

EDU 290: Oral History: Problems, Perspectives, and Possibilities
Crosslisted as SOC 290 and AFR 290

Professors: Hilton Kelly and Caitlin Christian-Lamb

Class Time: TBD

Class Meeting Location: TBD

Office Hours: TBD

Course Overview:

In this hands-on methods course, students will build interdisciplinary research skills focused on the theory and practice of oral history. We will explore the theories, methods, and debates surrounding one of the oldest research tools: oral testimony. Students will learn to critically evaluate oral sources and use oral histories in conjunction with other forms of research. Students will engage with the practical aspects of oral history by completing and transcribing two oral history interviews. In addition, students will gain a more sophisticated understanding of individual and collective memory and the questions that both raise for writing oral history. Each student will participate in a class oral history project, as well as leave the class with the tools necessary to begin her or his own.

Course participants will benefit from two collaborative projects occurring during the semester: Davidson College Archives & Special Collections' History Homecoming Day event, and the Associated Colleges of the South True Stories grant. History Homecoming Day, which will take place at the Ada Jenkins Center in Davidson in October 2016 and is supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, is a community event designed to solicit oral histories from underdocumented populations in the town of Davidson, as well as provide digitization services and educational programming on town history. Students in this course will be expected to attend and participate in History Homecoming Day.

True Stories is a collaborative grant project between faculty and archivists from three Associated Colleges of the South institutions: Davidson College, Rollins College, and Southwestern University. Students enrolled in this course will have access to recorded lectures and learning materials from the two other institutions, and will have the opportunity to share course products and assignments on the True Stories website (<http://social.rollins.edu/wpsites/truestories/>). Course participants will decide what material they wish to share with our grant partners and post publicly.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

- Explain the evolution of oral history methodology and its uses across disciplines.
- Explain the promises and the challenges of oral history as theory and method.
- Identify ethical concerns in the collection, use, and preservation of oral histories.

- Demonstrate an understanding of individual and collective memory through class discussions, writing assignments, and a major project.
- Engage with local Davidson and metro-Charlotte history, as relevant to the class oral history project.
- Conduct and transcribe interviews for deposit into an archival repository (including familiarization and practice with policies such as data and metadata management, privacy agreements, and deeds of gift).
- Present oral history research during an end-of-semester class conference.

Required Texts:

Charlton, Thomas L., Myers, Lois E. and Sharpless, Rebecca. 2006. *Handbook of Oral History*. NY: Rowman & Littlefield.

Lorder-Jackson, Tondra L. 2015. *Schoolhouse Activists: African American Educators and the Long Birmingham Civil Rights Movement*. NY: State University of New York Press.

Class Oral History Project (OHP):

Students will all participate in the class Oral History Project (OHP). The overarching theme of the project will be chosen by the class participants, but possible topics include: student life, student activism, town-gown relations, and the experiences of Davidson as a person of color.

Each student will identify interview subjects (with assistance from instructors as needed), conduct and record two oral histories, transcribe both oral histories, and synthesize that experience in a final paper. The OHP experience will be supplemented with research conducted on the theories and ethics of oral history projects (as covered in class readings and discussions), as well as relevant local history. Findings from the OHP will be publicly disseminated at the end-of-semester class conference. Peer review of the first draft of the OHP paper will also take place at the class conference.

Raw interview recordings, transcriptions, and final papers will all be placed in the Davidson College Archives & Special Collections to benefit future research on these topics, pending permission from interviewees.

Important Due Dates for OHP Paper:

9/22 Annotated bibliography due (5 sources)

Please note that these are preliminary sources. The final bibliography will include books (including edited volumes), articles and book chapters, and films.

11/8 2 Transcriptions Due

11/29 First draft due (Peer review)

12/14 OHP paper due

OHP Paper Grading Rubric:

ARGUMENT: The paper presents a clear argument and well-documented evidence to support claims; it uses highly persuasive examples that are chosen thoughtfully and carefully.

THOROUGHNESS: The paper explores arguments thoroughly within the page requirements; it anticipates objections and counter-arguments; all concepts are clearly defined.

CORRECTNESS: The paper makes its points based on reasonably correct interpretations of the author(s); it uses concepts correctly and precisely as the author(s) intended; it uses the adopted reference format.

ORIGINALITY: The paper is based on the student's own reading of the texts and does not simply repeat summaries presented in class; the introduction and body of the paper are thoughtful; the conclusion is insightful.

GRAMMAR AND STYLE: The paper makes clear use of active verbs in consistent tense; it avoids slang, informal constructions, floating quotations, and sentence fragments; it avoids spelling errors; it makes use of introductory and transition sentences; it avoids redundancy in well-planned paragraphs.

