

Readings in Oral History

Instructor: Jessica Taylor

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Office Hours: F: 10-3, Pugh 210 & by appt.

Oral history is one of the newest tools available to practitioners of one of the world's oldest academic disciplines. A product of twentieth-century technological innovation, oral historians archive, analyze and disseminate stories from public figures like Bob Graham and lesser-known labor activists like Marie Francois. In this class, we will discuss the capabilities, controversies, and methodologies of this developing field. What are the ethical ways to collect oral histories? What can young scholars contribute to the field of oral history? What are their responsibilities to their host communities? Students who complete the class will understand how to conduct an oral history project and the basic theories behind oral history which make it distinct and crucial to our understanding of the past.

This class adheres to university policies on academic honesty, plagiarism, and accommodation:

- **Academic Honesty:** Academic integrity is a fundamental value at the University of Florida. It must be at the heart of all our endeavors and must guide our actions every day as students and as members of the faculty, administration, and staff. Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity free from fraud and deception and is an educational objective of this institution. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating of information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students.
- **Plagiarism:** It is plagiarism if you present the ideas or words of someone else as you own. You are responsible for understanding the University's definitions of plagiarism and academic dishonesty. Please read the Student Honor Code and ask me if you have any questions. Keep in mind that plagiarism is a serious violation of the student academic honor code and university policy recommends that, at a minimum, instructors should impose a course grade penalty and report any suspected academic dishonesty to the Office of the Dean of Students.
- **Accommodation for Disabilities:** We are more than happy to work with anyone who needs extra help on a project or assignment. In line with university policy, students requesting accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the professor. Please be sure to provide this documentation to Program Director, Dr. Paul Ortiz, as soon as possible.
- **Late/Absent Policy:** In this class, a late paper or assignment cannot receive a higher grade than the lowest grade given to a paper or assignment turned in on time. Tardiness to class will count as an absence, and two absences will result in a failing grade at the instructor's discretion.

Grading:

Short Response Papers: 5% each (1 per week for the first 5 weeks- total of 25%)

Short response papers are 2-3 pages long and are due at the beginning of class every Thursday. All papers are due in TNR, 12 point font, 1" margins.

Please use at least two oral history resources you find on UFDC, and cite them appropriately using Chicago Style.

Midterm Paper: 25%

Due at the start of class on May 27, 2015.

For this assignment, please write 4 to 5 double-spaced pages in two parts. In the first part, in approximately one to two pages, you will rewrite your textbook section based on the information in that section and oral histories you find on UF Digital Collections (UFDC.UFL.EDU). For the second, more substantial part, answer these questions: do your findings significantly alter the textbook narrative, or do they add supporting information? Why or why not? Do you consider your findings important? Why or why not?

Class Discussion: 20%

This class is small, and everyone's contribution is necessary to make class productive and enlightening. Please come prepared to discuss the readings on the day listed. All readings not in the textbook will be emailed in advance.

Your participation grade is also contingent upon weekly meetings with the instructor to discuss your final project. Please arrive on time and prepared.

Final, individual project: 30%

During the one-on-one meetings with the instructor, we will construct a project based on your interests with the following components (1) an oral history interview (2) a class presentation and (3) a "deliverable such as a podcast, lesson plan, or infographic. You will share your final project with the class during Week 6 in a 15-minute presentation. By the end of Week 1, you should have a general idea of your interests.

Active local projects include:

- Alachua County African American History Project
- Alachua County Youth Orchestra
- Retired Faculty University of Florida
- Veterans History Project
- Oral History Metadata Synchronizer (OHMS)

Week 1: Introduction to Oral History

PAPER TOPIC: We started and ended this week with songs and poetry from working-class people. Are their "facts" or "truth" conveyed by these songs, and if so, what are they? Why collect them at all? Use examples from the readings and class in your answer.

Monday, May 11: Welcome! Let's go over the syllabus.

Listen: Michael Hansinger, Civil War Veteran John Salling Vietnam Veteran Scott Camil

Tuesday: What is Oral History? What can we do with it?

Ritchie, Introduction, and "An Oral History of Our Time," pp. 1-34

Wednesday: The Development of Oral History in the Twentieth Century

Zora Neale Hurston, "Migrant Farm Labor"

Alan Lomax: "Folk Song Style," *American Anthropologist*
Alistair Thomson, "Fifty Years On: An International Perspective on Oral History," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 85, No. 2 (Sept. 1998)

Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, "Folk Songs," UFDC.UFL.EDU

Thursday: Why is oral history necessary?

