
HTST 539

Oral History

Overview

Oral history theory and practice have developed in relationship to each other. Seminar discussions will examine the methodological and theoretical developments in the field over the past forty years. Students will learn how to conduct an oral history – from ethics to interpreting the evidence of oral history – and will have the opportunity to interview one person about some aspect of the past. They will also learn how to interpret and use oral histories collected by others in a major research paper.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand oral history theory and methodology
- Understand ethics policy and practice
- Critically assess the evidence of oral history
- Conduct an oral history
- Interpret oral history evidence

Evaluation

Seminar Participation	20%
Oral History Methodology	25%
Research Proposal	10%
Presentation	15%
Research Paper	30%

Fall 2018
Thursdays, 2:00 – 4:45

Instructor: Nancy Janovicek
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Office: 22 612
Office Hours: Tuesday 10:00 – 12:00;
Thursday, 1:00 – 2:00

Required Text

Kristina R. Llewellyn, Alexander Freund, and Nolan Reilly, *The Canadian Oral History Reader*

Assignment Deadlines

Oral History Methodology Paper

Friday, October 6

Note: there are small assignments to support this assignment throughout the first month. These assignments must be completed before the paper is submitted.

Research Proposal

Friday, November 9

Research paper

Friday, December 14

ASSIGNMENTS

All assignments are to be double-spaced and written in Times New Roman 12-point font. Students will upload their assignments to D2L by midnight of the due date.

I expect that all graded papers will have a clear thesis statement, be well-organized, and have a logical argument. Use endnotes and follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*. The basic rules are explained in the *History Students' Handbook*, which is available on the department website.

Deadlines are firm, but students who make arrangements with me in person at least one week before the assignment is due may receive an extension if I deem the circumstances to be appropriate. Late papers will lose 0.5 of the 4.00 grade point system per day.

SEMINAR PARTICIPATION

I eavesdrop when I'm in the elevator. I once heard a student say that seminars are easy because you don't have an exam so you don't have to take notes; you don't have to prepare; you just have to show up and sit there. That student was wrong.

Engaged student participation based on careful reading of *all* of the assigned readings is essential to a successful seminar. Taking reading notes – not just highlighting key passages – is necessary in order to participate effectively in seminar discussions. I'll lead the discussion, but prepare for class by thinking of questions about the readings and be prepared to discuss what you thought was most interesting about each reading.

ORAL HISTORY METHODOLOGY ASSIGNMENT

The purpose of this assignment is to train students to conduct an oral history interview. Rather than using this interview as evidence for a research paper, the interview will be the primary source for a methodology paper. There are many components to this assignment because you must first learn ethics policy and do the preparatory work necessary to conduct an oral history interview. **A grade will only be assigned to the paper, but to comply with ethics policy all of these assignments must be completed before I will grade the final paper.**

This may look overwhelming, but don't drop the course because there is too much work! It will be easier to break these tasks down into separate assignments. Except for the paper, the assignments are small and should only take an hour or two. Remember the paper is graded, not these tasks; write carefully, but the small assignments need not be polished.

Research proposal (250 – 300 words), due Friday, September 13

In order to conduct the oral history, students must identify an aspect of the past they are interested in researching. You are not required to do research for this proposal. The purpose of this assignment is to ensure that you have a topic about the past. You will most likely interview someone you know. But you can't just sit down, turn on the recorder, and say, "So grandma, tell me what it was like when you were young." You must discuss a particular topic, such as their work, their political activism, their travel as a young person, or another specific topic. This short proposal (a paragraph that is about half a page single-spaced) will identify the topic and explain how an oral history interview would inform the research. What do you want to learn in the interview that you couldn't find in other sources? I also want to ensure that you are not going to interview the narrator on a sensitive issue. Researching sensitive topics takes a great deal of training and is not appropriate for your first interview.

