History 535.002: Global Microhistories
Spring 2022
Wednesday 7:20-10 pm
Krug Hall 209

Professor Joan Bristol
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Office hours: By appointment. I am very happy to speak with you in person or on Zoom and my schedule is very flexible. Please email me or talk to me after class and make an appointment!

Global Microhistories examines narrative histories written about individuals, groups of people, places, and events from a detailed perspective. We will primarily focus on the early modern Atlantic World and we will examine the lives of women and men; Native Americans, Africans, Europeans and their descendants; Jews, Muslims, and Christians; and others. 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.

Blackboard login instructions.
We will use Blackboard for this course. You can access Blackboard at http://mymasonportal.gmu.edu. Log in and click on the “courses” tab. You will see HIST-535. Your username and password is the same as those you use for your Mason email account. If we have to move online temporarily for any reason the zoom link will be in Blackboard.

Assignments and grading:
1) Class participation (40% of the final grade). Participation will be measured by involvement in class discussions. Collaborating verbally with your colleagues is the most important part of graduate classes. If the class discussions lag I may start posting discussion board prompts or having you do in-class writing. I will send you a progress report by early March to let you know how you are doing.

2) Class discussion board (20% of final grade): You will be using the discussion board as a place to discuss your research paper.

3) Microhistorical research project, due at the end of the semester (40% 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/](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:**
The books are widely available for purchase. We have copies in our library and they are also available through WRLC and ILL. Any edition is fine. An ** means that we have an online edition available through the library. However, please double-check as our holdings may have changed since I last checked.

** Corteguera, *Death by Effigy*
** Diouf, *Dreams of Africa in Alabama*
** Sajdi, *The Barber of Damascus*
Davis, *Return of Martin Guerre*
Eustace, *Covered with Night*
Ginzburg, *Cheese and the Worms*
Kierner, *Scandal at Bizarre*
Lepore, *Book of Ages*
** Miles, *The House on Diamond Hill*
Sparks, *Two Princes of Calabar*
Ulrich, *Midwife’s Tale*

**Schedule:**
**Week 1 (1/26): What is microhistory?**

**Week 2 (2/2): Is microhistory different from other forms of history?**
VISIT with Dr. George Oberle for first part of class.


Identify a source to use in your microhistorical project. Before class please email the citation and a description to me. (100-200 words)


By class time please post a description of your primary source on the “research project” thread on the class discussion board and please describe one secondary source that you will use for context. (100-200 words)

Week 6 (3/2): Cynthia Kierner, *Scandal at Bizarre* (2006) By class time please comment on at least one of your fellow students’ posts on the “research project” thread. Please comment on them in a substantive way: perhaps you have a suggestion for how to approach the project, perhaps you have a suggestion for further reading, perhaps you see some comparison to your own project. (100-200 words)

Week 7 (3/9): Randy Sparks, *Two Princes of Calabar* (2009)

March 16 NO CLASS – Spring break!

By class time please post (on the “research project” thread) a general summary of your project and a discussion of how it relates to other microhistories we have read for the class in terms of method, structure, and use of sources. (100-200 words)

By class time please respond to at least one of your fellow students’ questions on the “research project” thread from last week. (100-200 words)

By class time please post a general update on your research project. (100-200 words)

By class time please respond to at least one of your fellow students’ research project posts from last week. General support, advice, questions all constitute good responses. (100-200 words)


By class time please post a general update on your research project. (100-200 words)

**Week 13 (4/27): Nicole Eustace, Covered with Night (2021)**

By class time please respond to at least one of your fellow students’ research project posts from last week. General support, advice, questions all constitute good responses. (100-200 words)

**Week 15 (5/4): Global Microhistory**


**FINAL PAPER DUE Friday 5/13 by 5 pm. Please email it to me in Word.**

**History 535, 615, 635 Spring 2022 Final paper assignment**

Due Friday 5/13 by 5 pm. Please email it 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 create a microhistory centered around one primary source. The product will be a 15-25 page paper. If you want to consider another format (a website, an exhibition) I am open to possibility but cannot offer much guidance. You will use at least five other sources (primary and secondary) to provide context and interpretation for the story the primary source tells. I am 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 may be on any time period or region.

**Relevant dates:**

**Week 3 (2/9):** Identify a primary source to use in your microhistorical project. Before class please email the citation and a description to me. (100-200 words)

**Week 5 (2/23):** By class time please post a description of your primary source on the “research project” thread on the class discussion board and please describe one secondary source that you will use for context. (100-200 words)

**Week 6 (3/2):** By class time please comment on at least one of your fellow students’ posts on the “research project” thread. Please comment on them in a substantive way: perhaps you have a suggestion for how to approach the project, perhaps you have a suggestion for further reading, perhaps you see some comparison to your own project. (100-200 words)

**Week 8 (3/23):** By class time please post (on the “research project” thread) a general summary of your project and a discussion of how it relates to other microhistories we have read for the class in terms of method, structure, and use of sources. (100-200 words)

**Week 9 (3/30):** By class time please respond to at least one of your fellow students’ questions on the “research project” thread from last week. (100-200 words)

**Week 10 (4/6):** By class time please post a general update on your research project. (100-200 words)

**Week 11 (4/13):** By class time please respond to at least one of your fellow students’ posts from last week. General support, advice, questions all constitute good responses. (100-200 words)

**Week 12 (4/20):** By class time please post a general update on your research project. (100-200 words)

**Week 13 (4/27):** By class time please respond to at least one of your fellow students’ posts from last week. General support, advice, questions all constitute good responses. (100-200 words)