

HIST 3467: Oral History
Fall 2024
Wednesdays 2:30 – 5:10pm in Chapman 133

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Course Description

Oral history encompasses both the technique and practice of recording, preserving, and making accessible oral testimony *and* the historical method of analyzing and interpreting oral testimony to create historical scholarship. Many of the earliest recorded histories relied on oral history interviews for evidence, including the histories taken by scribes in the Zhou dynasty of China starting in 1122 BC as well as the work of Greek historian Herodotus in the 5th century BC. Furthermore, a number of cultures have relied on oral traditions for remembering and sharing their histories. Since the mid-20th century, however, oral history has become a professional endeavor, with a strict code of ethical conduct, best technical practices, and other ever-evolving methodological guidelines. This course will provide students with an introduction to the methods and practice of oral history. In the first part of the course, we will explore what oral history is, and what possibilities—and limitations—it has for helping us uncover and understand the past. The second part of the course will provide students with instruction in various oral history methods, including how to develop a project, develop questions, and record, transcribe, and archive interviews. In the final part of the semester, students will learn how to interpret oral histories. Throughout the course, students will gain hands-on experience by contributing to a real oral history project.

Learning Outcomes

This course is designed to contribute to both the Oral and Visual Communication capacity and the Experiential Learning designation within the Pathways curriculum. As such, by the end of this course students will have demonstrated the ability to:

- Identify and use the elements of effective oral and visual communication.
- Create and deliver effectively structured oral presentations using language correctly and appropriately.
- Use visual media that are effective, appropriate, and well-integrated into the presentation.
- Analyze and critique oral and visual components of presentations.
- Respond effectively to questions and comments from audience members

- Understand the principles and complexity of creating and managing oral history collections and develop an awareness of the methods oral historians use to gather, process, archive, and make accessible oral histories, as well as the methods historians use when interpreting oral histories for both public and scholarly work.
- Develop goals for and execute a specific oral history project that involves purposeful engagement with a local, national, or global community outside of the formal classroom
- Apply skills, theories, or methodologies gained through their coursework in this course to solve problems or explore issues outside of the formal classroom
- Employ oral history methodologies and conduct work in the field that contributes to the creation and interpretation of knowledge within the historical and archival science disciplines.

Course Requirements

Participation: This is a reading, discussion, and practice-intensive course that is organized around a semester-long oral history project. Students are expected to participate actively in all class discussions and activities. The activities we do in class, such as developing oral history projects, crafting interview questions, and creating transcriptions, will count toward the participation grade.

Discussion Leadership: Over the course of the semester, each student will be expected to serve as presenter and discussion leader for one class period. The responsibility to serve as a presenter and discussion leader will provide you with the chance to practice oral presentation skills and to design an effective piece of visual media. You will each be assigned specific readings to present on and will prepare a discussion outline with your planned talking points and at least three open-ended discussion questions based on the readings, along with a visual aid (a slideshow, handout, etc.). Due dates will be staggered throughout the semester so that everyone has a chance to serve as discussion leader for their readings throughout the course.

Oral History Interview and Presentation:

Interview Part I: Each student will identify an individual to interview based on the oral history project topic. Students will contact their potential narrator to see if they are interested in participating. You and your narrator will have a pre-interview meeting to discuss the process and get to know one another (in person or virtual). You will conduct pre-interview research on your narrator utilizing historical resources and the information received in the pre-interview meeting. Based on that research, you will tailor a set of interview questions for your narrator. Students will conduct an interview with their narrator. Students will ensure that they have gone over the consent and deed of gift form with the narrator and have it signed at the end of the interview. They will also collect supplemental material if possible. You will submit the interview, set of questions, supplemental material, and deed of gift form to the instructors.

Interview Part II: Using the historical research, pre-interview meeting, and the interview content from their narrator, each student will create a biographical summary of the narrator, write an abstract of the interview, and complete an index of the recording.

Interview Presentation: Students will give a 10-minute formal presentation in class on the interview process, discussing how they formulated their questions based on their research, how the interview went, their experience indexing and crafting biographical summaries, and what they learned from the process. These presentations will take place in class during Weeks 11 and 12.

Final Oral History Project: Your final project will consist of the finalized oral history interview, with all related research, preparation, forms, letters, and supplemental material, the biographical note, abstract, and index, and the poster for your presentation.

Due Date: December 16

Final Project Presentation: During our final exam period, we will have a showcase of the final projects. Each student should be prepared for a poster presentation on their oral history project. Your poster and presentation should explain the methods you used to conduct your oral history interview and to prepare your oral history for the collection, as well as how you interpreted your oral history interview through your final project. Be ready to respond to questions from the instructors and the audience, and be ready to ask pertinent questions of your classmates when they present (asking questions is part of the grade for the presentation).