Critical Book Review (Due October 18):

A critical book review describes the content of a book and provides a thorough analysis and evaluation of its ideas and purpose. Being "critical" demands an analytical approach in your assessment of the book's strengths and weaknesses, rather than making vicious attacks of the book that cannot be substantiated. The descriptive element of a review should give the reader an understanding of the author's argument(s) and methodology, while the evaluative element should detail your assessment of the book's ideas which may include critiques of the argument(s) and methodology.

Each student will select a book that is relevant to the class oral history project. The goal is for students to use the knowledge that they have acquired in the course to evaluate a "published" oral history. Here are a few tips:

Writing the first draft

On the first page of the critical book review, provide the bibliographic citation for the book that you will review. At the end of the review, write your full name and college affiliation.

The **first paragraph(s)** should contain:

- A statement of your thesis
- The author's purpose in writing the book
- The author's thesis (Is it convincing?)
- The author's theoretical orientation
- Comments on how the book relates to other work on the same subject
- Information about the author's reputation or authority in the field

The **body** of the review should:

- State your arguments in support of your thesis
- Include quotations from the book (and from other reviews) which illustrate your main ideas (Yes, you have to provide a reference section.)
- Address issues with methodology (Is the methodology appropriate to answer the research questions?)
- Note strengths and weaknesses (Are there strong or weak arguments?)
- Relate the ideas in the book to other ideas and arguments on the same topic (You have read other scholarship in the field which allows you to make a comparison)
- Assess the book's reliability, validity, and trustworthiness.
- Address the author's bias and how might it affect the book? (Does the author provide enough information so that you can form your own judgments of the evidence?)
- State how the author addresses issues of power and conflict in her research strategy
- Establish the significance of the book
- State the limitations of the book

The **concluding paragraph** should:

- Summarize the review
- Restate your thesis
- State the contribution(s) of the book

Revising the first draft

- Grammar, punctuation, and writing errors
- Organization and logical development of your thesis
- Errors in quotations or in references

Class Conference

Under the direction and supervision of the instructors, our class will put together a conference at the end of the semester. Each student will present a draft of her or his oral history paper to their peers, as well as invited Davidson College community members, on a panel of 3 or 4 students around a common topic or theme. The purpose of the conference is to provide an opportunity for students to present their research findings to a larger public with the expectation that what they have learned might be interesting, important, worthwhile, or useful to others. We will start planning the conference on the first day of the course.

Grading:

Class Conference 10%

Annotated Bibliography 10%

2 Interviews 20%

Critical Book Review (Individual Choice) 20%

Oral History Research Paper 40%

Letter grades will correspond to the following numerical scale:

A	96-100	C	73-76
A-	90-95	C-	70-72
B+	87-89	D+	66-69
B	83-86	D	60-65
B-	80-82	F	0-59
C+	77-79		

Readings: Readings are an essential component to the course; they provide additional information and perspectives, aid in broadening your understanding, and prepare you for writing assignments. You are expected to read the required readings before each class. You are also required to take copious notes from the readings as preparation for class discussions and reviews. Go to Moodle to print articles and book chapters. Reading quizzes will be random and calculated as a concomitant assignment.

Late Papers and Extra Credit: Unless you have been given prior approval, no writing assignments will be accepted late. Extra credit is not available in this course.

Attendance: Attendance to all classes is critical. If you are unable to attend class for any reason, you should provide a written explanation for your absence. ATTENTION: Job interviews, doctor appointments, taking a test for another class, leaving early, or coming back late from vacation are not acceptable reasons for missing class. With or without a note, two absences or more may result in failure.

Documented Disabilities: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. The ADA requires that students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation. Any student who feels he or she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately as

soon as possible to discuss his or her specific needs. We rely on the Office of the Dean of Students to verify the need for reasonable accommodations based on documentation in that office.

Academic Integrity: The students and faculty of Davidson College are committed to the Honor Code and will not tolerate any violation of this principle. Academic honesty, the cornerstone of teaching and learning, lays the foundation for lifelong integrity. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, providing or receiving assistance in a manner not authorized by the instructor in the creation of work to be submitted for evaluation. This standard applies to all work ranging from daily homework assignments to reviews. Students must clearly cite any sources consulted---not only for quoted phrases but also for ideas and information that are not common knowledge. Neither ignorance nor carelessness is an acceptable defense in cases of plagiarism. It is the student's responsibility to follow the appropriate format for citations. As indicated in Davidson College's Student Handbook, instructors must refer every act of academic dishonesty and violations may result in failure in the course, suspension, or expulsion.

