

EDPL 711: Oral History and Education
University of Maryland, College Park
Spring 2007

COURSE INFORMATION:

Seminar Location: 3112B Benjamin Building

Days & Time: Thursdays, 7:00pm- 9:45pm

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Office: Benjamin 3112-F
Hours: Thurs. 3pm-6:30pm
& by appt.

COURSE OVERVIEW:

This class will engage us collectively in studies of the art, science, and craft of oral history. The course will be dilemma-centered and will enable students to analyze the pitfalls and possibilities of oral history as a way of knowing, preserving experience, generating documents, forming historical memory, and helping to create it. There will be opportunities to explore the uses of oral history in a variety of fields. Through forays to places where oral histories are organized and collected -- e.g. the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the National Archives, and selected community settings, students will have opportunities to work in depth in an area of their own choosing.

Students will prepare a major paper of approximately 25-35 pages. You will be asked to identify a topic for which oral history is well-suited and useful, and complete an historical study which integrates oral histories, generates written transcripts, demonstrates a capacity to interpret history creatively and critically, and is suitable for submission to a scholarly journal or for use in classrooms.

Useful Definitions:

“Oral history is primary source material obtained by recording the spoken words – generally by means of planned, tape-recorded –of persons deemed to harbor hitherto unavailable information.” **Louis Starr**

“The focus of oral history is to record as complete an interview as possible – an interview which contains within itself, its own system of structures, not a system derived from the narrow conventions of written history.” *Oral History, the interviewing of eye-witness participants in the events of the past for the purposes of historical reconstruction....*

“...is as old as history itself. It was the first kind of history. And it is only recently that skill in handling oral evidence has ceased to be one of the marks of the great historian.” **Ronald J. Grele.**

“Oral history sits at the interface of living memory, local tradition, and historic circumstance.”
Barbara Finkelstein

GENERAL OUTLINE OF CONTENT:

1. **CONSTRUCTING AN APPROACH TO ORAL HISTORY: CONSIDERATIONS OF CONTENT, CRAFT, AND VOICE**
2. **SITUATING VOICES IN HISTORICAL CONTEXTS**
3. **PROJECTING, INTERVIEWING, ANALYZING, EDITING, AND CRAFTING AN ORAL HISTORY**

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- A. It is assumed that every class member will complete assignments in a timely fashion, contribute freely and meaningfully to class discussions, and, as appropriate, prepare critiques of research, readings, and presentations for class. It is also assumed that students will enter the class with knowledge of the basic chronologies of education history. If you need refreshers, please be in touch with Barbara Finkelstein before the semester begins.
- B. In addition to these common expectations, each student will **generate two transcripts**: 1) the contents of a practice interview; 2) the contents of at least two other interviews with narrators of your own choosing or chosen in consultation with the instructor; 3) a follow-up interview with at least one narrator. Taken together, the interviews will serve as a foundation for:

A highly focused article of 25-30 pages, which situates the voices of narrators in context, relies on documentary as well as oral historical evidence, and presents a coherent historical essay. The paper will be prepared and presented in stages as follows:

February 22nd-March 8th During these two weeks you will conduct and record an interview, and prepare excerpts of three pages that might illustrate a “rich point,” “well-asked and /or poorly asked question,” and/or crucial moments in the interview. Prepare sufficient numbers of copies to share with the class. After class critique and discussion you will revisit/extend the interview and apply technique changes.

March 1st & 8th : Submit and prepare to discuss Transcripts

March 15: Construct a working resource list including description and analysis of best resources on your topic, e.g. context-revealing histories, documents, descriptions, historical works, collections, etc. Identify and prepare to explain an historical work which situates, exemplifies, or reflects an example of a well defined essay, journal article or book on a subject relevant to the research to be undertaken.

March 29: Each student will prepare a 10-12 minute presentation on the focus, significance, context, chronology and mode of oral historical perspective in their study.

In addition, students will submit a working resource list including description and analysis of best resources, e.g. context-revealing histories, documents, descriptions, historical works, collections, etc.

April 19: Submit Penultimate Draft for Critique

April 26: Discussion and Critique

May 10: Last Day of Class: Submit Final Draft

C. On occasion, you will be asked to make presentations, prepare critiques of museum exhibitions, Oral History Association program and meetings.

D. There will be no final examination

E. “The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit <http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/code.html>.

F. If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible.

REQUIRED READINGS & COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

Richard White, *Remembering Ahanagan: Storytelling in a Family's Past*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1998.

Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 3d edition, London: Oxford University Press.

Alan Peshkin, *Places of Memory: Whiteman's Schools and Native American Communities*. Mahwah New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum Publishers.

*Barbara Finkelstein, *Oral History: A Reader*. On-line through McKeldin Library, Course Reserves

A sensitive tape recorder and tapes.

***Course Reserves:** All other required/assigned reading will be available through the McKeldin Library online course reserves. You may download the assigned articles and book chapters from <http://www.lib.umd.edu/PUBSERV/RESERVE/MCK-R/> (password: **EDPL711FIN**)

Recommended:

Perks, R. and Thompson, A. *The Oral History Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000. 2d edition. ISBN 0415-13352-1.