Ethics: Consent Form, Recruitment Materials, due Friday, September 21

This research project has been approved by the Faculty of Arts Research Ethics Committee. It has not been approved by the Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board (CFREB), which reviews all humanities and social science research that involves human subjects conducted by faculty and graduate students at the University of Calgary. This is an important distinction. The faculty review committees have expedited the ethics approval process for undergraduate course-based assignments. Because it has not been approved by the CFREB, there are limitations to how you can use the research. First, the faculty committee reviews and approves the instructor's application so that undergraduate students can learn research methodologies and develop skills. Second, the data generated for this assignment can only be used for this course. You may not use this interview in future papers or in any publications. You must include this commitment to not publish the research in your consent form. To comply with ethics policy, you must also destroy the data in 2 years.

Ethics boards review every aspect of the interviews, including recruitment. Submit a short script to describe the assignment to your narrator and to explain the assignment. Since you will probably interview someone you know, you can call or e-mail them. Do not text them or contact them on social media; you wouldn't do that for a research project.

We will discuss the consent forms in the seminar before you submit them for me to review. I have uploaded examples from my research on D2L. Note: writing a good consent forms takes time. Allocate at least two hours. Templates for the consent forms are available here: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/research/researchers/ethics-compliance/chreb/chreb-and-cfref-forms-and-templates> After you have revised them, based on my feedback, they must be submitted to the Faculty of Arts Ethics Committee for approval.

Please note that you should not contact your narrator until I've reviewed and approved these documents.

Interview Questions, Due September 28

In our discussions about oral history theory and practice, we'll discuss why oral history is unique from interviews conducted by researchers in other disciplines. An important difference between historians and other social science researchers is that we aren't trying to find reproducible results. We look for patterns, but are also interested in how individuals experienced and remember an event. We create the evidence with the narrator and often follow their lead if they are directing the research in an interesting direction. Because of this oral historians don't always stick to the questionnaire. But we have to prepare before the interview! I did not expect research for the proposal, but you should research your topic so that you can prepare smart and useful questions. Include an annotated bibliography of 2 -3 sources you've read and explain how they helped you write your questions. Prepare for an interview that is 1 to 1½ - hours long. That's about a page of questions. There is an example of my interview questions posted on D2L. Your questionnaires must also be approved by the Faculty of Arts Ethics Committee.

Transcript of the interview uploaded to D2L by October 11

The purpose of this exercise is to make sure that you don't procrastinate. An interview takes longer than you think it will to transcribe. I need to read your transcript in order to grade your paper.

Oral History Methodology Paper (1, 000 - 1, 250 words/5 pages), Due Friday, October 26 by midnight.

Rather than using this oral history to write about the past, you'll analyze the transcript as oral history evidence. Begin by writing a self-reflexive critique about the interview. Using the articles that we're reading for seminar discussions – especially the literature on sharing authority – reflect on the experience of the interview. What did you expect to learn and what surprised you? How did the relationship with the narrator develop as the interview progressed? Consider silences and ways the narrator may have directed the interview in a different direction. I strongly recommend that you

jot down a few notes as soon as you get home after the interview – keeping a research journal is a common practice. What evidence did you and the narrator produce? Then think about how you could use this in research. Use the questions that you would use in a primary document analysis to guide you through this analysis of the evidence. Analyze the transcript as you would a primary source – but remember that oral history produces a unique kind of evidence. Answer the critical questions that a researcher would need to consider about the narrator to interpret the evidence. How could this be used in research? What are the limitations? “Faulty memory” is not a valid dismissal of the evidence of oral history. How people narrate and remember the past is central to oral history theory and practice.

RESEARCH PAPER PROPOSAL (500 WORDS/2 PAGES & BIBLIOGRAPHY) DUE FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 9

Your research paper will be based on oral history collections that are available in digital oral history collections or archival collections. In the research proposal, identify the collection that you will use. Select 5 interviews from the database and explain why you chose these interviews. Include a brief historiography, discussion of key debates in the field, and your research questions. Explain how you will use the evidence of oral history to write your paper. Include a preliminary bibliography with 8 – 10 secondary sources. This proposal is graded and should be polished.