Due Date: December 16, 7pm-10pm

Grading

The course grade will be calculated as follows:

Weekly Discussion leadership: 5%	Participation: 20%
Oral History Interview: 15%	Final Project: 40%
Oral History Interview Presentation: 10%	Final Project Presentation: 10%

Policies for Written Work

Formatting. All written work must be double-spaced in Times New Roman 12-point font, have one-inch margins on each side, include page numbers, and be submitted in .doc (preferred) or .pdf format on Canvas

Citations. All sources MUST be cited according to Chicago Notes-Bibliography style guidelines. Citation guidelines are available at <http://lib.trinity.edu/lib2/cite.php>. You can also consult the 17th edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style*, available at Coates Library in the reference section and online through the library catalog.

Late Work. If you think you will not be able to turn in an assignment on time, let us know so that we can arrange an extension if appropriate. We are flexible with due dates, so if you know you need an extension or if you are feeling overwhelmed, email us as soon as possible.

Academic Honor Code

All students are covered by a policy that prohibits dishonesty in academic work. Under the Honor Code, a faculty member will (or a student may) report an alleged violation to the Academic Honor Council. It is the task of the Council to investigate, adjudicate, and assign a punishment within certain guidelines if a violation has been verified. **Students are required to pledge all written work that is submitted for a grade: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received any unauthorized assistance on this work” and their signature. The pledge may be abbreviated “pledged” with a signature.**

http://www.trinity.edu/departments/academic_affairs/honor_code/index.htm.

If you have any doubt about whether an action violates the Honor Code, please email us before submitting your assignments. If you are struggling, overwhelmed, or confused please contact us! We are here to help you in the course and guide you through the material. We understand that personal circumstances or unforeseen events can sometimes interfere with your academic work; we will keep any concerns confidential and work with you to ensure your best possible performance in the course.

Other Course Policies

Students With Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and will need accommodations in this class, please submit your accommodation letter to us early in the semester so we can discuss how we can best meet your needs. All discussions will remain confidential. If you have not already registered with [Student Accessibility Services](#), contact the office at X8528 or SAS@trinity.edu. You must be registered with SAS before we can provide accommodation.

Excused Absences

If you are ill, please email us to let us know so we can excuse your absence. If you experience a family emergency or serious injury or illness, please contact Dr. Jennifer Henderson, who will provide help and will contact all of your professors for you.

Electronic Recordings of Classroom Instruction

Please be aware that all classroom instruction, including student participation in classroom activities, is subject to recording and dissemination on the University's secure course management systems (Canvas). The recordings will be made available only to students enrolled in the course to facilitate online learning and review. **Students are expressly prohibited from capturing or copying classroom recordings by any means; violations will be subject to disciplinary action.** Instructors who wish to use a recording outside of class must obtain the written consent of any students who are personally identifiable in the recording.

Title IX/Sexual Misconduct Reporting

As University employees who are committed to creating an environment where every member of our community can thrive, we want to let you know that **we are Mandatory Reporters**. That means we are required to report any instances of sexual misconduct or sexual harassment to

the Title IX Coordinator when: 1) we witness or receive information in the course and scope of our employment, 2) this information is about the occurrence of an incident that we reasonably believe is Sexual Harassment or Sexual Misconduct, and 3) the incident is committed by or against someone who was a Trinity university student, employee, or contractor at the time of the incident. This reporting responsibility applies regardless of where the incident occurred (on- or off-campus) and regardless of whether the individual(s) are still affiliated with Trinity.

If you share information with us about any incidents that implicate the [Policy Prohibiting Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct](#), we are required to report this to the Title IX Coordinator to make sure you have information about support resources and complaint resolution options. Our report does not initiate the complaint process, and you are in control over how you choose to engage with our Title IX Coordinator. If you or someone you know has experienced sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment, we encourage you to share this information directly with the Title IX Coordinator or one of the individuals who has been designated as a confidential resource on campus. The [reporting form](#) is available here and information about supportive resources is available [here](#).

Required Texts

- Ritchie, Donald. *Doing Oral History*. 3rd ed, 2014
- Bethell, Emily and Clare Milsom. *Posters and Presentations: Pocket Study Skills*. 2014.

Schedule of Weekly Meetings

Part I: What is Oral History?

Week 1 - August 28: Introduction to Oral History

- The Oral History Centre: What is Oral History? <https://youtu.be/Xk3qb9xCTFo>
- Ritchie, Donald. *Doing Oral History*, Chapter 1: An Oral History of Our Time.
- Anderson, Kathryn, and Dana C. Jack. "Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses." *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, edited by Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai, 11-26.