David K. Dunaway and Willa K. Baum, (eds.). *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, 2d. Edition, Walnut Creek, Lanham, New York, Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 1996. isbn:0-7619-9189-1

SCHOLARLY JOURNALS & OTHER (Selected) RESOURCES:

<i>American Archivist</i>	<i>American Jewish History</i>
<i>Canadian Historical Review</i>	<i>Canadian Oral Hx. Assoc.</i>
<i>Ethnohistory</i>	<i>Feminists Studies</i>
<i>Frontiers</i>	<i>Historical Studies in Education</i>
<i>History of Education Quarterly</i>	<i>Intl. Journal of Oral History</i>
<i>International Journal of Qualitative Methods in Education</i>	<i>Oral History Review</i>
<i>Journal of Interdisciplinary History</i>	<i>Journal of Social Issues</i>
<i>Journal of Narrative and Life History</i>	<i>Journal of American History</i>
<i>Journal of African-American History</i>	

Please search the web to find journals relevant to your particular topic.

OUTLINE OF TOPICS AND SCHEDULE OF READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS

I. CONSTRUCTING AN APPROACH TO ORAL HISTORY: CONSIDERATIONS OF CONTENT, CRAFT, AND DISCOVERING VOICES

Jan. 25: Traditions of Oral History-Doing: An Introduction

Required Reading: *(should be completed prior to the first day of class)*

Richard White, *Remembering Ahanagan: Storytelling in a Family's Past*. [Introduction & Ch. 1-2 pp. 1-22] New York: Hill and Wang, 1998. (Available at the University Book Center)

"A life-story Interview Guide, "The Voice of the Past: Oral History 3d edition: London: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 309-324 (emailed prior to January, 25th. Contact Barbara Finkelstein if you do not receive document).

Recommended Readings:

The Voice of the Past: Oral History, in Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson, *The Oral History Reader*, London and New York: Routledge, 2000. 2d edition. ISBN 0415-13352-1.

Assignment for next week:

For next week: Prepare a pre-interview protocol that enables you to engage in a preliminary conversation that reveals basic contact information, the chronological and local settings within which the lived experiences of your narrators are situated, and generates a time-line of an individual's life.

Handout: Basic contact and professional documents that provide information from volunteer professor-informants at the University.

Feb. 1: Oral History in Education: an Approach to Recovering the Past

Required Reading:

Jack Dougherty, "From Anecdote to Analysis: Oral Interviews and New Scholarship in Educational History," Vol. 86, Issue 2: 10/04/05 (online reserves)

Alan Weider, "Testimony as Oral History: Lessons from South Africa," *Educational Researcher*, August-September 2004. (online reserves)

Richard White, *Remembering Ahanagan: Storytelling in a Family's Past*. [Ch. 3 -7 pp. 22 -64] New York: Hill and Wang, 1998.

Finkelstein, B. (1998). "Revealing human agency: The uses of biography in the study of educational history", in C. Kridel (Ed.), *Writing educational biography: Explorations in qualitative research* (pp. 45-59). New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc. (online reserves)

Recommended Readings:

Helen Zia, *Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000. Introduction-21; pp. 252-319. (online reserves)

Feb. 8: Oral History as an Approach to Recovering the Past

Required Reading:

Paul Thompson, "Believe It or Not: Rethinking the Historical Interpretation of Memory," from *Memory and History: Essays on Recalling and Interpreting Experience*, (Edited by Jaclyn Jeffrey and Gleance Edwall: Lanham, New York, London: University Press of American and the Institute for Oral History, (online reserves)

John Bodnar, "Reworking Reality: Oral Histories and the Meaning of the Polish Immigrant Experiences," from Ronald J. Grele, (Ed.) *International Annual of Oral History, 1990; Subjectivity and Multiculturalism in Oral History*. (New York: Westbrook, Ct, London: Greenwood Press, 1992, (online reserves)

Alexander Portelli, "Conversations with the Panther: The Italian Student Movement of 1990, from International Annual of Oral History. (New York: Westbrook, Ct, London: Greenwood Press, 1992, (online reserves)

**February 15th- March 8th
classes will be taught by Dr. Caroline Eick, Assistant Professor, EDPL**

Feb. 15: Preparing for a Practice Interview: Background Preparation and Research

Required Reading:

Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Practical Guide for Social Scientists*, "Introduction," and "Preparation for the Interviewing Process," and "Interviewing Techniques," pp. 1-54 (online reserves)

“Hugo Slim and Paul Thompson, with Olivia Bennett and Nigel Cross, “Ways of Listening,” from Perks and Thompson, *The Oral History Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 1998. pp. 114-125. (online reserves)

Revisit Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, “*A Life-Story Interview Guide*”

Feb. 22: Interviewing

Required Reading:

Paul Thompson, “The Interview,” in *The Voice of the Past*, pp.118-172

Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jack, “Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses,” from *The Oral History Reader*. (Eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson, London and New York: Routledge, 1998, pp.114-126) (online reserves)

Assignment due next week:

Take the week to conduct and record an interview and prepare excerpts of three pages from the interview. The excerpts might illustrate a “rich point,” “well-asked and /or poorly asked question,” and/or crucial moments in the interview. Prepare sufficient numbers of copies to share with the class. Please bring interview tapes and prepare for discussions and critique. Bring your tape recorders.

