a variety of ways. Some microhistories focus deeply on one source to provide the bulk of the narrative and use other sources to fill in background information, while other microhistories use a variety of primary sources to tell a story. For the final project I would like you to write a microhistory and I would like you to begin with a primary source and use other sources (primary and secondary) to provide context and interpretation for the story the source tells (i.e. more along the lines of *Midwife's Tale* than *Malintzin's Choices*. I'm asking you to approach it this way because I think it will be an easier project to complete in one semester. If you have an ongoing project that you think would be appropriate to use to write a microhistory please feel free to do so.

Your microhistory can be on any time period or region.

By February 29th please email me a description of the primary source (or sources) that you will use as the centerpiece of your microhistory. During the week of March 22 please post on the class blog a description of your microhistory. Your post should include a general summary of your project and a comment on how it relates to other microhistories we have read for the class in terms of method, structure, and use of sources. Feel free to discuss any problems you might be having or ask your peers for advice.