

Comparative Studies 677.02 Oral History

Professor Amy Shuman
Office: 566 Denney Hall
Phone: 292-6555
Email: shuman.1@osu.edu
Office hours: Tuesday and Wednesday, 11:30-1

Texts:

Mary Chamberlain and Paul Thompson Narrative and Genre Routledge, recommended
Rina Benmayor and Andor Skotnes Migration and Identity, Oxford, recommended
Eva M. McMahan and Kim Lacy Rogers, Eds. Interactive Oral History Interviewing, Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum, 1994. recommended
Alessandro Portelli The Death of Luigi Trastulli, Albany, N.Y.: SUNY, 1991. required

Reading Schedule:

September 25: Why do Oral History: the introduction
Readings from Studs Terkel and Jack Santino, distributed in class

Week One (September 30, October 2): Samples of Oral History Work

Alessandro Portelli's Oral History Research
Read Chapters 1-4 of Portelli The Death of Luigi Trastulli...pp. vii-76.

Week Two (October 7, 9) Public Stories and Master Narratives
Readings: Anne B. Cohen Poor Pearl Poor Girl Austin: U of Texas Press, 1973. pp. 8-38
Aida Hurtado "Cross-border Existence: One Woman's Migration Story" from Mary Romero and Abigail Stewart Women's Untold Stories N.Y.: Routledge, 1999, pp 83-101.

Week Three (October 14, 16): Doing Oral History Research
Read: Katherine Borland "That's Not What I Said": Interpretive Conflict in Oral Narrative Research" from Women's Words, Ed. Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai,, N.Y.: Routledge, 1991. (packet)
Barbara Myherhoff "Life History among the Elderly," Life History as Integration" and "Surviving Stories" From Remembered Lives Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1995.
Film: Number Our Days

Week Four (October 21, 23): Oral History and Folklore Research
(Note, October 21 class will be held on October 22 at 4:00 in the Humanities House)
Read: Simon Lichman "The Gardener's Tale (unpublished)
Simon Lichman " The Traditional Creativity Through School Communities Project" (unpublished)
Judith Modell and Charlee Brodsky "Envisioning Homestead: Using Photographs in Interviewing" in McMahan and Rogers

Week Five (October 28, 30): More Methods
Ronald Grele "History and the Languages of History in the Oral History Interview: Who answers whose questions and why? In McMahan and Rogers, pp 1-18.
Kim Rogers "Trauma Redeemed: The Narrative Construction of Social Violence" in McMahan and Rogers, pp. 30-46.

Week Six (November 4, 6): The oral history of two industrial cultures
Read Portelli, chapters 5-9 pp. 81-192
Portelli chapters 10 and 11 pp. 195-238

Week Seven (November 13): Oral History and Fact; the construction of oral history

1. authority, eye-witnesses Read: Elizabeth Tonkin “The teller of the tale” and “Structuring an Account” from Narrating our Pasts Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
2. history as interpretation Read: Elizabeth Tonkin “Subjective or Objective: Debates on the nature of oral history” from Narrating our Pasts Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Week Eight (November 18, 20) Using Oral History

Read: Sylvia Ann Grider “How Texans Remember the Alamo” in Usable Pasts ed. Tad Tuleja. Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1997.

William Westerman “Central American Refugee Testimonies and Performed Life Histories in the Sanctuary Movement” in Rina Benmayor and Andor Skotnes, Eds. Migration and Identity Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Week Nine (November 25, 27): Why do Oral History: the conclusion

Shana Berger Gluck “Advocacy Oral History : Palestinian Women in Resistance” from Women’s Words, Ed. Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai,, N.Y.: Routledge, 1991. (packet)
Portelli, “The Oral Shape of the Law” pp. 241-269.

Week Ten (December 2, 4): Student Presentations

Assignments

1. Do an oral history interview and transcribe it. Students are encouraged to participate in the Meigs County oral history project. Each student participating in the project will be assigned to interview an individual craftsperson or knowledgeable resident. Other oral history projects are equally acceptable.
2. Write a description of the interview process, including what questions you asked, the context of the interview, and your prior knowledge of the events discussed. (Mid-term equivalent)
3. Find supplementary materials, including those provided by the people you interviewed, and discuss the relationship between the supplementary materials and the interview.
4. Identify an issue (including those discussed in class) and write an 8-10 page discussion that incorporates material from the interview.
5. Do a 10 minute oral presentation of your work.

Deadlines

No later than the third week of class (October 15), each student should turn in a schedule including:

- 1) the subject and topic of the proposed interview, a list of questions to be asked (at least 15 questions), and a proposed schedule for the remaining assignments.
 - The description of the interview process is due no later than 1 week after the interview
 - The discussion of supplementary materials is due no later than 2 weeks after the interview
 - The final paper is due no later than December 2.

Exams

The description of the interview process will be the mid-term exam.

Final exam date: December 10, 7:30-9:18 A.M.

Plagiarism Policy:

Plagiarism is the representation of another's works or ideas as one's own: it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas. All cases of suspected plagiarism, in accordance with university rules, will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct.

Also, remember that this course encourages you to use both written and unwritten (oral) sources of information, so if you find others' ideas useful, incorporate them in your work with proper acknowledgment.

Absence Policy:

Participation in class discussion is a part of your grade. The instructor recognizes that some absences are unavoidable, so for those occasions, please provide a written summary of the readings for days when you are absent. More than two absences will result in a lower course grade.

Disability Accommodations

Please inform the instructor of any accommodations that will afford you greater participation in the class. Also, the Office for Disability Services, located in 150 Pomerene Hall, offers services for students with documented disabilities. Contact the ODS at 2-3307.

Grading

Interview Questions: 10%

Interview: 10%

Discussion of Interview and Use of Supplementary materials: 10%

Discussion of Issues (final paper) 40%

Oral Presentation: 10%

Demonstrated Knowledge of Readings (class discussion and final exam): 20%

