

Topics in History: Oral History in Theory and Practice

HIST 5397-001
Wednesday, 6:00-8:45 PM
CAS 208
3 Credit Hours

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Office Hours:
Mondays, 10-11:30 AM
Wednesdays, 4:00-5:30 PM
Or by appointment

Course Description

This course focuses on Oral History, exploring the methodology, theory, and practice of oral history. Students will develop their knowledge and skill-sets in practicing and applying oral history in the profession and the community.

Objectives

This course is designed to help students understand approaches to, theories of, and the practice of oral history personally and professionally. Via readings and participation in interviewing for an ongoing project on the oral history of UT-Tyler, students will become familiar with the history of oral history, the debates over methodology and theory in oral history, the practice of oral history, the relationship between memory and history, and the deployment of oral history in writing historical narratives.

Thus, in accordance with the Student Learning Outcomes for this course, by the end of the semester, students will acquire the following skills:

- Learn the methodologies and approaches of oral history, and gain an ability to analyze which approaches are appropriate to different types of interviewing situations;
- Understand the history and theory of oral history;
- Situate oral history alongside other forms of documentation and narration in historical analysis;
- Critically analyze oral interviews and transcripts as primary sources and as historical documents;
- Situate the relationship between interviews, memory, historical analysis, and narrative-writing; and
- Deploy oral histories in the broader process of writing historical narratives.

Texts and Readings

This course will approach Oral History by drawing on classic and recent monographs that address practical, theoretical, and narrative approaches to oral history. These works will allow students to consider how oral history operates in practice, the historiography and theory behind oral history, the development of oral history across time, and the use of oral history in historical analysis and writing. Books for the course will be available in the bookstore. Additional supplementary readings may also be included on Blackboard. Required texts are:

- Ritchie, Donald A. *Doing Oral History*. Third Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Charlton, Thomas L., Lois E. Meyers, and Rebecca Sharpless, eds. *History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2007.
- Abrams, Lynn. *Oral History Theory*. Second Edition. New York: Routledge, 2016.
- Portelli, Alessandro. *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991.
- Stern, Steve J. *Remembering Pinochet's Chile: On the Eve of London 1998*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.
- James, Daniel. *Doña María's Story: Life History, Memory, and Political Identity*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2001.
- Llamojha Mitma, Manuel, and Jaymie Patricia Heilman. *Now Peru Is Mine: The Life and Times of a Campesino Activist*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.
- Alexievich, Svetlana. *Voices from Chernobyl: The Oral History of a Nuclear Disaster*. Translated by Keith Gessen. Mclean, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 2005.

Assignments

There will be two components to the grade for this course: Discussion (20%), and Writing (80%).

Participation & Attendance

As a graduate seminar, this course will be heavily dependent upon weekly discussions in seminar-style classes. As a result, twenty percent (20%) of your grade is based on oral participation and class attendance. **Two unexcused absences will result in a zero.** As part of your participation grade, you must be prepared to offer original insights and reflections on the weekly readings. If it becomes clear that students do not have thoughts prepared in weekly meetings and student participation and discussion is lacking, the professor reserves the right to have students turn in weekly written reflections of 500 words as a part of this grade in order to facilitate discussion.

Participation also involves courtesy. Healthy debate is both anticipated and encouraged, and the professor's classroom tends towards informality and discussion. However, disruptive behavior, disrespect towards fellow students or the professor, personal insults, or offensive language will result in: 1. a warning 2. expulsion from an individual class meeting. 3. Being dropped from the class.

Writing

Because this course, more than other graduate courses, is oriented around the practice of oral history, interviewing, and writing, there will be a number of assignments that will allow students to treat oral history as a practicum. As a result, students will have a number of writing assignments throughout the semester that will make up the remainder of the students' grades. These assignments, their value, and their due dates are:

- Two Reflective Essays (5% each, for 10% of total final grade): These essays, due in Week 2 (September 3) and Week 16 (December 12) are to be 750-1000 words. In these essays, students should reflect on issues such as (but not limited to): the uses of oral history to research, to communities, or/and to the public; what the student thinks "best practices" are, and why; what challenges oral history offers; how they may use oral history going forward; the advantages and limitations of memory in historical analysis; and the place of oral history in broader historical practice and writing.

