

History 4365
MICROHISTORIES OF MODERN EUROPE

Dr. Steven Soper
Fall Term 2010
MWF, 12:20-1:10
LeConte 321

Office: LeConte 128
Office Hours: Th, 10:00-11:00 a.m.
and by appointment
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One doctor and his patients in provincial Germany (1721-1740). A deadly cholera outbreak in a small London neighborhood (1854). The bombing of a restaurant in Paris (1894). A Nazi police battalion with orders to execute entire villages of Jews in Poland (1942-1943).

These are all examples of the genre of historical research and writing known as microhistory, which uses very specific (“micro-“) topics and archival sources to examine larger historical problems. Thus, the four microhistories described above address, respectively, changing conceptions of women’s bodies, urban growth and public health, the history of terrorism, and the social psychology of genocide in Nazi Germany.

The focus of this course will be a close reading of a wide range of modern European microhistories. But we will also examine the genre’s theoretical and methodological connections both to other scholarly disciplines – in particular, cultural anthropology – and to other genres of history, including local history and the history of everyday life.

Textbooks

The following books are required for the course:

- Barbara Duden, *The Woman Beneath the Skin: A Doctor’s Patients in Eighteenth-Century Germany*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991).
- Susanna Kaysen, *Girl, Interrupted* (New York: Vintage, 1993).
- Steven Johnson, *The Ghost Map: The Story of London’s Most Terrifying Epidemic – and How It Changed Science, Cities, and the Modern World* (New York: Riverhead Trade, 2007).
- Alain Corbin, *The Village of Cannibals: Rage and Murder in France, 1870*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992).
- David I. Kertzer, *Amalia’s Tale: An Impoverished Peasant Woman, an Ambitious Attorney, and a Fight for Justice* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2008).
- John Merriman, *The Dynamite Club: How a Bombing in Fin-de-Siècle Paris Ignited the Age of Modern Terror* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2009).
- Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998).

Coursepacks

Two coursepacks of readings, available at Bel-Jean Copy/Print Center (163 E. Broad St.), are also required for the course.

Course Requirements

Class Participation. This is a seminar, not a lecture class, which means that most of our class time will be spent discussing the assigned readings as a group. At the start of the semester, I will take the lead by posting discussion questions on our eLC “discussions” page in advance of our class meetings; by week four, however, our discussions will revolve around questions that you post in advance. (You will find detailed instructions on how to post questions and participate in online discussions on our main eLC page.) I will ask each of you to sign up for three separate

discussion dates (one for each third of the semester). In class, I will regularly ask two or three of you to start off our discussions with your thoughts on the posted discussion questions. **Please note:** Class participation is worth 20% of your final grade; when I return your first essay – on **Mon., Sept. 27** – I will let you know your participation grade at that time. Specifically, I will determine your participation grade as follows:

- A = Regularly contributes to discussions and rarely absent.
- B = Often contributes to discussions and rarely absent.
- C = Occasionally contributes to discussions and rarely absent.
- D = Rarely contributes to discussions or often absent.
- F = Rarely contributes to discussions and often absent.

Please note: In a MWF class, which meets 45 times over the course of the semester, I define “rarely absent” as missing between 0 and 4 of our class meetings, and I define “often absent” as missing 8 or more of our class meetings.

Short Essay. In a 6-page (typed, double-spaced) essay, use Barbara Duden’s book, *The Woman Beneath the Skin*, to explain the methods and aims of microhistory. This essay will be due on **Fri., Sept. 17.**

Research Project. I want you to think about how the methods of microhistory might be applied to a new historical topic. I do not expect you to become an instant expert on a specific topic, or to write a microhistory of your own; rather, the goal is to explore what Giovanni Levi calls the “experimental purposes” of microhistorical thinking. To give you an idea of what I want you to do, I will present a sample research project on microhistories of jazz in America on Mon., Oct. 4 and Mon., Oct. 11. In addition, to help with your research, I have arranged to have reference librarian Carla Buss run a special research tutorial, which will take place on Mon., Oct. 18 in the Main Library, Lab A. As part of this project, you are required to prepare a **10-minute oral presentation** of your topic, and to submit a **journal of your research and ideas**. Your journal should be approximately 15 (typed, double-spaced) pages, and it should include a detailed account of your research (exact GIL and GALILEO searches, etc.), as well as a coherent set of thoughts regarding both the strengths and weaknesses of existing books on your topic and the potential of new approaches. Your journal is **due the day of your presentation.**

Final Essay. In a 10-page (typed, double-spaced) essay, compare **at least 3** of the microhistories we have read during the semester. (Adding the essays by Darnton, Scott, Prost and Zavattini and the chapters by Colley, Goldberg, and Hass to the books by Duden, Kaysen, Johnson, Corbin, Kertzer, Merriman, and Browning, I count 14 sources from which to choose.) You should aim to organize your essay around one carefully defined and argued theme, for example, the different ways of writing the history of a specific incident in Darnton, Corbin, Merriman, and Zavattini; or the agency of women in Duden, Colley, Goldberg, Kaysen, and Kertzer. Your essay must be comparative; that is, be sure to avoid writing an essay which simply strings together summaries of three or more sources. This essay will be **due** in my office **by 5 p.m. on Monday, Dec. 13.**

Note: I expect every student to observe the University’s academic honesty policy, which can be consulted on the internet at: http://www.uga.edu/honesty/ahpd/culture_honesty.htm

Grades

Grades will be determined on the following basis:

class participation	20%
brief essay	20%
research project	30%
third essay	30%

Schedule of Class Meetings and Assignments

(Note: Please read the assigned readings before each class meets.)

