

Core III
Oral History: Theory, Method & Practice
Monday & Wednesday, 1:15-2:30
Humanities 202

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Office Hours: Tuesday 1-3 (or by appointment)
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Course Description:

Oral historians use focused interviews to broaden and deepen the historical record, documenting the stories and experiences of a wide range of people and communities. We will examine the theories and methods of oral history, before embarking on our own oral history project with Scripps College alumnae. This course engages with the theme of “Histories of the Present” by examining debates over how to define, collect, organize, and communicate history. Most broadly, this course encourages students to reexamine the concept of “history” and to see all historical narratives as influenced by the contemporary “present” in which they were created.

Course Aims:

- 1) Students will be able to define oral history, identify the key periods in the field’s history, and describe how the field has engaged with, and has been influenced by, theories and methods from cultural anthropology, literary studies, and psychology.
- 2) Students will be able to write and speak critically about the relationship among the past, the writing of history, and memory.
 - ✓ These course aims will be accomplished through reading assignments, class discussions, and in-class writing assignments.
- 3) Students will be able to evaluate a scholarly manuscript that uses oral history.
 - ✓ This course aim will be accomplished through book review oral presentation.
- 4) Students will be able to organize, conduct, record, and present original oral history research.
 - ✓ This course aim will be accomplished through research project with Scripps College alumnae.

Core III Learning Objectives:

1. Students independently and creatively develop their understanding of different disciplines and interdisciplinary inquiry acquired in Core 1 and 2.
2. Students explore and interrogate the historical construction of a particular field of inquiry.
3. Students formulate, research, and execute a substantial project of their own design.

Assignments/Grading:**Assigned Reading (15%)**

The assigned readings are an important part of this course. You are expected to complete the reading assignments outlined below and to attend every class prepared to be a thoughtful contributor and active listener in class discussions. Each day for which there is a reading assignment, we will start class with a short writing assignment. You will be asked to write for five minutes on a question related to that day's reading. The questions will ask you to explore one of the main themes, terms, and/or examples in that day's reading. These will not be trick questions and should be accessible if you have done the reading. Your responses will be graded as 1, 0.5, or 0 and will be handed back at the start of the next class. If you are sick or miss a class, you will need to e-mail me a 250-word summary of that day's reading before the next class. If you received a 0.5 or 0 for a particular day and would like to improve your score, you may also write a 250-word summary of the reading. These 250-word summaries will be graded using the same scale as the in-class responses. There are 10 days with reading assignments, so the maximum number of points available will be 10. The final grading scale for the assigned reading will look like this: 10=A, 9=A-/B+, 8=B, 7=C, etc.

Independent Reading Oral Presentation (15%)

Attached to the syllabus you will find a list of books on oral history. You will be asked to select one of these books for independent reading. All books should be available at the library or through Link+. After you have read the book you will be asked to prepare a brief (7 minute) oral presentation on the book. Your presentation should do four things: 1) Identify the thesis of the book; 2) Identify the evidence the author uses to support her/his thesis; 3) Identify how oral history interviews are important for this topic; and 4) Identify at least one topic the book addresses about which you would like to learn more.

The point of these presentations is to provide your classmates with an informative and engaging overview of a book related to our course themes. Ideally, your brief presentation will make people eager to learn more about the book you selected. There are four classes dedicated to these independent reading assignments (10/31; 11/2; 11/7; and 11/9). You will only be presenting on one of these dates. For the other three classes you should come to class prepared to listen to, and ask questions of, your classmates.

Attend Oral History Related Event (5%):

There are two other classes related to oral history being offered at the 5Cs this semester. I'm working with these professors to coordinate a panel discussion that would be relevant to all of our classes. In addition, there will be a number of speakers/events on campus this semester that are related in some way to oral history. You are asked to attend at least one of these events. Please e-mail after the event to confirm your attendance.

Individual Oral History Project Proposal (15%):

While our class project will focus on interviews with Scripps alumnae, I'd also like you to think about what kind of individual oral history project you might conduct in the future. You should submit a 5-page (12 pt., double spaced) project proposal that addresses the following: project goals, project description, resources needed, potential challenges, legal/ethical issues, interviewee selection and recruitment, questions to be asked, plans for transcribing and presenting interviews, and a hypothetical timeline for completing this project. A draft of your individual project proposal should be uploaded to Sakai by Friday, October 28th. Your final individual project proposal should be uploaded to Sakai by Friday, November 18th.

Scripps Alumnae Oral History Project (50%):

The focus of our semester is the oral history project you will conduct with Scripps alumnae. Your final grade on this project will be based on the following: participation in group planning of project goals, interviewee selection, questionnaire, and background research; scheduling, conducting, and transcribing one interview; participation in three-person interview team; participation in peer review of interview transcripts and findings; presentation of interview materials in on-line format (site TBD, likely CUC digital collections or wordpress site). Interviews should be completed before Friday, November 18th. All materials should be completed before Wednesday, December 7th.