Mar. 1: Critiques of Interview Transcripts: Issues of Voice, Ethics, Power, and Trust.

Come prepared to discuss your interview and prepared excerpts of three pages from the interview. The excerpts might illustrate a “rich point,” “well-asked and /or poorly asked question,” and/or crucial moments in the interview. Prepare sufficient numbers of copies to share with the class. Please bring interview tapes and prepare for discussions and critique. Bring your tape recorders.

Assignment due next week:

Utilizing the critiques of your first interview, go back into the field and conduct another interview or revisit the first. You should have sufficient feedback to extend the interview and apply the techniques from the class critique. Prepare another three pages of excerpts from this interview and come to class next week prepared to discuss your refined approach.

Mar. 8: Critiques of Interview Transcripts: Issues of Voice, Ethics, Power, and Trust.

Come prepared to discuss your second interview (or revisit) and prepared excerpts of three pages from the interview. The excerpts might illustrate a “rich point,” “well-asked and /or poorly asked question,” and/or crucial moments in the interview. Prepare sufficient numbers of copies to share with the class. Please bring interview tapes and prepare for discussions and critique. Bring your tape recorders.

II. SITUATING VOICES IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Mar. 15: Narrative Traditions in Education History: Stories, Plots, and Analysis of Change, Classroom Practices as an Example

Required Reading:

David Hogan, “The Market Revolution and Disciplinary Power: Joseph Lancaster and the Psychology of the Early Classroom System,” *History of Education Quarterly*,” 29, 3 Fall, pp. 381-417, (online reserves)

Barbara Finkelstein, "Governing the Young in Retrospect, A View from the Present," from *Governing the Young: Teacher Behavior in Popular Primary Schools in Nineteenth Century U.S.*, London: The Falmer Press, 1989, pp. 5-55, (online reserves)

Barbara Finkelstein, (1979). "Reading, Writing, and the Acquisition of Identity in Nineteenth-Century United states," in B. Finkelstein (ed) *Regulated children/Liberated Children: Education in Psychohistorical Perspective* (pp. 114-140). New York: Psychohistory Press. (online reserves)

Barbara Finkelstein(1994). Life at the margins of possibility. *American Studies Yearbook*, 16(2), 1-10. (online reserves)

Prepare to present 10-12 minute presentation for our next class. (see assignment below)

Other Readings

Kate Rousmaniere, *City Teachers: Teaching and School Reform in Historical Perspective (Paperback)*

Gretchen A. Duling: *Oral Life Histories of One-Room Schoolhouse Teachers: Voices from the Recitation Bench*: Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: The Edward Mellen Press.

SPRING BREAK: (NO CLASS) March 19-March 23

III. PROJECTING, INTERVIEWING, ANALYZING, EDITING, AND CRAFTING AN ORAL HISTORY

Mar. 29: Narrative Traditions in Education History: Stories, Plots, and Analysis of Change, Native Americans as Another Example

Required Reading: Part 1

Alan Peshkin, *Places of Memory: Whiteman's Schools and Native American Communities*. Mahwah New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum Publishers.

K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Teresa L. McCarty, *To Remain and Indian: Lessons in Democracy from a Century of Native American Education*. New York: Teachers College Press, Chapter 2, pp. 16-42. (online reserves)

Alan Wieder, *Voices from Cape Town Classrooms: Oral Histories of Teachers Who Fought Apartheid*. 2003. ISBN 0-8204-6768-5

Part 2 Creating a Study (Assignment Due)

Each student will present a 10-12 minute presentation on the focus, significance, context, chronology and mode of oral historical perspective in their study.

In addition, students should construct and submit a working resource lists including description and analysis of best resources, e.g. context-revealing histories, documents, descriptions, historical works, collections, etc.

Apr. 5: Sorting, Sifting, and Editing: Issues of Voice, Choice, Representation, and Trust

Required Reading:

Donald Ritchie, et. al., "Interviews as Historical Evidence..." *The History Teacher* 24, 2 (February, 1991): 223-238, (online reserves)

Paul Thompson, "Sorting and Sifting, in *The Voice of the Past*, 246-264.

Apr. 12 Interpretation and Analysis: Linking Narrative and Evidence

Required Reading:

Paul Thompson, "Interpretation: The Making of History," in *Voices of the Past*.

Richard White, *Remembering Ahanagan: Storytelling in a Family's Past*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1998.

Apr. 19: Interpretation and Analysis: Linking Narrative and Evidence

Class discussion and continuing critique

Apr. 26: Submit Penultimate Draft

May 3: Critique

May 10: Last Day of Class: Submit Final Papers