

**EDPL 711: Oral History and Education**

University of Maryland, College Park

Fall, 2003: Thursdays, 4:15-7:00pm

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Office Hours:

Thursday 1- 4 and by appt.

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 choice.

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, 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.

**GENERAL OUTLINE OF CONTENT**

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

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

### EXPECTATIONS

- 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 a 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 integrates interviews with documentary evidence, and presents a coherent historical essay. The paper will be prepared and presented in stages as follows:

**October 2: Submit practice interview transcript;**

**October 23: Submit Resource List**

**December 11: Submit Final Draft**

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

### REQUIRED READINGS

Paul Thompson. (2000). *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*. 3d ed. London: Oxford University Press. ISBN-19-289317-3

Barbara Finkelstein, *Oral History: A Reader*. Available at Bel Jean, Maryland Book Exchange and in the Education Technology Center in the basement of the Benjamin Building

A sensitive tape recorder and tapes

### RELEVANT JOURNALS, REVIEWS OF RESEARCH

*American Archivist*

*Canadian Historical Review*

*Ethnohistory*

*Frontiers*

*History of Education Quarterly*

*International Journal of Qualitative Methods in Education*

*Journal of Interdisciplinary History*

*Journal of Narrative and Life History*

*American Jewish History*

*Canadian Oral Hx. Assoc.*

*Feminists Studies*

*Historical Studies in Education*

*Intl. Journal of Oral History*

*Journal of American History*

*Oral History Review*

*Journal of Social Issues*

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

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“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 traditiosn, and historic circumstance.”

## OUTLINE OF CLASSES AND REQUIREMENTS

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

#### Sept. 4: Traditions of Oral History-Doing: An Introduction

**For next week: Prepare a pre-interview protocol that enables you to engage in a preliminary conversation that reveals basic contact information, the time-line of life, involvements in teaching, research, and/or service. (Please acquire one document and a curriculum vitae of your narrator as well.**

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

#### Sept.11: Oral History as an Approach to Recovering the Past

##### Common Readings

Paul Thompson, (199 ). “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, pp. 1-6, *Reader*.

John Bodnar (1992). “Reworking Reality: Oral Histories and the Meaning of the Polish Immigrant Experiences,” in Ronald J. Grele, (Ed.) *International Annual of Oral History Subjectivity and Multiculturalism in Oral History*. (New York: Westbrook, Ct, London: Greenwood Press, pp. 57-68.

Alessandro Portelli (1992).“Conversations with the Panther: The Italian Student Movement of 1990, in *International Annual of Oral History*.(New York: Westbrook, Ct, London: Greenwood Press, pp. 145-164, *Reader*.

#### Sept. 18: Preparing for A Practice Interview: Background Preparation and Research

##### Common Readings

Valerie Raleigh Yow (1994). Recording Oral History: *A Practical Guide for Social Scientists*, “Introduction,” and “Preparation for the Interviewing Process,” and “Interviewing Techniques,” pp. 1-83, *Reader*.

Anderson, Kathryn and Dana C. Jack (1998). Learning to Listen,” from Perks and Thompson, *The Oral History Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 1998, pp. 157-171. *Reader*.

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

### **Sept 25: No Class.**

Take the week to conduct and record an interview, create a full transcript, and prepare excerpts of three pages from the interview. The excerpts might illustrate “rich point,” “well-asked and /or poorly 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 discussion next week.

### **Oct 2: Critiques of Interview Transcripts: Issues of Voice, Ethics, Power, and Trust.**

#### **Common Reading:**

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

Michael Agar, (Spring 1987). “Transcript Handling: An ethnographic Strategy,” *Oral History Review*, 15b (Spring 1987); 209-19, *Reader*

Alan Wieder (2003). *Voices from Cape Town Classrooms: Oral Histories of Teachers Who Fought Apartheid*, New York: Peter Lang, pp. 1-16, *Reader*.

#### **Submit Transcripts**

## **II. SITUATING VOICES IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

**The Evolution of economic, political, social, cultural and educational settings within which voices are formed, taught, learned, framed, revealed, and /or obscured.**

### **Oct 9: Narrative Traditions in Education History: Stories, Plots, and Analysis of Change, Classroom Practices as an Example**

#### **Common Readings**

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, *Reader*.

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, *Reader*.

...(1998). “Classroom Management in the United States, 1790-1990: The Evolving Terrain of Teaching: in Nobuo Shimahara, editor. *Classroom Practices and Politics in Cross Cultural Perspective*, Garland Press, Chapter 2.

Kate Rousmaniere(2000).“From Memory to Curriculum,” *Teaching Education*, 1, 87-98.

## **Oct 16: Narrative Traditions in Education History: Stories, Plots, and Analysis of Change, Native Americans as Another Example**

### **Common Readings**

James Axtell, (1974). "The Scholastic Philosophy of the Wilderness," *The School Upon A Hill: Education and Society in Colonial New England*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974, pp. 245-281, *Reader*.

Amy C. Schutt, (Fall 1998) " 'What Will Become of our Young People?' Goals for Indian Children in Moravian Missions," *History of Education Quarterly*, 38, 3 268-287, *Reader*.

Margaret Connell Szasz (May 1980). "Poor Richard Meets the Native American: Schooling for Young Indian Women in Eighteenth-Century Connecticut," *Pacific Historical Review*, XLIX,,: 215-35, *Reader*.

Joel Spring, (1996). "Indian Policy as Ideological Management," and "From Thomas Jefferson to Henry Ford: The end of the Choctaw Republic," from *The Cultural Transformation of a Native American Family and Its Tribe, 1763-1995, A Basket of Apples*, Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, pp. 12-31; pp. 179-200, in *Reader*

**For next week, construct your own working resource lists including description and analysis of best resources, e.g. context-revealing histories, documents, descriptions, historical works, collections, etc. on your topic.**

### **III. CONSTRUCTING AN ORAL HISTORY**

#### **Oct 23: Who will you Interview, why, and so What?**

Required Reading:

Alex Haley, "Black History, Oral History and Genealogy, form Dunaway and Baum," *Oral History*, 2<sup>d</sup> edition, pp. 257-281

Caroline Eick, (2003). "Guidelines for Organizing and Conducting Oral Histories Designed for High School Students," College Park, Oral History in Education Institute

#### **Submit Resource List**

#### **Oct 30: Sorting, Sifting, and Editing: Issues of Voice, Choice, Representation, and Trust\**

Required Reading:

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

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

Arthur A. Hansen (1994). "A Riot of Voices: Racial and Ethnic Variables in Interactive Oral History Interviewing," from *Interactive Oral History Interviewing*, Hillsdale: Erlbaum Publishers, 1994, pp. 107-139, *Reader*

#### **Nov 6: Interpretation and Analysis: Linking Narrative and Evidence**

Required Reading:

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

Barbara Finkelstein, "Reading, Writing, and the Acquisition of Identity in Nineteenth Century America." (1979). *Regulated Children/Liberated Children: Education in Psychohistorical Perspective*, in Barbara Finkelstein (Editor). New York: Psychohistory Press, pp. 114-40.

**Nov 13: Interpretation and Analysis, Linking Narrative and Evidence**

Required Reading: TBA

**Nov 20: Presentations and Critiques**

Required Reading: TBA

Nov. 27 THANKSGIVING VACATION

**Dec. 4: Presentations and Critiques**

**Dec 11. Presentations and Submit Final Papers**