- Compose a (Hypothetical) Oral History Proposal (20%): In this assignment, students will prepare a 1200-1500 word (minimum) Oral History Project proposal that includes the following elements: the topic and subject(s) of the project; the importance of the topic to the historical profession *and* potential uses in a public history/community setting; a description of how the use of oral interviews contribute to knowledge on and analysis of the topic; the methodology the student would hypothetically use in compiling questions, contacting and gathering subjects for interview, conducting interviews, and compiling the interviews into a narrative; a list of sample questions the student would ask the subjects; a sample consent form that the student writes; and a *completed* IRB form (based on the Expedited and Exempt IRB form available at <http://www.uttyler.edu/research/compliance/irb/index.php>). This project is due Week 7 (October 10).
- Conduct an Interview (10%): In the course of the semester, students will conduct an interview with a current or former faculty or staff member of UT-Tyler as part of a broader project on the history of UT-Tyler. The student will work with Dr. Snider to coordinate an interview time with the subject and will take the lead in interviewing the subject. Interviews should be completed by Week 7 (October 7), contingent upon availability of interview subjects and scheduling.
- Transcribe an Interview (20%): This transcription will be based on the interview a student conducts with a faculty or staff member. This is a time-consuming project, and accuracy is essential. Students will be assisted in finding transcription technology. Transcriptions are due by week 11 (November 7).
- Conduct archival research and write a 1000-1250 word analysis based on archival experience (15%): Because oral sources are like any other historical sources, they need to be corroborated with analysis of other types of sources. As a result, building on their transcription, students will consult the University Archives to find *at least three* documentary sources that are pertinent to the interview they (or a colleague, if need be) conducted. Upon conducting this research, students will say which documents they consulted, how they found those documents, why they selected those documents, what the documents reveal individually, what those documents—combined with the oral interview/transcript—collectively reveal, and how that research might shape what one would write on the subject. This research can be done any time after the student has conducted an interview and completed the transcription, but this assignment is due by Week 14 (November 28).
- A 750-1000 word narrative reflection (5%): In this assignment, students will write a reflection that explains how they would use a transcription in writing a history, including: the memory frameworks the transcription reveals; the strengths and unique contributions of their individual transcription; the limitations of the transcription; and how they would address those limits in placing the transcription in a broader narrative. This assignment is due by Week 15 (December 5).

Evaluation and Grades

Based on the above assignments, the student's grade will be based on the following ratio, with a standard grading scale (A, 90-100; B, 80-89; C, 70-79; D, 60-69; F, 0-59):

Attendance and Participation

20%

Self-Reflective Essays (2 x 5% each)	10%
Oral History Project Proposal	20%
Interview	10%
Transcription	20%
Archival Research and Report	15%
Narrative Reflection	5%
TOTAL	100%

Further Readings

In addition to the required readings, students may also wish to consult the following works (during or beyond the semester):

- Boyd, Douglas A., and Mary A. Larson, eds. *Oral History and Digital Humanities: Voice, Access, and Engagement*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- Cave, Mark, and Stephen M. Sloan, eds. *Listening on the Edge: Oral History in the Aftermath of Crisis*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Dunaway, David K., and Willa K. Baum, eds. *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*. Second Edition. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996.
- Hamilton, Paula, and Linda Shopes, eds. *Oral History and Public Memories*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008.
- MacKay, Nancy. *Curating Oral Histories: From Interview to Archive*. Second Edition. New York: Routledge, 2015.
- Olick, Jeffrey K., Vered Vinitsky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy, eds. *The Collective Memory Reader*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Perks, Robert, and Alistair Thompson, eds. *The Oral History Reader*. Third Edition. New York: Routledge, 2015.
- Quinlan, Mary Kay, Nancy MacKay, and Barbara W. Sommer. *Interviewing in Community Oral History*. New York: Routledge, 2013.
- Ritchie, Donald A. *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Sommer, Barbara W., and Mary Kay Quinlan. *The Oral History Manual*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009.
- Sheftel, Anna, and Stacey Zembrzycki, eds. *Oral History Off the Record: Toward an Ethnography of Practice*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Trouillot, Michel. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. 20th Anniversary Edition. Boston: Beacon Press, 2015.
- Yow, Valerie Raleigh. *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014.