Week 1**Wednesday (Aug 31)**

- ☞ Course Introduction. No reading assignment.

Week 2**Monday (Sept 5)**

- ☞ Rebecca Sharpless, "The History of Oral History," in *Handbook of Oral History*, pp. 19-42 (PDF on Sakai)
- ☞ Donald Ritchie, "An Oral History of Our Time," in *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*, pp. 19-46 (PDF on Sakai)

Wednesday (Sept 7)

- ☞ Howard Sacks, "Why Do Oral History?," in *Catching Stories: A Practical Guide to Oral History*, pp 1-19 (PDF on Sakai)
- ☞ Mary Marshall Clark, "The September 11, 2001, Oral History Narrative and Memory Project: A First Report," from *Journal of American History* (Sep. 2002), pp 569-579 (PDF on Sakai)

Week 3**Monday (Sept 12)**

- 📖 Sherna Berger Gluck, “Women’s Oral History: Is It So Special?” in *Handbook of Oral History*, pp. 357-383 (PDF on Sakai)

Wednesday (Sept 14)

- 📖 Stephen H. Paschen, “Planning an Oral History Project,” in *Catching Stories: A Practical Guide to Oral History*, pp 20-41 (PDF on Sakai)
- 📖 Mary Larson, “Research Design and Strategies,” in *Handbook of Oral History*, pp. 105-134 (PDF on Sakai)
- 🗣️ Brainstorming Discussion on Scripps Alumnae Oral History Project (Who to Interview? Why?)

Week 4**Monday (Sept 19)**

- 📖 Linda Shopes, “Legal and Ethical Issues in Oral History,” in *Handbook of Oral History*, pp. 135-169 (PDF on Sakai)
- 📖 David Mould, “Legal Issues,” in *Catching Stories: A Practical Guide to Oral History*, pp. 56-81 (PDF on Sakai)

Wednesday (Sept 21)

- 🗣️ Class Works on Research Proposal for Institutional Review Board

Week 5**Monday (Sept 26)**

- 📍 Begin Background Research at Denison Library

Wednesday (Sept 28)

- 📖 David Mould, “Interviewing” in *Catching Stories: A Practical Guide to Oral History*, pp. 82-103 (PDF on Sakai)
- 📖 Donald Ritchie, “Conducting Interviews,” in *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*, pp. 84-109 (PDF on Sakai)
- 🗣️ Brainstorming Discussion on Scripps Alumnae Oral History Project (What questions should be asked?)

Week 6**Monday (Oct 3)**

- 📖 Alice Hoffman and Howard Hoffman, “Memory Theory: Personal and Social,” in *Handbook of Oral History*, pp. 275-296 (PDF on Sakai)
- 📖 Mary Chamberlain, “Narrative Theory,” in *Handbook of Oral History*, pp. 384-410 (PDF on Sakai)

Wednesday (Oct 7)

- 📖 Charles Ganzert, “Catching Sound and Light,” in *Catching Stories: A Practical Guide to Oral History*, pp 115-135 (PDF on Sakai)
- 📖 David Mould and Charles Ganzert, “Audio and Video Recording,” in *Catching Stories: A Practical Guide to Oral History*, pp 136-162 (PDF on Sakai)
- 🎧 Audio-Visual workshop in class

Week 7

Monday (Oct 10)

- 🗨️ Finalize questions for interviews. Practice interviewing classmates.

Wednesday (Oct 12)

- 📍 Continue Background Research at Denison and/or Honnold/Mudd Library

Week 8

Monday (Oct 17)

FALL BREAK – NO CLASS

Wednesday (Oct 19)

- 📖 TBD

Week 9

Monday (Oct 24)

- 🗨️ Discussion of on-line oral history projects. Visit at least one of the oral history projects on the attached list and come to class prepared to discuss.

Wednesday (Oct 26)

- 📖 Charles Morrissey, “Oral History Interviews: From Inception to Closure,” in *Handbook of Oral History*, pp. 170-206 (PDF on Sakai)

***** Individual Project Proposal Draft Due – Friday, October 28th *****

Week 10

Monday (Oct 31)

- 🗨️ Student Presentations on Oral History Books

Wednesday (Nov 2)

- 🗨️ Student Presentations on Oral History Books

Week 11

Monday (Nov 7)

🗨 Student Presentations on Oral History Books

Wednesday (Nov 9)

🗨 Student Presentations on Oral History Books

Week 12

Monday (Nov 14)

📖 Elinor Mazé, “The Uneasy Page: Transcribing and Editing Oral History,” in *Handbook of Oral History*, pp. 237-271 (PDF on Sakai)

📖 Donna Deblasio, “Transcribing Oral History,” in *Catching Stories: A Practical Guide to Oral History*, pp. 104-114 (PDF on Sakai)

Wednesday (Nov 16)

🗨 Discuss interview findings

***** Individual Project Proposal Due – Friday, November 18th *****
***** Scripps Alumnae Interviews Completed by Friday, November 18th *****

Week 13

Monday (Nov 21)

🗨 Peer review of transcribed interviews

Wednesday (Nov 23)

THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS

Week 14

Monday (Nov 28)

Complete Scripps Alumnae Oral History Project

Wednesday (Nov 30)

Complete Scripps Alumnae Oral History Project

Week 15

Monday (Dec 5)

Complete Scripps Alumnae Oral History Project

Wednesday (Dec 7)

Course wrap-up and evaluations

***** Final Project Materials Due – Wednesday, December 7th *****

Selection of Oral Histories on the Internet

Please visit at least one of these sites before class on October 24th.

