

# 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 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. 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.

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 between six and 18 years old must be registered with the Parent Partnership in order to participate.

**Dr Jan Sigvartsen also operates Berrien Springs Parent Partnership and Niles Virtual School classes:**

1. Archaeology Dig – Tarragindi
2. Archaeology Dig – 1830s Old Jailhouse
3. Archaeology Plus – Long Lake Cemetery Restoration Project
4. Historic Photography
5. Historic Court Trials
6. Board Games (Eurogames)

## CLASS TIMES

Week 1 – Orientation – January 6 or 8, at 6pm-8pm (at the Berrien Springs Old Courthouse)

**Week 2 – The History Center Tour – January 11 at 1pm – 3pm**

Weeks 3-6 - Sunday, 1pm – 4pm – January 18 – February 8

## REQUIRED MATERIALS

Bring your acting skills and willingness to learn, and we will bring you cases to reenact and snacks to eat! If you would like to dress in 1800's period clothing, you are welcome to, but it is not required.

## YOUR PROJECT

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

## COURSE SCHEDULE

|                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| WEEK 1, January 6 <b>or</b> 8, 6pm - 8pm                                                                                             | ORIENTATION – OLD COURTHOUSE                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Berrien Springs History Center –<br>313 N Cass St, Berrien Springs<br>January 6, 2026 - 6-8 pm <b>or</b><br>January 8, 2026 – 6-8 pm | All students undertaking Dr Jan Sigvartsen's six 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, January 11, 1pm – 3pm                                                                                                        | HISTORY CENTER TOUR                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Berrien Springs History Center<br>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 from a prisoner's perspective.                                                                |
| WEEK 3, January 18, 1pm - 4pm                                                                                                        | OLD COURTHOUSE                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Berrien Springs History Center<br>313 N Cass St, Berrien Springs                                                                     | Re-enactment of Historical Court Trials.                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| WEEK 4, January 25, 1pm – 4pm                                                                                                        | OLD COURTHOUSE                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Berrien Springs History Center<br>313 N Cass St, Berrien Springs                                                                     | Re-enactment of Historical Court Trials.                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| WEEK 5, February 1, 1pm – 4pm                                                                                                        | OLD COURTHOUSE                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Berrien Springs Community Library</b><br><b>215 W Union Street, Berrien Springs</b>                                               | Re-enactment of Historical Court Trials.                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| WEEK 6, February 8, 1pm – 4pm                                                                                                        | OLD COURTHOUSE (last class for Berrien Springs Parent Partnership Students)                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Berrien Springs History Center<br>313 N Cass St, Berrien Springs                                                                     | Re-enactment of Historical Court Trials.                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| WEEK 7, February 15, 1pm – 3pm                                                                                                       | OLD COURTHOUSE - (last class for Niles Virtual School Students)                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Berrien Springs History Center<br>313 N Cass St, Berrien Springs                                                                     | Re-enactment of Historical Court Trials.                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

## ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTORS

**Dr Jan Sigvartsen PhD** (Dr Jan) 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 Archaeology research institute. He has participated in archeological digs in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the USA 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, and the *1830s Old Jailhouse Archaeological Dig*, also in Berrien Springs, which is excavating one of Berrien County's first municipal buildings. Dr Sigvartsen exceeds the [Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation and Professional Qualifications Standards as stipulated in the Code of Federal Regulations, 36 CFR Part 61.](#)

**Leanne Sigvartsen** (Ms Leanne) originally trained as a psychologist in Australia and spent many years as a counselor and academic advisor for teens and young adults. She then transitioned to research project management, working on a number of projects, most recently as the Research and Special Projects Director at the Chicago-based *Center for Collaborative Study of Trauma, Health Equity, and Neurobiology*. She is a triple citizen of the United States, Australia, and Malta, and has lived in the United States, Australia, and Germany. She wants to see young people succeed, be happy, and grow into thriving adults - especially those who have experienced trauma and adverse childhood experiences.