

HIST 395-Spring 2026
THE CROOKED PATHS OF RESEARCH

This is a junior seminar and its main purpose is to give history majors a first exposure to research and writing in history. Therefore, during the semester we will not focus so much on the “story” told in each selected reading as on how they have been researched and written and how the texts reflect the assumptions and logic of the authors. That is, the course will emphasize questions of methodology, such as the problems posed by research, availability and access to archives, what kind of information we can reasonably expect to find in documents, the complicated relationship between evidence and narrative devices, etc. The course also has a strong interdisciplinary approach to these methodological reflections: we will not only read historical texts but also will explore similar questions in literature and art and in two different areas of study (Latin America and Europe): the readings include a narrative of the search in the streets of Paris for a girl victim of the Holocaust, an explanation of the competing logics behind Shakespeare’s authorship dispute, the investigations through criminal records and folklore of gaucho rebellions in Argentina, etc .

One of the purposes of this required seminar is to help students develop and improve their reading and writing skills: thus, throughout the semester they will respond essay questions that will work as writing exercises and reading control.

Learning outcomes: 1) Students will learn about the complexity of historical research 2) Students will recognize different forms of historical reflection and will understand the role of critical thinking in the creation of historical knowledge as well as the research challenges that the latter entails. To achieve these goals we will combine lectures, discussions, weekly essay questions, and a final paper.

Required book:

-Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*

Suggested book:

David Hockney, *Secret Knowledge*

Class Schedule:

Week 1

Introduction. **Readings:** On Learning, Bias, and Understanding. (**WEQ-Weekly Essay Question**)

Week 2

Modiano, *Dora Bruder* (**WEQ**)

Week 3

Ginzburg, “Proofs and Possibilities” and Grafton, “The Footnote” (**WEQ**)

Week 4

Shapiro, *Contested Will* (**WEQ**)

Week 5

Shapiro, *Contested Will* (**WEQ**)

Week 6

Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms* (**WEQ**)

Week 7

De la Fuente, *Children of Facundo* (**WEQ**)

Week 8

Yeazell, *Picture Titles* (**WEQ**)

Week 9

Yeazell, *Picture Titles* (**WEQ**)

March 16-21 Spring Break

Week 11

Preliminary report on topics, bibliography, and sources

Week 12

Fuller, *Who is Ozymandias?* (**WEQ**)

Week 13

Hockney, *Secret Knowledge*, (**WEQ**)

Week 14

Writing

Week 15

Writing

Week 16

Final paper due

Grades will be determined as follows: Weekly Essay Questions, 85%; final paper, 10%; attendance, 5%.

Attendance is mandatory: Students are allowed to have three absences (excused or not) without penalty. With the fourth absence one percentage point will be deducted from the final grade and the fifth and sixth absences with a loss of 2% each. Students are allowed a total of six absences. Incurring in a seventh absence (including excused ones) automatically translates into failing the course. The attendance sheet will be available until three minutes past the beginning of class; after the three minute grace time students will not be able to sign in and a late arrival will be counted as an absence.

Grade Scale:

90-100=A

80-89=B

70-79=C

60-69=D

0-59=F

Freedom of Expression:

In this class, students are encouraged to exercise their right to free inquiry and expression. You are welcome to express any view on the subject matter introduced by the instructor or other class members within the structure of the course. While you are responsible for learning the content of this course, you remain free to take a reasoned exception to the views presented and to reserve judgment about matters of conscience, controversy, or opinion. When you encounter ideas that you find offensive, unwise, immoral, or wrong-headed, you are encouraged to engage them with reasons, evidence, and arguments. Your course grade will be based on your academic performance, not on the opinions you express. Our commitment to freedom of expression means that no relevant ideas or positions are out of bounds, but disruptive or disorderly behavior, threats, or harassment are strictly prohibited and will be reported to the Office of the Dean of Students.

See the University's "Commitment to Freedom of Expression" and "Bill of Student Rights" in the University Policies and Statements module on Brightspace.

Conduct and ethics: Students are expected to follow the code of honor and academic ethics as set forth in University regulations. Violations of these codes will be penalized according to university regulations.

Academic integrity is one of the highest values that Purdue University holds. Individuals are encouraged to alert university officials to potential breaches of this value by either emailing integrity@purdue.edu or by calling 765-494-8778. While information may be submitted anonymously, the more information is submitted the greater the opportunity for the university to investigate the concern. More details are available on our course Brightspace table of contents, under University Policies.

Incidents of academic misconduct in this course will be addressed by the course instructor and referred to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities (OSRR) for review at the university level. Any violation of course policies as it relates to academic integrity will result minimally in a failing or zero grade for that particular assignment, and at the instructor's discretion may result in a failing grade for the course. In addition, all incidents of academic misconduct will be forwarded to OSRR, where university penalties, including removal from the university, may be considered.

In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances beyond the instructor's control. Relevant changes to this course will be posted onto the course website or can be obtained by contacting the instructors or TAs via email or phone. You are expected to read your @purdue.edu email on a frequent basis.

Purdue University is committed to welcomes individuals of all ages, religions, sex, sexual orientations, races, nationalities, languages, military experience, disabilities, family statuses, gender identities and expressions, political views, and socioeconomic statuses. Please respect the different experiences, beliefs and values expressed by everyone in this course. Behaviors that threaten, harass, discriminate or that are disrespectful of others will not be tolerated. Inappropriate behaviors will be addressed with disciplinary action, which may include being referred to the Office of the Dean of Students.

For unanticipated or emergency conflict, when advance notification to an instructor is not possible, the student should contact the instructor as soon as possible by email, through Brightspace, or by phone. When the student is unable to make direct contact with the instructor and is unable to leave word with the instructor's department because of circumstances beyond the student's control, and in cases of bereavement, quarantine, or isolation, the student or the student's representative should contact the Office of the Dean of Students via email or phone at

765-494-1747. Our course Brightspace includes a link on Attendance and Grief Absence policies under the University Policies menu.

If you find yourself beginning to feel some stress, anxiety and/or feeling slightly overwhelmed, try WellTrack. Sign in and find information and tools at your fingertips, available to you at any time.

If you need support and information about options and resources, please contact or see the Office of the Dean of Students. Call 765-494-1747. Hours of operation are M-F, 8 am- 5 pm.

If you find yourself struggling to find a healthy balance between academics, social life, stress, etc. sign up for free one-on-one virtual or in-person sessions with a Purdue Wellness Coach at RecWell. Student coaches can help you navigate through barriers and challenges toward your goals throughout the semester. Sign up is completely free and can be done on BoilerConnect. If you have any questions, please contact Purdue Wellness at evans240@purdue.edu.

If you're struggling and need mental health services: Purdue University is committed to advancing the mental health and well-being of its students. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of mental health support, services are available. For help, such individuals should contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 765-494-6995 during and after hours, on weekends and holidays, or by going to the CAPS office of the second floor of the Purdue University Student Health Center (PUSH) during business hours.

Any student with special needs or a health issue that may affect her/his performance in this course should speak in private with the instructor after class to make the necessary arrangements.