

**LIS 690, Fall, 2006, Special Topics: Oral History
Thursday, 5:00 P.M – 8:00 P.M. (Eastern)**

**Arwen Donahue
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to oral history methodology and theory. It is designed for persons intending to use oral history interviews in the practice of historical or other qualitative research or for persons intending to manage oral history collections in libraries and archives. The course examines how oral history projects are constructed and administered, how interviews are conducted, and how oral history interviews are preserved in archives and libraries. The course will also explore the technologies involved in the collection and preservation of interviews, the reliability of memory and the utilization of oral histories in various forms of publications including print, radio, television, internet, and museum exhibitions. Students will gain practical experience in oral history interviewing and related aspects of oral history, such as archiving, transcribing, editing, and publishing oral histories.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Class participation: (10 percent of grade)

Students are expected to attend class regularly and to have read the assignments before coming to class. You are expected to participate actively in class discussions about the assigned readings as well as about issues raised during class or discussions raised online.

Assignment #1: Interview Review (15 percent of grade) **(Due September 7)**

Choose an oral history interview from an archive and review the tape and/or transcript. In not more than five double-spaced pages describe the nature of the interview and assess the information the interview provides.

Assignment #2: Interviewing (15 percent of grade) **(Due October 5)**

In not more than five double-spaced typed pages discuss the role of interviewing in the oral history process. Use class readings and discussions as well as outside sources to discuss the role of preparation in interviewing, the importance of interviewing “styles” and the role of the interviewer in the interviewing process.

Assignment #3: Book/media review (20 percent of grade) **(Due October 26)**

Choose a book or media production (documentary, exhibit, website) in which oral history plays a prominent role. In not more than five double-spaced typed pages, summarize the primary arguments in the book/media production, analyze the role of oral history in the narrative, make some judgment about the author’s/producer’s oral history expertise (if possible), and make some conclusions regarding the value of the use of oral history in the book/media production. Be prepared to discuss with class on October 26.

Assignment #4: Oral history interview and summary: (40 percent of grade) (Final paper due November 30)

You are required to conduct at least one tape-recorded oral history interview. The interview may be on a topic of your choice with my approval or I will work with you to identify a prospective interviewee. Following the interview prepare a summary of your interview experience (no more than 10 double-spaced pages) in which you compare and analyze your experience with the information regarding interviewing gleaned from the class readings and discussions. You will also transcribe at least 5 double-spaced pages of what you consider the “best” or “most interesting or informative” portion of your interview. The interview summary and transcript are due November 30. You will have the opportunity to discuss your interviewing experience during class on November 30 and on December 7. You will be encouraged to deposit your original interviews in a local or relevant oral history archive.

GRADING SCALE

A: 90-100 pts.

B: 80-89 pts.

C: 70-79 pts.

F: 69 or below

PLAGIARISM

See 6.3.1 under University of Kentucky Student Rights and Responsibilities
<http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/Code/part2.html>

REQUIRED BOOKS

Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide* (Oxford University Press, 2003).

Dunaway, David K. and Willa K. Baum (Eds.) *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology* (AltaMira Press 1996).

Perks, Robert and Alistair Thomson (Eds.) *The Oral History Reader* (Routledge, 1998).

REQUIRED ARTICLES/ CHAPTERS

Allen, Barbara. “Oral History: The Folk Connection.” In Sharpless, Rebecca and David Stricklin (Eds.) *The Past Meets the Present: Essays on Oral History* (University Press of America: 1988) pp. 15-28.

Allen, Susan Emily. “Resisting the Editorial Ego: Editing Oral History.” *The Oral History Review* 10 (1982): 33-45.

Blatti, Jo. “Public History and Oral History.” *Journal of American History*, Vol. 77, No. 2 (September 1990) 615-625