- Mon., Aug. 16** Introduction
- WHAT IS MICROHISTORY?**
- Wed., Aug. 18** Background: Early Modern Microhistories
Appuhn, “Microhistory” [coursepack #1]; Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre*, Preface, Introduction, and Chapter 1 [coursepack #1].
- Fri., Aug. 20** Two Historians Go Into an Archive... (One of them is Carlo Ginzburg.)
Ginzburg, *The Cheese and The Worms* [coursepack #1].
- Mon., Aug. 23** The Historian as Storyteller
Burke, “History of Events and the Revival of Narrative” [coursepack #1].
- Wed., Aug. 25** The Historian as Detective
Muir, “Introduction: Observing Trifles” [coursepack #1].
- Fri., Aug. 27** Problems of Scale and Context
Levi, “On Microhistory” [coursepack #1].
- Mon., Aug. 30** Working with Fragments
Carlo Ginzburg, “Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know About It” [coursepack #1].
- Wed., Sept. 1** Histories of Medicine (and Progress)
Duden, *The Woman Beneath the Skin*, Chapter 1 summary [handout].
- Fri., Sept. 3** Close Listening
Duden, *The Woman Beneath the Skin*, Chapters 2 and 3.
- Mon., Sept. 6** **no class – Labor Day**
- Wed., Sept. 8** The Mysterious Human Body
Duden, *The Woman Beneath the Skin*, finish.
- Fri., Sept. 10** History and Anthropology
- Mon., Sept. 13** Thick Description
Clifford Geertz, “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight” [coursepack #1].
- Wed., Sept. 15** The Great Cat Massacre
Robert Darnton, “Workers Revolt” [coursepack #1].

MODERN MICROHISTORIES

- Fri., Sept. 17** The Need for Modern Microhistories
FIRST ESSAY DUE
- Mon., Sept. 20** **Global Histories**
Colley, *The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh* [coursepack #2]; Scott, “Small-Scale Dynamics of Large-Scale Processes” [coursepack #2].
- Wed., Sept. 22** **Institutions of Confinement**
- Fri., Sept. 24** The Eberbach Asylum
Goldberg, *Sex, Religion, and the Making of Modern Madness* [coursepack #2].
- Mon., Sept. 27** McLean Hospital
Kaysen, *Girl, Interrupted*.
- Wed., Sept. 29** **Social Investigations**
- Fri., Oct. 1** Death in Soho
Johnson, *The Ghost Map*, pp. 1-109

- Mon., Oct. 4** SAMPLE RESEARCH PROJECT: Microhistories of Jazz (a start)
Wed., Oct. 6 Solving the Mystery
 Johnson, *The Ghost Map*, pp. 111-228.
Fri., Oct. 8 **Political Communication**
Mon., Oct. 11 SAMPLE RESEARCH PROJECT: Microhistories of Jazz (research)
Wed., Oct. 13 “Monstrous Brutes”
 Corbin, *The Village of Cannibals*.
Fri., Oct. 15 **Poverty & Justice**
Mon., Oct. 18 RESEARCH TUTORIAL (Main Library, Lab A)
Wed., Oct. 20 Exploitation
 Kertzer, *Amalia’s Tale*.
Fri., Oct. 22 **Terrorism**
Mon., Oct. 25 Anarchists
 Merriman, *The Dynamite Club*, pp. 1-97.
Wed., Oct. 27 FINAL ESSAY TUTORIAL
Fri., Oct. 29 no class – Fall Break
Mon., Nov. 1 The Bomber
 Merriman, *The Dynamite Club*, pp. 99-216.
Wed., Nov. 3 **Modern War & Memory**
Fri., Nov. 5 The “Great War”
 Antoine Prost, “Verdun” [coursepack #2].
Mon., Nov. 8 Vietnam
 Hass, *Carried to the Wall* [coursepack #2]
Wed., Nov. 10 Microhistory & the War Film
Fri., Nov. 12 **Genocide**
Mon., Nov. 15 Voices
 Browning, *Ordinary Men*, pp. xv-132.
Wed., Nov. 17 **Oral presentations**
Fri., Nov. 19 The Gray Zone
 Browning, *Ordinary Men*, finish.

Nov. 22-26 – Thanksgiving Break

- Mon., Nov. 29** **Film and History: Italian Neorealism**
 Zavattini, “Some Ideas on the Cinema” [coursepack #2].
Wed., Dec. 1 **Oral presentations**
FILM: *Umberto D.* (De Sica, 1952), 7:30-9:30 p.m., LeConte 321
Fri., Dec. 3 **Oral presentations**
Mon., Dec. 6 **Oral presentations**
Tues., Dec. 7 **Oral presentations**

Monday, December 13 – FINAL ESSAY DUE
 (by 5:00 p.m., in my office: LeConte 128)