

**HISTORY 581-001
ORAL HISTORY
SPRING 2019**

Professor: Paul J. P. Sandul, Ph.D.

Email: sandulpj@sfasu.edu

Phone: 936-468-6643

Office: Liberal Arts North #363

Office Hours: Tu & Th: 8:30-10:30 am; and W: 5:00-6:00 pm

Department: History

Class meeting time and place: Ferguson 482, W, 6:00-8:30 pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This graduate seminar is both a reading seminar and a practicum concerning oral history practice, as well as public history. The relationship between oral history and public history is intimate, precisely because oral history is a major tool utilized by public historians and often oral history projects are historical works geared toward a public audience. Nevertheless, oral history has its own history, development, and unique issues. This course will hence explore how oral history represents a unique historical source that is both similar to and different from other more traditional historical sources, such as written documents, and how oral history has evolved. We will also seek to define the goals, aims, and guidelines for the practice of oral history, including the use of technology and the production of an oral history transcript. More excitingly, this course will offer students the opportunity to be practicing oral historians by working with and interviewing individuals in and around East Texas.

PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

The SFA History Department has identified the following Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) for all SFA students earning an M.A. degree in History:

1. The student will be able to explain the key issues and developments in at least two historical periods (one per course).
2. The student will be able to identify the main historical works and interpretive debates associated with an event or period.
3. The student will be able to locate, identify, and critically analyze primary sources.
4. The student will be able to research and analyze effectively an issue or topic in writing.
5. The student will be able to present written work in an appropriate academic style, including the proper citation of sources using Chicago Manual of Style.

This course will focus on PLOs 3 & 5.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR HISTORY 581

A student who completes this course will be expected to: (1) demonstrate a thorough working knowledge of oral history, its practice, and major issues associated with the field; (2) recognize the significance of oral history as an historical source; (3) demonstrate an awareness of the intimate relationship between oral history and public history; and (4) complete an oral history project that includes both an interview and a transcription of that interview following best practices associated with oral history.

REQUIRED TEXTS

1. Lisa Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2010);
2. Alwyn Barr, *The African Texans* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2004);
3. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1998);
4. Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide, Third Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015);
5. Barbara Sommer and Mary Kay Quinlan, *The Oral History Manual*, second edition (Lanham, MD: Alta Mira Press, 2009);
6. Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, Fourth Edition (New York: Oxford University, 2017);
7. Anne Valk and Leslie Brown, *Living with Jim Crow: African American Women and Memories of the Segregated South* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); and

ADDITIONAL READING MATERIAL (PROVIDED BY PROFESSOR)

In the “course calendar” section of this syllabus, you will see additional reading material has been assigned throughout the semester and will be made available by the professor.

A NOTE ON HOW WE ARE GOING TO DO ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

Members of the African American community of Houston County have agreed to work with the students of this course by consenting to be interviewees for oral history interviews. This class project complements current efforts to gather new materials by the Houston County Historical Commission, as well as to identify and preserve resources important to African American organizations and residents in East Texas. Because African Americans, their resources, and their history have been largely underrepresented in East Texas, this class project will help, if only in a small way, to correct that.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Activity/Assessment	Points	Grade Scale
Participation	100	A = 900-1000 total points B = 800-899 total points C = 700-799 total points D = 600-699 total points F = 599 points and below
Audited Oral History and Critique	150	
Practice Oral History and Transcription	150	
Peer Review of Practice Oral History and Transcription	75	
Collaborative History Essay	100	
Transcription of Final Oral History Project Rough Draft	75	
Peer Review of Final Oral History Project Rough Draft	75	
Final Oral History Project	200	
Reflection Paper	75	
Total	1,000	

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students are expected to attend all classes.

PARTICIPATION (100 POINTS)

All students must do the following to successfully participate in this course:

- Prepare by thoroughly reading all the assigned material and having a solid understanding of the big-picture of the readings as well as the details;
- Each student must write down two topics to talk about during the discussion and to which will be placed on the board at the start of the class;
 - Some ideas for types of topics to discuss include, but are not limited to: delving deeper into a particular research area; exploring the evidence the author or authors provide for any of their conclusions; expanding on an implication of any particular reading; exploring the implications of any particular reading for understanding both the discipline of history broadly conceived and for different disciplinary areas; or for how the research could be applied in a variety of different capacities; (obviously, the possibilities are endless);
- Each student must provide insights, questions, and answers to posed questions from the professor and fellow students in general;
- Actively listen to fellow group participants and respond to each other's comments rather than just bringing your own comments to the table.

For **weeks two, three, four, five, six, seven, and twelve** you will grade yourself for participation that week (for weeks two, three, four, five, six, and seven it will be out of 15 points each and for week twelve it will be out of 10 points; so, 100 total points). Simply inform me of how many points you earned and, briefly, why (tell me in an email within a week). If you miss a week, consult with me on making up points (I will likely have you write a 4-5 pp review paper).

AUDITED ORAL HISTORY AND CRITIQUE (150 POINTS)

On D2L select a website from the handout "Oral History Web Sites" and choose an oral history interview to listen to that also is accompanied by a transcription. Please select an interview of no less than twenty minutes but no greater than one hour (if it runs longer, just stop).

Write at least a four-page audit and critique of the interview and transcription that focuses on:

- the interviewer's style and questions; question quality; interviewer presence; sound quality; transcription clarity and accuracy; and what the interviewer did well and poor, why or why not, and what would you do different (or not) and why.