RESEARCH PRESENTATION

Students will present their research in the final two weeks of the course. The presentations will be 20 minutes long – the standard length for a conference paper – that’s 10 double-spaced pages in 12-point font.

The draft of the research paper must be uploaded to D2L by midnight on the Tuesday before your presentation. I will share these with the class. If you are not presenting that day, you must read the papers so that you can provide critical feedback during the question period to help the presenter improve their paper. Your participation in this discussion, based on a careful reading of the drafts, will be considered when I determine your seminar participation grade. I will provide critical feedback on the draft of the paper as well as comments and grades for your presentation on Friday.

I’ll grade the presentation, not the paper. The draft doesn’t need to be complete, but the more you write, the more helpful my feedback will be.

RESEARCH PAPER (4,500 – 5,000 WORDS/18 – 20 PAGES) DUE FRIDAY, DECEMBER 14 AT MIDNIGHT)

Your final paper must incorporate the critical feedback from your peers and myself. They are due a week after the classes end, but if all of your exams are scheduled early, don’t hesitate to ask for an extension.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism occurs when one submits or presents one’s work in a course, or ideas and/or passages in a written piece of work, as if it were one’s own work done expressly for that particular course, when, in fact, it is not. As noted in *The History Student’s Handbook* (http://hist.ucalgary.ca/sites/hist.ucalgary.ca/files/history_students_handbook_2015.pdf), plagiarism may take several forms:

- Failure to cite sources properly may be considered plagiarism. This could include quotations, and wording used from another source but not acknowledged.
- Borrowed, purchased, and/or ghostwritten papers are considered plagiarism, as is submitting one's own work for more than one course without the permission of the instructor(s) involved.
- Extensive paraphrasing of one or a few sources is also considered plagiarism, even when notes are used, unless the essay is a critical analysis of those works.
- The use of notes does not justify the sustained presentation of another author’s language and ideas as one’s own.

Plagiarism is a serious academic offence and written work that appears to contain plagiarized passages will not be graded. All such work will be reported to the Faculty of Arts' associate deans of students who will apply the penalties specified in the *University of Calgary Calendar*.

DEPARTMENTAL GRADING SYSTEM

The following percentage-to-letter grade conversion scheme has been adopted for use in all Canadian Studies, History, and Latin American Studies courses.

Percentage	Letter Grade	Grade Point	Description
90-100	A+	4.00	Outstanding
85-89	A	4.00	Excellent—superior performance showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.
80-84	A-	3.70	
77-79	B+	3.30	
73-76	B	3.00	Good—clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.
70-72	B-	2.70	
67-69	C+	2.30	
63-66	C	2.00	Satisfactory—basic understanding of the subject matter.
60-62	C-	1.70	Receipt of a grade point average of 1.70 may not be sufficient for promotion or graduation.
56-59	D+	1.30	Minimal pass—marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject.
50-55	D	1.00	
0-49	F	0	Fail—unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.

WRITING

This course will include written assignments. Faculty policy directs that all written assignments (including, although to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) but also general clarity and organization. Research papers must be properly documented.

WRITING SUPPORT

Students are also encouraged to use Writing Support Services and other Student Success Centre Services, located on the 3rd floor of the Taylor Family Digital Library (TFDL). Writing Support Services assist with a variety of assignments, from essays to lab reports. Students can book 30-minute one-on-one appointments online, sign up for 15-minute drop-in appointments, and register for a variety of writing workshops. For more information on this and other Student Success Centre services, please visit www.ucalgary.ca/ssc.

SEMINAR SCHEDULE

Week 1 (September 6): Introduction to course

Week 2 (September 13): What is Oral History?

