EDPS711: Oral History and Education
University of Maryland, College Park
Spring 2012

COURSE INFORMATION:
Barbara Finkelstein, Professor
Office Hours: Th. 2-6:30pm and by appointment
Telephone: 301-405-3588
Benjamin: Room 3112-F
email: bf@umd.edu

Location: 2102 Benjamin Building
Days and Time: Thursdays. 7:00-9:45 pm

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.

Evolving constructions of oral history

“[oral history] …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 is primary source material obtained by recording the spoken word – generally by means of planned, tape-recorded – of persons deemed to harbor hitherto unavailable information.” Louis Starr

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

“….a powerful tool for discovering, explaining, exploring the nature of historical memory – how people make sense of their past, how they connect individual experience and its social context and how the past becomes part of the present, and how people use it to interpret their lives and the world around them.” Michael Frisch.

….Building Partnerships between Oral History and Memory Studies. “Oral history helps us understand ….how an interview can reveal and shape what is known among and by others, even as it can also participate in a broader political process of public meaning-making.” Paula Hamilton and Linda Shopes
GENERAL OUTLINE OF CONTENTS:

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 some basic knowledge and/or experience studying history. If you need refreshers, please be in touch with Barbara Finkelstein before the semester begins.

Class Participation: Evaluation of Class Participation will rest on evolving abilities to:

► Demonstrate a reflective turn on content of reading;

► Support/Advance collective understanding in the classroom;

► identify links between content and craft;

Class Participation: seminar discussion leaders:

*Participants will rotate roles as seminar discussion leaders. Discussion leaders are expected to devise a plan for moving through the readings, “teach” the themes you found across the readings, and raise discussion questions. Each student should expect to serve at least once as a seminar discussion leader. The schedule will be developed during week one of the semester. If the class is small, we will devise a different plan.

Analytic Paragraphs: In order to contribute to a robust class dialogue, each student will prepare a single paragraph that analyzes each of the readings with particular attention to the authors’ construction of their work, choice of narrators, their arguments, and the themes they have emphasized. Be prepared to compare themes across readings. (Model paragraphs are available on the Elms Discussion Board) and if necessary, will be made in hard copy during the first night of class.

B. In addition to these common expectations, each student will generate 3 transcripts: 1) the contents of a practice interview; 2) the contents of an interview with narrators of your own choosing; 3) a follow-up interview with your narrator. Taken together, the classes, the assignments, and 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 historical essay. The paper will be prepared and presented in stages as follows:

February 23- March 8: 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 8 & 15: Submit transcripts and prepare critique

SPRING BREAK – March 19-March 26

April 5: 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 will submit a working resource list including description and analysis of best resources, e.g. context-revealing histories, documents, descriptions, historical works, collections, etc.

May 3: Submit Penultimate Draft for Critique

May 17: Potluck at the Finkelsteins -- Submit Final Drafts

D. There will be no final examination

E. Code of Academic Integrity

“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. Course Evaluations

As a member of our academic community, you as a student have a number of important responsibilities. One of these responsibilities is to submit your course evaluations each term though CourseEvalUM in order to help faculty and administrators improve teaching and learning at Maryland. Please make a note now of the dates for Spring 2012 (Tuesday, April 27 through Wednesday, May 12) and the link at which you can access the submission system. https://www.irpa.umd.edu/Assessment/CourseEval/stdt FAQ.shtml.

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

REQUIRED READING, COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES


A sensitive digital recorder and DVD-RW discs

All other readings can be downloaded from Elms/Blackboard
SCHOLARLY JOURNALS AND OTHER (selected) RESOURCES

American Archivist
American Jewish History
Canadian Historical Review
Canadian Oral History Association
Ethnohistory
Frontiers: Historical Studies in Education
Feminist Studies
History of Education Quarterly International
International Journal of Qualitative Methods
in Education

Journal of African-American History
Journal of American History
Journal of Interdisciplinary History
Journal of Narrative and Life History
Journal of Oral History
Journal of Social Issues
Oral History Review

General Reference Works that might be explored as you develop your studies


OUTLINE OF TOPICS AND SCHEDULE OF READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS

I. WAYS OF KNOWING IN ORAL HISTORY: CONSIDERATIONS OF CONTENT, CRAFT, AND THE DISCOVER OF VOICE

Jan. 26: Traditions of Oral History: Introductions and Discussion

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Recommended Readings:
Feb. 2: Approaches to Recovering the Past, 1

Required Reading:


Green, Anna, “Can Memory be Collective?” in Donald A. Ritchie (Ed.) The Oxford handbook of oral history, pp. 90-111.

Recommended:

Feb. 9: Approaches to Recovering the Past, 2

Required Reading:
Dougherty, Jack. “From Anecdote to Analysis: Oral Interviews and New Scholarship in Educational History,” Vol. 86, Issue 2: 10/04/05

White, Richard. Remembering Ahanagran: Storytelling in a Family’s Past. [Ch. 3 -7 pp. 22-64].


Recommended Readings:

Feb. 16: Approaches to Recovering the Past, 3

Required Reading:


Feb. 23: Preparing for a Practice Interview: Background Preparation and Research

Required Reading:

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

Mar. 1: Interviewing

Required Reading:

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

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. 8: 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.

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.

Please prepare a 10-12 minute talk for next week’s class as per the description below.

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

II. SITUATING VOICES IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Mar. 29: Creating a Study (Assignment Due)

Each student will present a 10-12 minute talk on the focus, significance, context, chronology and mode of oral historical perspective in their study. In addition, students should submit a working resource lists including description and analysis of best resources, e.g. context-revealing histories, documents, descriptions, historical works, collections, etc.

April 5: Narrative Traditions in Education History: Stories, Plots, and Analysis of Change,
**Required Reading:**


**Other studies and model student papers to be selected depending on the interests of individuals and the class**

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


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

**Apr. 12: Narrative Traditions in Education History: Stories, Plots, and Analysis of Change, Native Americans as Another Example**

**Required Readings:** To be determined by and centered arounds studentinterest

**Recommended:**

Peshkin, Alan. ”Caught Up in This Whiteman’s Society”: Living in Two Worlds” in *Places of Memory: Whiteman’s Schools and Native American Communities*. Mahwah New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum Publishers, Chapter 4, pp. 65-91.


**Apr. 19: Sorting, Sifting, and Editing: Issues of Voice, Choice, Representation, and Trust**

**Required Reading:**
Ritchie, Donald. (1991) “Interviews as Historical Evidence.” *The History Teacher* 24, 2 (February): 223-238,


**Apr. 26: Interpretation and Analysis: Linking Narrative, Voice, and Evidence**

**Required Reading:**

**Discussion of your papers:** On the interface of context and voice  
**May 3:** Submit Penultimate Draft  
**May 10:** Critique  
**May 17:** Last Day of Class: Submit Final Papers  
  Potluck Dinner at the Finkelstein’s