Ritchie, Chapter 4, *Using Oral History in Research and Writing*

Alessandro Portelli, "The Death of Luigi Trastulli," 1-26.

Friday: Schedule first individual meeting with the instructor.

Week 2: Oral History's Place in Mainstream History

PAPER TOPIC: This week, we concentrated much of our attention on the history of the Civil Rights Movement and social activism. Do you feel that oral historians should supplement the history of "landmarks" like Plessy vs. Ferguson or Massive Resistance, throw out those landmarks, or something in between? Justify your answer.

Monday, May 18: Creating Alternative Narratives

BTV, *Remembering Jim Crow: African Americans Tell About Life in the Segregated South*, Introduction and "Bitter Truths." pp. 1-61

Tuesday: Combatting Untruths

Paul Ortiz, "Tearing Up the Master's Narrative: Stetson Kennedy and Oral History"

Listen: Interview with David Barsamian

Wednesday: Why does it matter to everyone else?

Howard Zinn, *People's History*, Chapter 17, "Or Does It Explode?" on the Civil Rights Movement

Thursday: Getting Ready for Your Own Work

Ritchie, Chapter 3, *Conducting Interviews*

Alessandro Portelli, "Research as an Experiment in Equality," 29-44.

Friday: Meetings with instructor

Week 3: The Oral History Project

Complete either the paper or the activity:

PAPER TOPIC: Grant-writing exercise: Write 2 pages that outlines an oral history project that one oral historian might accomplish. Include (1) research questions (2) goals/number of interviews (3) How this research, and oral history's role in it, contributes to our understanding of history/humanity and (4) A public deliverable. This can be an outline of your project.

ACTIVITY: Complete one index for the Oral History Metadata Synchronizer. This activity should take between one and two hours.

Monday, May 25: The Set-up

Ritchie, Chapter 2, *Setting up an Oral History Project*

Speaker: Sarah Blanc, getting funding for your research

Tuesday: The Oral Historian and the Archivist

Ritchie, Chapter 6, *Preserving Oral History in Archives and Libraries*

Tour of SPOHP

Wednesday: PAPER DUE

Discussion about papers

Speaker: Diana Dombrowski, Oral History Metadata Synchronizer (OHMS)

Thursday: Making it Useful

Ritchie, Chapter 8, Presenting Oral History
Friday: Meeting with instructor

Week 4: Applications to Public History

Complete either the paper or the activity:

PAPER TOPIC: Find an online history or oral history exhibit that resonates with you (loc.gov or archives.gov are good places to start). How would you describe the approach of the architect? Do the subjects' voices come through? How are they portrayed?

ACTIVITY: Visit the Emancipation Day Exhibit at the Cone Park Library, Gainesville and write a one-page response paper.

Monday, June 1: Oral History as Performance

Watch: "Gator Tales." On YouTube at SPOHP Channel: SPOHP111

Tuesday: Museum Studies

Green, "Returning History to the Community: Oral History in a Museum Setting"

Wednesday: Digital Humanities

Listen: Marie Francois, Podcast

Medea Benjamin, Podcast

Browse: College of Charleston Low Country Digital History Initiative ldhi.library.cofc.edu
Visual Journalism at <http://oral.history.ufl.edu/2014/09/24/podcasts-storified-for-fall-2014-visual-journalism-class/>

Thursday: Oral History in Classrooms

Ritchie, Chapter 7, Teaching Oral History

Friday: Meeting with Instructor

Week 5: Ethics and Responsibility

PAPER TOPIC: What best practices would you recommend so that the Boston College case never happens again?

Monday, June 8: Responsibility to Communities

Paul Ortiz, "Behind the Veil," Radical History Review

Guest Speaker: Sarah Blanc, Mississippi Freedom Project and Using Oral History to Study Grassroots Movements

Tuesday: Law vs. Ethics

Ritchie, Appendix 1: "Principles and Best Practices"

James Allison King, "Say Nothing: Silenced Records and the Boston College Subpoenas"

Wednesday: Responsibility and Retelling Stories in the Digital Age

Browse: <http://nunncenter.org/civilrights/>

<http://haitimemoryproject.org/>

Thursday: Ethics and YOU

Speaker: Patrick Daglaris, Fieldwork and Ethics

Week 6: Presentations

All work for final projects due at start of class June 15, 2015.