	Tuesdays	Thursdays
August 23 & 25 Oral History: Who, What, When, Where, and How?	Introduction to Oral History & Class Expectations	"The History of Oral History," Sharpless (HOH) "Oral History and 'Hard Times,'" a Review Essay Excerpts from <i>Working: People Talk about What They Do All Day and How They Feel about What They Do</i> , Studs Terkel
August 30 & September 1 Oral History: Who, What, When, Where, and How?	"Oral History as Evidence," Grele (HOH) "The Politics and Poetics of Oral History in Qualitative Research: This One's for Nikki Giovanni," Kelly "Field-Workers' Feelings: What we Feel, Who We Are, How We Analyze," Kleinman	"Introduction to the In-Depth Interview," Yow "Trouble on Memory Lane: Adults and Self-Retrospection in Researching Youth," Biklen "Oral History and the Presentation of Class Consciousness: The <i>New York Times</i> v. The Buffalo Unemployed," Frisch
September 6 & 8	Voices of Collective Remembering, Wertsch,	Voices of Collective Remembering, Wertsch,

<p>Voices of Collective Remembering</p>	<p>chapters 1-3</p> <p>Excerpts from <i>On Collective Memory</i>, Halbwachs</p>	<p>chapters 4-5</p> <p>Excerpts from <i>How Societies Remember</i>, Connerton</p> <p>“The Massacre at Civitella Val di Chiana (Tuscany, June 29, 1944): Myth and Politics, Mourning and Common Sense,” Portelli (in <i>The Battle of Valle Guilia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue</i>, 140-160)</p>
<p>September 13 & 15</p> <p>Voices of Collective Remembering</p>	<p>Voices of Collective Remembering, Wertsch, chapters 6-7 and conclusion</p> <p>Excerpts from <i>Black Workers Remember: An Oral History of Segregation, Unionism, and the Freedom Struggle</i>, Honey</p>	<p>Guest Lecturer: Kristi Multhaup</p> <p>Topic: “How We Remember: Psychological Perspectives”</p> <p>“Memory Theory: Personal and Social,” Hoffman and Hoffman</p> <p>“Mnemonic convergence in a social network: Collective memory and extended influence,” Yamashiro & Hirst</p> <p>“Memory’s malleability: Its role in shaping collective memory and social identity,” Brown, Kouri, & Hirst</p>
<p>September 20 & 22</p> <p>Preserving Memory</p>	<p>“Research Design and Strategies,” Larson</p> <p>“Legal and Ethical Issues in Oral History,” Shopes</p> <p>“‘If I See Some of This in Writing, I’m Going to Shoot You’: Reluctant Narrators, Taboo Topics, and the Ethical Dilemmas of the Oral Historian,” K’Meyer & Crothers</p> <p>“Tryin’ to Gather a Little Knowledge: Some Thoughts</p>	<p>Guest Lecturer: Jan Blodgett</p> <p>Topic: “Collective Memory and the Archival Record”</p> <p>“Keeping the Conversation Going: The Archives Thrive on Interviews and Oral History,” Lucas & Strain</p> <p>“Oral History and Archives: Documenting Context,” Fogerty</p>

	on the Ethics of Oral History,” Portelli (in <i>The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue</i> , 55-71)	
September 27 & 29 Interviewing	“Oral History Interviews: From Inception to Closure,” Morrissey “Preparing for the Interviewing Project,” Yow “A Conversation Analytic Approach to Oral History Interviewing,” McMahan	“Interviewing Techniques,” Yow “I Didn’t Do Anything Important’: A Pragmatist Analysis of the Oral History Interview” Ryan “The Uneasy Page: Transcribing and Editing Oral History” Maze
October 4 & 6 Re-Reading Oral History	<i>Schoolhouse Activists: African American Educators and the Long Birmingham Civil Rights Movement</i> , Lorder-Jackson (Preface, Chapters 1 & 2) Focus: Varieties of Oral History Projects; Data and Methods	<i>Schoolhouse Activists: African American Educators and the Long Birmingham Civil Rights Movement</i> (Chapters 3-5), Lorder-Jackson Focus: Narrative Theory, Storytelling, Collective Remembering
October 11 & 13	FALL BREAK: No Class	Guest Lecturer: Tondra Lorder-Jackson (University of Alabama at Birmingham)
October 18 & 20 Doing Oral History	Lab: Research & Retrieval	Lab: Research & Retrieval
October 25 & 27 Doing Oral History	Lab: Interviewing	Lab: Interviewing
November 1 & 3 Doing Oral History	Lab: Transcribing and Editing	Lab: Transcribing and Editing
November 8 & 10 Crafting Oral History	Field Notes Critical Book Review Due	Field Trip The Southern Oral History Program in the Center for the Study of the American South

November 15 & 17 Crafting Oral History	Workshop: Preparing for Class Conference	Lab: Working on interviews/transcription, project and presentation troubleshooting
November 22 & 24 Crafting Oral History	Lab: Working on interviews/transcription, project and presentation troubleshooting	THANKSGIVING BREAK: no class
November 29 & December 1 Panel Presentations	Class Conference	Class Conference
December 6 Panel Presentations	Class Conference	NO CLASS (semester end)