Shoah Foundation Institute:

<http://dornsife.usc.edu/vhi/clipviewer/>

Chinatown (NY) Documentation Project:

<http://911digitalarchive.org/chinatown/>

The Rule of Law Oral History Project:

http://library.columbia.edu/indiv/ccoh/new_projects/rule_of_law.html

Notable New Yorkers:

<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/digital/collections/nny/>

Carnegie Corporation Oral History Project:

http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/digital/collections/oral_hist/carnegie/

ACTUP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) Oral History Project

<http://www.actuporalhistory.org/>

HIV@30: Re-Visiting ‘AIDS Doctors: Voices from the Epidemic’

<http://www.thehivstoryproject.org/media-projects/hiv30-re-visiting-aids-doctors-voices-from-the-epidemic/>

Oral Histories on the AIDS Epidemic in San Francisco

http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/ROHO/collections/subjectarea/sci_tech/aids.html

First Black Women at Virginia Tech

<http://spec.lib.vt.edu/blackwom/>

The Vietnam Center and Archive (Texas Tech)

<http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/oralhistory/>

Rutgers World War II Oral History Archive

<http://oralhistory.rutgers.edu/>

Veterans History Project (Library of Congress)

<http://www.loc.gov/vets/>

StoryCorps

<http://storycorps.org/about/>

Archives of American Art, Oral History Collections (Smithsonian)

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/oral/online.html#guides>

Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snhome.html>

Civil Rights in Mississippi Digital Archive (University of Southern Mississippi)

<http://digilib.usm.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/coh>

Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers History Center Oral Histories

http://www.ieeeahn.org/wiki/index.php/Oral-History:IEEE_Oral_History_Collection

Kent State Shootings Oral Histories

<http://www.library.kent.edu/page/13894>

Women in Journalism

<http://wpcf.org/oralhistory/ohhome.html>

Bracero History Project

<http://braceroarchive.org/>

Selection of Books on Oral History

Please select one of these books for your independent reading assignment. If you would like to select a book that is not on this list, please e-mail to check with me first.

- Carole Garibaldi Rogers, *Habits of Change: An Oral History of American Nuns* (2011)
- David King Dunaway and Molly Beer, *Singing Out: An Oral History of America's Folk Music Revivals* (2010)
- Alessandro Portelli, *They Say in Harlan County: An Oral History* (2010)
- Gary Bruce, *The Firm: The Inside Story of the Stasi* (2010)
- J. Todd Moye, *Freedom Flyers: The Tuskegee Airmen of World War II* (2010)
- Jeff Kisseloff, *You Must Remember This: An Oral History of Manhattan from the 1890s to World War II* (2000)
- Jim Fricke and Charlie Ahearn, *Yes Yes Y'All: The Experience Music Project Oral History of Hip-Hop's First Decade* (2002)
- Harvey Schwartz, *Solidarity Stories: An Oral History of the ILWU* (2009)
- Catherine Fosl, *Freedom on the Border: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement in Kentucky* (2010)
- Mary Clarke, ed., *After the Fall: New Yorkers Remember September 2001 and the Years that Followed* (2011)
- Damon DiMarco, *Tower Stories: An Oral History of 9/11* (2007)
- Studs Terkel, *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression* (1970)
- Studs Terkel, *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do* (1972)
- Studs Terkel, *The Good War: An Oral History of World War II* (1984)
- Mark Yarm, *Everybody Loves Our Town: An Oral History of Grunge* (2011)
- Haruko Taya Cook & Theodore Cook, *Japan at War: An Oral History* (1993)
- Malcolm Benally, *Bitter Water: Dine Oral Histories of the Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute* (2011)
- Donald Miller & Lorna Touryan Miller, *Survivors: An Oral History Of The Armenian Genocide* (1999)
- Svetlana Alexievich & Keith Gessen, *Voices from Chernobyl: The Oral History of a Nuclear Disaster* (2006)
- Henry Hampton, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s Through the 1980s* (2001)
- Ronald Bayer and Gerald M. Oppenheimer, *AIDS Doctors: Voices from the Epidemic: An Oral History* (2002)
- Ronald Bayer and Gerald M. Oppenheimer, *Shattered Dreams? An Oral History of the South African AIDS Epidemic*
- Theodore Rosengarten, *All God's Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw* (1975)
- Tamara Hareven, *Amoskeag: Life and Work in an American Factory-City* (1995)