- Blatz, Perry K. "Craftsmanship and Flexibility in Oral History: A Pluralistic Approach to Methodology and Theory," *The Public Historian*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Fall, 1990): pp. 7-22.
- Blee, Kathleen M. "Evidence, Empathy and Ethics: Lessons from Oral Histories of the Klan." *Journal of American History*, Vol. 80, No.2 (Sep., 1993), 596-606.
- Bodnar, John. "Power and Memory in Oral History: Workers and Managers at Studebaker," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 75, No. 4 (March 1989): pp 1201-1221.
- Clark, Mary Marshall, "The September 11, 2001, Oral History Narrative and Memory Project: A First Report," *Journal of American History* (Vol. 89, No. 2)
- De Hart, Jane Sherron. "Oral Sources and Contemporary History: Dispelling Old Assumptions," *Journal of American History* (September 1993) pp. 582-595.
- Grele, Ronald J. "Useful Discoveries: Oral History, Public History, and the Dialectic of Narrative," *The Public Historian*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Spring, 1991), pp. 61-84.
- , "Using Oral History Collections," *Journal of American History*, Vo.. 74, No. 2 (September 1987) pp. 570 - 578.
- Henson, Pamela. M. and Terri A. Shorzman. "Videohistory: Focusing on the American Past," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 80, No. 2 (September, 1991), pp. 618-627.
- Morrissey, Charles. "The Two Sentence Format as an Interviewing Technique in Oral History Field Work," *The Oral History Review*, Vol. 15 (Spring 1987): 43-54.
- Oshinsky, David M., "Oral History: Playing By The Rules," *Journal of American History* (September 1990) pp. 609-614,
- Portelli, Alessandro. "Chapter 1 The Death of Luigi Trastulli: Memory and the Event" in *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (State University of New York Press 1991).
- Ritchie, Donald A., Holly Cowan Shulman, Richard S. Kirkendall, and Terry Birdwhistell. "Interviews As Historical Evidence: A Discussion of New Standards of Documentation and Access," *The History Teacher*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (February 1991).
- Rogers, Kim Lacy. "Oral History and the History of the Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 75, No. 2 (September, 1988).
- Shircliffe, Barbara. "'We Got the Best of that World': A Case for the Study of Nostalgia in the Oral History of School Desegregation," *Oral History Review* (September/Fall 2001), 59-84.
- Shopes, Linda, "Oral History and the Study of Communities: Problems, Paradoxes, and Possibilities," *Journal of American History* (Vol. 89, No. 2).
- Swain, Ellen D. "Oral History in the Archives: Its Documentary Role in the Twenty-first Century," *The American Archivist* Vol. 66 (Spring/Summer 2003) 139-158.
- Wilmsen, Carl. "For The Record: Editing and the Production of Meaning in Oral History," *Oral History Review*, (Winter/Spring 2001), pp. 65-85.

Yow, Valerie Raleigh, "Interviewing Techniques," in *Recording Oral History: A Practical Guide for Social Scientists* (Sage Publications Inc.) pp. 55-83.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Boyd, Douglas A. "Civil Rights Movement in Kentucky Oral History Project: Digital Media Database," (Kentucky Oral History Commission, 2005). <http://oralhistory.ky.gov>

Hardy, Charles III & Allesandro Portelli, "I Can Almost See the Lights of Home: A Field Trip to Harlan County, Kentucky." <http://www.albany.edu/jmmh/vol2no1/lights.html>

Jeffrey, Jaclyn and Glenace Edwall. (Eds.) *Memory and History: Essays on Recalling and Interpreting Experience* (University Press of America, Inc. 1994)
http://www3.baylor.edu/Oral_History/memorybook.htm

Oral History Association. *Evaluation Guidelines/Principles and Standards* (OHA, Pamphlet #3, 1992). http://omega.dickinson.edu/organizations/oha/pub_eg.html

Sharpless, Rebecca and David Stricklin (Eds.) *The Past Meets the Present: Essays on Oral History*. http://www3.baylor.edu/Oral_History/pmp%20webpage/pmp.htm

ACCESSING THE E-RESERVES

Your assigned readings are available via the Libraries' online catalog, InfoKAT
Click on InfoKAT link on the Library's home page, <http://www.uky.edu/Libraries>
Click on the **Course Reserve Search** tab
Search by **Course: LIS 690** or **Instructor: Arwen Donahue**
A link will be provided for electronic reserves
You will need an ID/Password to access

ID: dolis690

Password: OralHist1

If you plan to access material in Netlibrary or the Electronic Journals Database (such as JSTOR) that are *not* linked through the e-reserves page, then you will need to set up a Netlibrary account or a library barcode as appropriate. That can be done by completing online forms for "Library Card Request Form" and "Netlibrary Account Request" at http://www.uky.edu/Libraries/lib.php?lib_id=16. If you have any questions about this process, contact Carla Cantagallo, the Distance Learning Librarian, at carla@uky.edu.