Week 2 - September 4: Oral History Ethics and Best Practices

- OHA, "Principles and Best Practices." <https://www.oralhistory.org/principles-and-best-practices-revised-2018/>
- Baik, Crystal Mun-Hye. "From 'Best' to Situated and Relational: Notes Toward Decolonizing Praxis," 2022.
- Cramer, Jennifer. A., "First, Do No Harm: Tread Carefully Where Oral History, Trauma, and Current Crises Intersect," 2020.
- McMurtrie, Beth. "Secrets from Belfast," 2014. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/secrets-from-belfast/>

Week 3 - September 11: Is it Oral History?

- Freund, Alexander. "Under the Storytelling Spell? Oral History in a Neoliberal Age." 2015
- Farrell, Shanna. "#NotOralHistory." 2019
<https://update.lib.berkeley.edu/2019/09/16/notoralhistory/>
- Greenspan, Henry and Sidney Bolkosky, "When is an Interview an Interview? Notes from Listening to Holocaust Survivors," *Poetics Today* 27, 2 (Summer 2006): 431-449.

Part II: Oral History Methods

Week 4 – September 18: Designing a Project

- Ritchie, Donald. *Doing Oral History*, Chapter 2: Setting up an Oral History Project
- Charlton, Thomas. *Oral History for Texans*, Chapter 4: Organizing Oral History Projects
- Boyd, Doug. "Designing an OH Project: Questions to Ask Yourself."
<https://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/2012/06/designing-an-oral-history-project/>
- MacKay, Nancy. *Curating Oral Histories: From Interview to Archive*, chapters 6-7.

Week 5 – September 25: Interviewing Skills

- Voice of Witness. *Say It Forward*, Chapter on Trauma Informed Approach
- Ritchie, Donald. *Doing Oral History*, Chapter 3: Conducting Interviews.
- Charlton, Thomas. *Oral History for Texans*, Chapter 3: How to Interview

Week 6 – October 2: Interviewing Workshop

- *More and More Every Day* Podcast, "Mock Interview" episode

Week 7 – October 9: Transcription, Indexing and other Deliverables

- MacKay, Nancy. *Curating Oral Histories: From Interview to Archive*, chapters 3, 5, and 8.

Week 8 – October 16: Indexing and other Deliverables Workshop

- *More and More Every Day* Podcast, "Using Your Oral Histories – Indexing Your Interview," episodes I and II
- OHMS, "Indexing Interviews in OHMS: An Overview."
- *Transcribing Oral History*, Chapter 5

Part III: Interpretation and Access

Week 9 – October 23: Oral History Interpretation

- Ritchie, Donald. *Doing Oral History*, Chapter 4, Using Oral History in Research and Writing, 103-136.
- Shopes, Linda. "Model Interpretation," <https://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/oral/sample.html>
- Portelli, Alessandro. "The Death of Luigi Trastulli: Memory and the Event," in *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories* (SUNY Press, 2001), 1-26.
- *More and More Every Day Podcast*, "You and Your Narrator in Historical Context, Part I."

Week 10 – October 30: Oral History Interpretation, continued

- Frisch, Michael. "Three Dimensions and More: Oral History Beyond the Paradoxes of Method," in Sharleen Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy, eds. *Handbook of Emergent Methods* (Guildford Press, 2008).
- Abrams, Lynn. "Narrative," in *Oral History Theory* (Routledge, 2010), 78-105.

Week 11 – November 6: Oral History Interview Presentations, Group I

- Bethell and Milsom. *Posters and Presentations*. Chapters 8-11.

Week 12 – November 13: Oral History Interview Presentations, Group II

- Bethell and Milsom. *Posters and Presentations*. Chapters 8-11.

Week 13 – November 20: Oral History Behind the Scenes

- OHA. "Archiving Oral History." <https://www.oralhistory.org/archives-principles-and-best-practices-overview/>
- Ritchie, Donald. *Doing Oral History*, Chapter 6, Preserving Oral History in Archives and Libraries, 161-192.

Week 14 – November 27: **NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK**

Week 15 – Dec 4: Oral History's Place in Public and Community History, Archives

- Ritchie, Donald. *Doing Oral History*, Chapter 8: Presenting Oral History
- Girdharry, Kristi. "Organizational Sponsorship: An Ethical Framework for Community Oral History Projects," 2021.
- Gould, Sarah Zenaïda. "Challenges in Exhibiting Oral History," *Oral History Review* blog. <https://blog.oup.com/2016/03/exhibiting-oral-history/>
- Bethell and Milsom. *Posters and Presentations*. Chapters 12-13.

Final Exam – December 16, 7pm-10pm: Final Project Presentations and Showcase Location TBA