- Alessandro Portelli, "The Peculiarities of Oral History," *History Workshop Journal* 12, 1 (1981): 96 – 107.
- Linda Shopes, "What is Oral History?" *History Matters: The U. S. Survey on the Web* Available at: <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/oral/oral.pdf>
- Lynn Abrams, "Liberating the female self: epiphanies, conflict and coherence in the life stories of post-war British women," *Social History* 39, 1 (February 2014): 14 – 35.
- COHR, Freund, Llewellyn, Reilly, "Introduction"

Week 3 (September 20): Ethics

- Zachary M. Schrag, "How Talking Became Human Subjects Research: The Federal Regulation of the Social Sciences, 1965 - 1991." *Journal of Policy History* 21 (Winter 2009): 3 -37.
- COHR, Janovicek, "Oral History and Ethical Practice after TCPS2"
- CIHR, NSERCC, and SSHRC, *Tri-council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (Ottawa: Secretariat on Responsible Conduct of Research, 2014) Available at: http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/pdf/eng/tcps2-2014/TCPS_2_FINAL_Web.pdf

Workshop: Ethics Policy and Consent Forms. Bring a copy of the Consent Form Templates.

Week 4 (September 27): Indigenous Oral Traditions

- COHR, Cruikshank, "Oral History, Narrative Strategies, and Native American Historiography"
- COHR, Calliou, "Methodology for Recording Oral Histories in the Aboriginal Community"
- COHR, Wheeler, "Narrative Wisps of the Ojibwa Sipe Past: A Journey in Recovering Collective Memories"

Week 5 (October 4): Shared Authority

- COHR, Zembrzycki, "Sharing Authority with Baba"
- COHR, Sugiman, "I Can Hear Lois Now: Corrections to My Story of the Internment of Japanese Canadians"
- COHR, Parr, "'Don't Speak for Me': Practicing Oral History amid the Legacies of Conflict"

Workshop: The Oral History Interview – Bring your interview questions

Week 6 (October 11): Trauma and Oral History

- COHR, Low & Sonntag, "Listening and Learning with Life Stories of Human Rights Violations"
- COHR, Zembrzycki and High, "'When I Was Your Age': Bearing Witness in Holocaust Education"
- National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation <https://nctr.ca/map.php> Explore the resources available. We will discuss selected videos posted in the archives section.
- Sean Carleton, Chrystal Fraser and Jim Milly, "Assessing the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation," *Active History*, 26 November 2015. Available at: <http://activehistory.ca/2015/11/assessing-the-national-centre-for-truth-and-reconciliation/>

Week 7 (October 18): Memory & Interpretation

- COHR, Sangster, “Reflections on the Politics and Praxis of Working-Class Oral Histories”
- COHR, Llewellyn, “Productive Tensions: Feminist Readings of Women Teachers”
- COHR, Freund, “A Canadian Family Talks about Oma’s Life in Nazi Germany: Three-Generational Interviews and Communicative Memory”

Week 8 (October 25): Legal Issues

- COHR, Jarvis-Tonus, “Legal Issues Regarding Oral Histories”
- Jo-Anne Fiske, “From Customary Law to Oral Traditions: Discursive Formation of Plural Legalisms in Northern British Columbia, 1857 – 1993,” *BC Studies* 115 (1997): 267 – 88.
- *Boston College Subpoena News*. Available at: <https://bostoncollegesubpoena.wordpress.com/>
- Palys, T. and Lowman J. (2012). “Defending Research confidentiality “To the Extent the Law Allows:” Lessons From the Boston College Subpoenas.” *Journal of Academic Ethics* 10(4), 271-297.

Week 9 (November 1): Preservation

- Alexander Freund, “Oral History as Process-Generated Data”
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Final Report of the TRC Volume I: Summary*, Preface – Commission Activities Available at:
http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Exec_Summary_2015_05_31_web_o.pdf
- Research news reports about the Supreme Court Rulings on the destruction and preservation of testimonials.

Week 10 (November 8): Digital Oral History Projects

- *Histoires de vie Montréal/Montreal Life Stories* Available at: <http://lifestoriesmontreal.ca/>
- Chapters from Steven High, *Oral History at the Crossroads: Sharing Life Stories of Survival and Displacement* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014). Posted on D2L.

Research workshop: Be prepared to discuss the oral history database you will use for your paper. We’ll talk about methodology and interpretation and how to integrate the evidence of oral history into the research paper.