Attendance and Makeup Policy

Students must make every effort to be in class regularly. As outlined above, attendance in the class is **mandatory**, and more than four unexcused absences will result in a failing grade on attendance and participation (10% of the total grade). In cases of **emergency** (i.e., serious illness, family emergencies, etc.), however, an absence may be excused. The student should make sure to consult with the professor as soon as possible in order to provide advance warning of absences where possible. Students must also provide documentation in order for an absence to be excused. At the professor's prerogative, makeup exams will be available in the case of an emergency. Students also must put forth every effort to submit their papers on time. Each day the paper is late will result in a reduction of one-letter grade from the student's paper. If the paper is one week late, it will not be

accepted, and the student will receive an **automatic zero** for the assignment. In the event a student needs a paper extension due to serious illness, family emergency, etc., they must make every effort to speak with the professor in advance, keeping in mind that paper extensions remain the professor's prerogative.

Syllabus Notice

The instructor reserves the right to alter the syllabus; however, students will be given ample warning to any possible changes.

UT Tyler Honor Code

Every member of the UT Tyler community joins together to embrace: Honor and integrity that will not allow me to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do.

Students Rights and Responsibilities

To know and understand the policies that affect your rights and responsibilities as a student at UT Tyler, please follow this link: <http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php>

Campus Carry

We respect the right and privacy of students 21 and over who are duly licensed to carry concealed weapons in this class. License holders are expected to behave responsibly and keep a handgun secure and concealed. More information is available at <http://www.uttyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php>

UT Tyler a Tobacco-Free University

All forms of tobacco will not be permitted on the UT Tyler main campus, branch campuses, and any property owned by UT Tyler. This applies to all members of the University community, including students, faculty, staff, University affiliates, contractors, and visitors. Forms of tobacco not permitted include cigarettes, cigars, pipes, water pipes (hookah), bidis, kreteks, electronic cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chewing tobacco, and all other tobacco products. There are several cessation programs available to students looking to quit smoking, including counseling, quitlines, and group support. For more information on cessation programs please visit www.uttyler.edu/tobacco-free.

Grade Replacement/Forgiveness and Census Date Policies

Students repeating a course for grade forgiveness (grade replacement) must file a Grade Replacement Contract with the Enrollment Services Center (ADM 230) on or before the Census Date of the semester in which the course will be repeated. Grade Replacement Contracts are available in the Enrollment Services Center or at <http://www.uttyler.edu/registrar>. Each semester's Census Date can be found on the Contract itself, on the Academic Calendar, or in the information pamphlets published each semester by the Office of the Registrar. Failure to file a Grade Replacement Contract will result in both the original and repeated grade being used to calculate your overall grade point average. Undergraduates are eligible to exercise grade replacement for only three course repeats during their career at UT Tyler; graduates are eligible for two grade replacements. Full policy details are printed on each Grade Replacement Contract. The Census Date is the deadline for many forms and enrollment actions of which students need to be aware. These include:

- Submitting Grade Replacement Contracts, Transient Forms, requests to withhold directory information, approvals for taking courses as Audit, Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit.
- Receiving 100% refunds for partial withdrawals. (There is no refund for these after the Census Date)
- Schedule adjustments (section changes, adding a new class, dropping without a “W” grade)
- Being reinstated or re-enrolled in classes after being dropped for non-payment
- Completing the process for tuition exemptions or waivers through Financial Aid State-Mandated Course Drop Policy

Texas law prohibits a student who began college for the first time in Fall 2007 or thereafter from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career. This includes courses dropped at another 2-year or 4-year Texas public college or university. For purposes of this rule, a dropped course is any course that is dropped after the census date (See Academic Calendar for the specific date). Exceptions to the 6-drop rule may be found in the catalog. Petitions for exemptions must be submitted to the Enrollment Services Center and must be accompanied by documentation of the extenuating circumstance. Please contact the Enrollment Services Center if you have any questions.



Disability/Accessibility Services

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) the University of Texas at Tyler offers accommodations to students with learning, physical and/or psychological disabilities. If you have a disability, including a non-visible diagnosis such as a learning disorder, chronic illness, TBI, PTSD, ADHD, or you have a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment, you are encouraged to visit <https://hood.accessiblelearning.com/UTTyler> and fill out the New Student application. The Student Accessibility and Resources (SAR) office will contact you when your application has been submitted and an appointment with Cynthia Lowery, Assistant Director of Student Services/ADA Coordinator. For more information, including filling out an application for services, please visit the SAR webpage at <http://www.uttyler.edu/disabilityservices>, the SAR office located in the University Center, # 3150 or call 903.566.7079.

Student Absence due to Religious Observance

Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are requested to inform the instructor of such absences by the second class meeting of the semester.

