

# Historic Court Trials – Dr Jan Sigvartsen

## INSTRUCTOR

Jan Sigvartsen PhD  
Leanne Sigvartsen MCouns

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Tarragindi.org

## AGE

10 -18

## FORMAT

In-person

## HOURS

16.5 hours

## CLASS OVERVIEW

Reenact and relive real court trials from the 1800's from Berrien Springs' very own courthouse – back when the court was the hottest entertainment in town. The Berrien County History Center has generously allowed us to use the Old Courthouse for this class too! This is an immersive exploration of Berrien Springs' own legal history, where students will play parts in these real historic court trials. This is not a mock re-trial debating the merits of the law, but rather an experiential look at how courts were conducted historically, how early settlers from our own town were treated under the law, and the legal issues these settlers faced in the 1800s. There will be a discussion about each case after each re-enactment.

We will also re-enact court trials from other famous courts like the Old Bailey in England, where many people were sentenced to transportation to the United States and Australia as convicts. Through re-enacting these trials, we will learn about the rapid industrial and technological changes that forced people to act on the wrong side of the law.

A parent or guardian over 18 can accompany you if they would like to, but it is not required. Friends or siblings under 18 must be registered with the Parent Partnership in order to participate.

## CLASS TIMES

Week 1 – Orientation - August 26 or 28 at 6pm – 8pm (at the Berrien Springs Old Courthouse)  
**Week 2 – The History Center Tour – September 7 at 1pm – 3.30pm**  
Weeks 3-6 - Sunday, 1pm – 4pm – October 26 – October 16

## REQUIRED MATERIALS

Bring your acting skills and willingness to learn, and we will bring you cases to reenact and snacks for an afternoon “high tea.” If you would like to dress in 1800's period clothing, you are welcome to, but it is not required.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1, August 26 or 28, 6pm - 8pm	ORIENTATION – OLD COURTHOUSE
Berrien Springs History Center – 313 N Cass St, Berrien Springs August 26, 2025 - 6-8 pm <u>or</u> August 28, 2025 – 6-8 pm	All students undertaking Dr Jan Sigvartsen's five Parent Partnership classes this semester are required to attend orientation. There are two scheduled orientation times – <b>you only have to attend <u>one</u> of these scheduled orientations</b>
WEEK 2, September 7, 1pm – 3.30pm	HISTORY CENTER TOUR
Berrien Springs History Center 313 N Cass St, Berrien Springs	This week we will take a tour through the Berrien Springs History Center and learn about the fascinating and multicultural history of Berrien Springs.

WEEK 3, October 26, 1pm - 4pm	OLD COURTHOUSE
Berrien Springs History Center 313 N Cass St, Berrien Springs	Re-enactment of Historical Court Trials.
WEEK 4, November 2, 1pm – 4pm	OLD COURTHOUSE
Berrien Springs History Center 313 N Cass St, Berrien Springs	Re-enactment of Historical Court Trials.
WEEK 5, November 9, 1pm – 4pm	OLD COURTHOUSE
<b>Berrien Springs Community Library</b> <b>215 W Union Street, Berrien Springs</b>	Re-enactment of Historical Court Trials.
WEEK 6, November 16, 1pm – 4pm	OLD COURTHOUSE
Berrien Springs History Center 313 N Cass St, Berrien Springs	Re-enactment of Historical Court Trials.

## YOUR PROJECT

You may like to research one of the people in our cases. Where did they live? What happened to them?

## ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTORS

Jan Sigvartsen PhD has taught Archaeology and Ancient Religion classes at Andrews University, Michigan, and the Theologische Hochschule Friedensau, Germany, where he was also their PhD Programs Coordinator and Associate Director of their Institute of Biblical Studies and Archaeology. He has participated in archeological digs in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and currently directs the *Tarragindi Archaeological Dig* in Berrien Springs, which is excavating a farm that was first settled in 1836 by one of Berrien County's earliest European settlers.

Leanne Sigvartsen originally trained as a psychologist in Australia and spent many years as a counselor and academic advisor for teens and young adults. She currently works with the Chicago-based Center for *Collaborative Study for Trauma, Health Equity, and Neurobiology* as their Research Project Director. She is a triple citizen of the United States, Australia, and Malta, and has lived in the United States, Australia, and Germany. She is committed to creating unique and interesting childhood experiences/activities (like this class) for young people, especially those who have experienced bullying, trauma, and adverse childhood experiences.