

# HISTORY 495 — A Person and a Place: The Joy of Microhistory

Spring 2026 • Purdue University, Department of History

**Meeting Times:** Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays • January 12 – May 8, 2026

**Location:** WALC 2127

**Office Hours:** Online, by request

**Zoom Room:** <https://purdue-edu.zoom.us/j/6898881530>

---

## Course Goals

This course develops **historical research and writing skills** through the study and creation of **microhistories**.

Students will:

- Read and analyze several microhistorical works
- Learn how close-focused, deeply sourced research illuminates human experience
- Explore how large-scale historical processes unfold at an intimate level
- Choose their own microhistorical research topic
- Produce an original, carefully constructed research project

**No prior study of history is required.**

If you have a disability or physical limitation requiring accommodation, contact the instructor as early as possible. We will work together to create a supportive plan.

---

## Required Texts

Students must obtain the following books:

- **Yigael Yadin**, *Bar-Kokhba: The Rediscovery of the Legendary Hero of the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome* (1971)
- **Jean-Claude Schmitt**, *The Holy Greyhound: Guinefort, Healer of Children Since the Thirteenth Century* (1979; English trans. 1983)
- **Carlo Ginzburg**, *The Cheese and the Worms* (1980)

- **William Dalrymple**, *The Last Mughal: The Fall of a Dynasty, Delhi 1857* (2006)
  - **Anne Walthall**, *The Weak Body of a Useless Woman: Matsuo Taseko and the Meiji Restoration* (1998)
- 

## Contact Information

**Email:** swijeyer@purdue.edu

Messages sent after **6:00 PM** may not receive a response until after **9:00 AM** the next day.

Notify the instructor as soon as possible if you need an extension or must miss class. Important questions should be addressed in person when possible.

### Email Expectations

- Use professional language
  - Address the instructor by title and surname
  - Avoid text-message style writing
  - Be concise, polite, and clear
- 

## Coursework and Grading

### Participation — 25%

Assessed on:

- Quality of discussion contributions
  - Engagement with course materials
  - Professional classroom behavior
- 

### Book Analyses — 2 × 15%

Students will select **two** required texts to present.

Each 10-minute presentation should include:

- A historiographical evaluation

- Comparisons to similar works
  - Insights into methodology or noteworthy research techniques
- 

## Final Project — 45% total

### Research Paper — 30%

A **2,500–3,000-word** original microhistory on:

- A single individual, **or**
- A group of **no more than four people, or**
- A location no larger than **100 square miles**

### Methodology Presentation — 15% (15 minutes)

Explain to the class:

- Why you chose your topic
  - Your research methodology
  - Valuable or surprising sources
  - Lessons learned during the project
- 

## Late Work and Extensions

- Request extensions **early**; last-minute requests are not acceptable except in emergencies.
  - Extensions may be granted for illness or family emergency, but **not** for other course workloads.
  - Maximum extension length: **one week**
  - Late assignments without extension: **one full grade deduction per day**
  - **All required work must be submitted** to receive a final course grade
- 

## Participation and Classroom Conduct

The instructor aims to create an engaging class environment. In return, students are expected to:

- Stay awake, attentive, and prepared

- Complete readings before class
- Participate respectfully in discussion

## University Policy Reminders

Review Purdue policies on:

- **Academic honesty:** <https://www.purdue.edu/odos/osrr/academic-integrity/index.html>
- **Copyright:** <https://www.purdue.edu/policies/academic-research-affairs/ia3.html>
- **Attendance:**  
[https://www.purdue.edu/studentregulations/regulations\\_procedures/classes.html](https://www.purdue.edu/studentregulations/regulations_procedures/classes.html)

## Classroom Expectations

- Silence phones; no texting or web browsing
- Eating/drinking allowed only if it is not distracting
- Missed work must be completed before the next class meeting
- Up to **one** pre-approved absence without penalty
- More than **3 unexcused absences** → -5%
- Additional absences → -1% each
- **No recording** of lectures or discussion (notes only)

---

# Course Guide and Weekly Schedule

Items in **red** (in the original syllabus) were required before class. In this accessible version, they appear under **Required Before Class**.

---

## Week 1 (Jan 12, 14, 16) — Basic Historical Theory

- Introduction
- Slides on key historical concepts
- Essay guidelines

### Required Before Class

- "Birkbeck Explains: What is Global History?" (YouTube)
- "School of Life: Modernity" (YouTube)

---

## Week 2 (Jan 19, 21, 23) — Bar-Kokhba

- Lecture: Introduction to the Roman Empire
- **Reading:** Yadin, *Bar-Kokhba*
- Discussion

---

## Week 3 (Jan 26, 28, 30) — The Greyhound Saint

- Lecture: Medieval Western Europe
- **Reading:** Schmitt, *The Holy Greyhound*
- Discussion

---

## Week 4 (Feb 2, 4, 6) — Project Formation

- Narrow down topics
- Feasibility workshop
- Choose a subject
- Begin forming an argument

---

## Week 5 (Feb 9, 11, 13) — Menocchio

- Lecture: The Prehistory of Modernity
- **Reading:** Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*
- Discussion
- Begin bibliography

---

## Week 6 (Feb 16, 18, 20) — Bahadur Shah Zafar

- Lecture: The British and the Mughals
- **Reading:** Dalrymple, *The Last Mughal*
- Discussion

- Continue bibliography
- 

## **Week 7 (Feb 23, 25, 27) — Matsuo Taseko**

- Lecture: Revolutionary Japan
  - **Reading:** Walthall, *The Weak Body of a Useless Woman*
  - Discussion
  - Continue bibliography
- 

## **Week 8 (Mar 2, 4, 6) — Basic Planning**

- Finalize topic
  - Draft thesis and structure
  - Begin research
- 

## **Week 9 (Mar 9, 11, 13) — Research Week**

- In-class research time
  - Workshop challenges
- 

## **Week 10 (Mar 16, 18, 20) — Half-Term Break (No Class)**

---

## **Week 11 (Mar 23, 25, 27) — Research Week II**

- Continue research
  - Workshop difficulties
-

## **Week 12 (Mar 30, Apr 1, Apr 3) — Workshopping**

- Peer discussion of draft essays
  - Feedback and revision strategies
- 

## **Week 13 (Apr 6, 8, 10) — Research & Write**

- Independent writing week
  - Optional: one 30-minute feedback meeting
- 

## **Week 14 (Apr 13, 15, 17) — Research & Write**

- Continued independent work
- 

## **Week 15 (Apr 20, 22, 24) — Final Presentations**

---

## **Week 16 (Apr 27, 29, May 1) — Final Draft + Class Picnic**

**Final essay due: May 8**