Student Absence for University-Sponsored Events and Activities

If you intend to be absent for a university-sponsored event or activity, you (or the event sponsor) must notify the instructor at least two weeks prior to the date of the planned absence. At that time the instructor will set a date and time when make-up assignments will be completed.

Social Security and FERPA Statement

It is the policy of The University of Texas at Tyler to protect the confidential nature of social security numbers. The University has changed its computer programming so that all students have an identification number. The electronic transmission of grades (e.g., via e-mail) risks violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act; grades will not be transmitted electronically.

Emergency Exits and Evacuation

Everyone is required to exit the building when a fire alarm goes off. Follow your instructor's directions regarding the appropriate exit. If you require assistance during an evacuation, inform your instructor in the first week of class. Do not re-enter the building unless given permission by University Police, Fire department, or Fire Prevention Services.

Student Standards of Academic Conduct

Disciplinary proceedings may be initiated against any student who engages in scholastic dishonesty, including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.

- i. "Cheating" includes, but is not limited to:
 - copying from another student's test paper;
 - using, during a test, materials not authorized by the person giving the test;
 - failure to comply with instructions given by the person administering the test;
 - possession during a test of materials which are not authorized by the person giving the test, such as class notes or specifically designed "crib notes". The presence of textbooks constitutes a violation if they have been specifically prohibited by the person administering the test;
 - using, buying, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in whole or part the contents of an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program;
 - collaborating with or seeking aid from another student during a test or other assignment without authority;
 - discussing the contents of an examination with another student who will take the examination;
 - divulging the contents of an examination, for the purpose of preserving questions for use by another, when the instructors has designated that the examination is not to be removed from the examination room or not to be returned or to be kept by the student;
 - substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for oneself to take a course, a test, or any course-related assignment;
 - paying or offering money or other valuable thing to, or coercing another person to obtain an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program or information about an unadministered test, test key, home solution or computer program;
 - falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other academic work offered for credit;
 - taking, keeping, misplacing, or damaging the property of The University of Texas at Tyler, or of another, if the student knows or reasonably should know that an unfair academic advantage would be gained by such conduct; and
 - misrepresenting facts, including providing false grades or resumes, for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit or injuring another student academically or financially.
- ii. "Plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to, the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another's work and the submission of it as one's own academic work offered for credit.

- iii. “Collusion” includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any section of the rules on scholastic dishonesty.
- iv. All written work that is submitted will be subject to review by plagiarism software.

UT Tyler Resources for Students

- UT Tyler Writing Center (903.565.5995), writingcenter@uttyler.edu
- UT Tyler Tutoring Center (903.565.5964), tutoring@uttyler.edu
- The Mathematics Learning Center, RBN 4021, this is the open access computer lab for math students, with tutors on duty to assist students who are enrolled in early-career courses.
- UT Tyler Counseling Center (903.566.7254)

Course Outline

Week 1 (August 29): Introduction

Week 2 (September 5): What (and How) Is Oral History

Readings: Ritchie, Doing Oral History

Self-Reflective Essay #1 due by 6:00 PM

Week 3 (September 12): Oral History in Theory

Readings: Abrams, Oral History Theory

Week 4 (September 19): Oral History Historically

Readings: Charlton, Meyers, and Sharpless, History of Oral History

Week 5 (September 26): Oral History in Practice

Readings: Portelli, The Death of Luigi Trastulli

Week 6 (October 3): Memory and Oral History

Readings: Stern, Remembering Pinochet's Chile

Week 7 (October 10): Oral History and (Students') Experiences

Oral History Project Proposal due by 6:00 PM

Interviews should be conducted by this week

Week 8 (October 17): NO CLASS – Work on Transcription

Week 9 (October 24): NO CLASS – Work on Transcription

Week 10 (October 31): Oral History and Writing (I): Relations with Interviewees

Readings: James, Doña María's Story

Week 11 (November 7): Oral History and Writing (II): Interviews and Research

Readings: Llamojba Mitma, Now Peru Is Mine

Transcription due by 6:00 PM

Week 12 (November 14): Oral History and Writing (III): Narrative Liberties and Limits

Readings: Alexievich, Voices from Chernobyl

Week 13 (November 21): Thanksgiving Break – NO CLASS

Week 14 (November 28): Archives and Oral History

Archival Research Report due by 6:00 PM

Week 15 (December 5): Oral History, Memory, and Writing

Narrative Reflection due by 6:00 PM

Week 16 (December 12 – FINALS WEEK): Final Comments

Self-Reflective Essay #2 due by 6:00 PM