Reading Week November 15

Week 11 (November 22): Community-based Projects: Queer Interventions

- COHR, Chenier, “Hidden from Historians: Preserving Lesbian Oral History in Canada”
- Calgary Gay History: <https://calgaryqueerhistory.ca/>
- Archives of Lesbian Oral Testimony: <https://alotarchives.org/>

Guest Speaker: Kevin Allen, Research Lead, Calgary’s Gay History

Week 12 (November 29): Paper Presentations

Week 13 (December 6): Paper Presentations

IMPORTANT DEPARTMENTAL, FACULTY, AND UNIVERSITY INFORMATION

Department Twitter @ucalgaryhist

Faculty of Arts Program Advising and Student Information Resources

- Have a question, but not sure where to start? The Arts Students Centre (ASC) is your information resource for everything in Arts! Drop in at Social Sciences 102, call 403-220-3580, or email artsads@ucalgary.ca. For detailed information on common academic concerns, you can also visit the Faculty of Arts website at <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate>.
- For program planning and advice, contact the Arts Students Centre (ASC) in SS 102, call 403-220-3580, email artsads@ucalgary.ca, or visit <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/advising>.
- For registration issues, paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Enrolment Services at 403-210-ROCK (7625), visit the office in the MacKimmie Library Block (MLB) or their website at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/>.

Copyright

The University of Calgary has opted out of the Access Copyright Interim Tariff proposed by the Copyright Board. This means that instructors in all University of Calgary courses will strictly adhere to Copyright Act regulations and the educational exceptions permitted by the Act for both print and digital course material. What this simply means is that no copyrighted material may be placed on course D2L or web sites without the prior permission of the copyright holders. In some cases, this may mean that instructors will require you to purchase a print course pack from the University of Calgary bookstore or that you will have to consult books on reserve at the library. For more information on the University of Calgary's copyright policy, see <http://library.ucalgary.ca/copyright>.

Red Box Policy

Essays and other assignments may be handed in to the red box located outside of the History Department office (Social Sciences, Room 656). Please include the following information on your assignment: **1) course name and number, 2) instructor, 3) your name and 4) your student number**. Assignments received after 4:00 p.m. will be date stamped with the date of the next business day. We do not time stamp any papers. Please do not bring your paper into the office to be stamped. The box is emptied promptly at 8:30 a.m. and at 4:00 p.m. Monday to Friday.

Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI)

At the University of Calgary, feedback provided by students through the Universal Student Ratings of Instruction survey provides valuable information to help with evaluating instruction, enhancing learning and teaching, and selecting courses (www.ucalgary.ca/usri). Your responses make a difference. Please participate in USRI surveys.

Academic Accommodations (implemented July 1, 2015)

The student accommodation policy can be found at: ucalgary.ca/access/accommodations/policy.

Students needing an Accommodation because of a Disability or medical condition should communicate this need to Student Accessibility Services in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.

Students needing an Accommodation based on a Protected Ground other than Disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to the course instructor.

Campus Resources for Mental Health

The University of Calgary recognizes the pivotal role that student mental health plays in physical health, social connectedness and academic success, and aspires to create a caring and supportive campus community where individuals can freely talk about mental health and receive supports when needed. We encourage you to explore the excellent mental health resources available throughout the university community, such as counselling, self-help resources, peer support or skills-building available through the SU Wellness Centre (Room 370, MacEwan Student Centre, <https://www.ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/services/mental-health-services>) and the Campus Mental Health Strategy website (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/mentalhealth/>).

Other Useful Information

- Faculty of Arts Representatives: 403-220-6551, arts1@su.ucalgary.ca, arts2@su.ucalgary.ca, arts3@su.ucalgary.ca, arts4@su.ucalgary.ca.
- Campus Security & Safewalk: 403-220-5333, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/safewalk>.
- Freedom of Information: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip/foip-hia>.
- Emergency Evacuation Assembly Points: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>.
- Student Union Information: <http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/>.
- Graduate Student Association: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/gsa/>.
- Student Ombudsman Office: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>

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