ORAL HISTORY DISCUSSION LIST

H-Oralhist is the oral history discussion list. You will be expected to keep current on the discussions occurring on H-Oralhist. You are not required to participate in the online discussion but you should be prepared to talk about issues discussed on the discussion list in class. To subscribe to the H-Oralhist send a message to: listserv@h-net.msu.edu with no subject and with the following text:

SUBSCRIBE H-ORALHIST firstname lastname, affiliation

CLASS SCHEDULE

INTRODUCTION

August 24:

Introduction to course and course requirements

August 31:

- Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, pp. 11-46
- Perks and Thomson, pp. 21-28, 63-74.
- Dunaway and Baum, pp. 39-61

INTERVIEWING

September 7: (Assignment #1 due)

- Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, pp. 47-64, 84-109.
- Oshinsky, David M., "Oral History: Playing By The Rules."
- Morrissey, "The Two Sentence Format."
- De Hart, "Oral Sources and Contemporary History"

Class discussion of Assignment #1 (Interview Review Project)

September 14:

- Perks and Thomson, pp. 101-182.
- Dunaway and Baum, pp. 99-134
- Yow, "Interviewing Techniques."

Guest Lecturer: Dr. Terry Birdwhistell

ARCHIVING PART I: ORAL HISTORY AND TECHNOLOGY

September 21:

- Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, pp. 134-154.
- Perks and Thomson, pp. 379-388.
- Henson and Shorzman, "Videohistory."

Class discussion of assignment #2 (Interviewing)

ARCHIVING PART II: TRANSCRIBING, EDITING, AND PRESERVATION:

September 28:

- Swain, "Oral History in the Archives."
- Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, pp.64-83, 155-187.
- Perks and Thomson, pp. 357-378, 389-392
- Allen, Susan, "Resisting the Editorial Ego."

October 5: (Assignment #2 due)

- Perks and Thomson, pp. 393-464.
- Ritchie, Schulman, Kirkendall, and Birdwhistell, "Interviews As Historical Evidence."
- Wilmsen, "For The Record: Editing and the Production of Meaning in Oral History."
- Shopes, Linda, "Oral History and the Study of Communities."

ORAL HISTORY THEORY PART I:

October 12:

- Perks and Thomson, pp. 29-62.
- Blatz, Perry K. "Craftsmanship and Flexibility in Oral History"
- Grele, Ronald J. "Useful Discoveries: Oral History, Public History, and the Dialectic of Narrative"
- Shopes, Linda, "Oral History and the Study of Communities."

Class discussion of Assignment #3 (book/media reviews)

ORAL HISTORY THEORY PART II : MEMORY

October 19:

- Perks and Thomson, pp. 75-100; 269-319
- Bodnar, "Power and Memory in Oral History"
- Portelli, "Memory and Event"

ORAL HISTORY THEORY PART III : MEMORY AND IDENTITY

October 26: (Assignment #3 Due)

- Allen, Barbara. pp. 15-28 Dunaway and Baum, pp. 175-230
- Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, pp. 222-251.
- Shircliffe, "'We Got the Best of that World'"

Video (in class): "Long Road Back: Vietnam Remembered "

PUBLISHING ORAL HISTORY

November 2:

- Perks, pp. 320-356.
- Grele, "Using Oral History Collections."
- Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, pp. 110-133.
- Hardy & Portelli, "I Can Almost See the Lights of Home: A Field Trip to Harlan County, Kentucky."

DOCUMENTING DIVERSITY

November 9:

- Rogers, "Oral History and the History of the Civil Rights Movement."
- Boyd, Douglas A. "Civil Rights Movement in Kentucky Oral History Project: Digital Media Database," (Kentucky Oral History Commission, 2005).
<http://history.ky.gov/civilrights.htm>

Video: Living The Story: The Civil Rights Movement in Kentucky

November 16:

- Blee, "Evidence, Empathy, and Ethics."
- Blatti, Jo. "Public History and Oral History."
- Clark, Mary Marshall, "The September 11, 2001, Oral History Narrative and Memory Project"

November 23: Thanksgiving—no class

November 30: (Assignment #4 Due)
Assignment #4 Reports and Discussion

December 7:
Assignment #4 reports and discussion