You are also required to relate your review to the class, being sure to:

- explain the website, the project affiliated with it, and the interview you audited specifically; communicate the key focuses listed above; and provide examples, such as audio clips and/or transcriptions examples.

The purpose of all this is to obviously think about what makes a good oral history interview and hence better prepare you to conduct an interview yourself. **Due: March 13.**

PRACTICE ORAL HISTORY AND TRANSCRIPTION (150 POINTS)

Interview someone/anyone (I know people if you want help!). Whatever the case, you must interview someone for at least thirty minutes and transcribe it by the end of Week 10, March 30 (see calendar). Note that peer reviews start the following week so you will need to finish timely and get whomever you are partnered with a copy of both your interview and your transcription (the “how to” of which we will cover in class and readings—you will need to only transcribe ten pages worth or approx. fifteen minutes worth).

- So, however you arrange it, you will need to get your partner and the professor a copy of (1) the audio of your interview and (2) your transcription. This needs to be done by Saturday, March 30.

PEER REVIEW OF PRACTICE ORAL HISTORY & TRANSCRIPTION (75 POINTS)

You will be paired with a classmate for whom you will peer review. In a 4/5-page essay you are responsible for peer reviewing your fellow student’s oral history interview and transcription rough draft (copies of which are to be exchanged as you two determine—get the professor copies too—but no later than Saturday, March 30). Like the audited and critique assignment, please review the interviewer, quality, presence, etc. Of importance is to also edit and review the transcription rough draft as doing so will be a fruitful exercise for your own gain, as well as a benefit to your fellow student in finalizing a superior product.

So, first, edit and mark up the actual copy of your classmate’s practice oral history transcription. Second, write a review. Make two copies of the review, one for the professor and one for your classmate. The professor will then take the marked-up copy to review and then, after a few days, give it to the classmate for their benefit.

COLLABORATIVE HISTORY ESSAY (100 POINTS)

Your final oral history project will be an interview with a member of the Houston County African American community. While we will review some Houston County history in week five, we should do more. The objective of this assignment is to review the history of Houston County in more depth. We are, collectively, going to approach this assignment from several different angles (to be determined in class, but might include, say, the history of major industries of Houston County or the major institutions, clubs, etc.). Specifically, you will be divided into groups of two or three and each group will be responsible for reporting on one angle.

What you are doing, exactly? You are writing a 5-pp essay regarding your group’s angle. Only one essay needs to be turned in to me, but you will need to make enough copies for everyone so they can benefit from your splendid work. That’s the entire blessed point. By dividing the various histories that are crucial in painting a full(er) picture of our interview subjects we will get the best in each case. The goal is therefore to provide everyone with a great deal of good information that will be most useful to them in the conduction of a final oral history project.

Presentation: Not only will you be turning in your group essay, but you will also be presenting it to the class. Again, the purpose is for us to share and learn from and with each other.

The papers and presentations are due week 12, Apr. 10

TRANSCRIPTION OF FINAL ORAL HISTORY PROJECT ROUGH DRAFT (75 POINTS)

Like the Practice Oral History and Transcription, once you have completed your “real” oral history interview you will then need to transcribe it (the “how to” of which we will cover in class and readings). You are to provide a rough draft of your transcription (as complete, or not, as it is) by Friday, May 3 to everyone in the class (via email). One of your fellow superb students will then peer review the transcriptions and the oral history interview itself, to better aid you in the completion of a high-quality final transcription. You will need to get a copy of the audio to both the professor and the classmate peer reviewing you—again, by May 3.

PEER REVIEW OF FINAL ORAL HISTORY PROJECT (75 POINTS)

In a 4/5-pp essay you are responsible for peer reviewing one fellow student’s oral history interview and transcription rough draft (copies of which are to be distributed by May 3). Like the audited and critique assignment please review the interviewer, quality, presence, etc. Of importance is to also edit and review the transcription, as doing so will be a fruitful exercise for your own gain, as well as a benefit to your fellow student in finalizing a superior product.

FINAL ORAL HISTORY PROJECT (200 POINTS)

The final transcription and oral history interview are the culmination of all your preparation, reading, and hard work. Without doubt, these materials will greatly address and help correct the dearth of historic information concerning the African American community of Houston County. Specifically, the East Texas Research Center (ETRC) and the Houston County Historical Commission will receive a copy of your final transcript and oral history interview (which you can simply provide your professor with on CD or, in case of the transcript, via email). In addition, you will print out one copy of your final transcript, along with any legal forms (e.g., release forms), as well as provide a copy of the oral history interview on a CD.

- **See the handout for this project to see what you are to turn in, exactly.**

REFLECTION PAPER (75 POINTS)

In a 8/10-pp essay, reflect upon your performance, the importance of oral history and your impressions of it, the good, the bad, and, yes I’ll say it, the ugly of doing oral history, and, finally, how, or in what ways, you think you can make use of oral history in the future. While this is a reflective essay that calls for your personal opinions and thoughts, I expect such to be nuanced and sophisticated and, precisely because of such, I further expect you to anchor all this in the sources we have read and to reference and cite them in your paper as well.

A NOTE ON TURNING IN ASSIGNMENTS AND FORMAT

First, all assignments are to be turned in to me as (a) hardcopies in class and (b) as digital copies uploaded to the D2L drop box for this class. **Second**, unless otherwise indicated, all written assignments must follow *Chicago Manual of Style* and formatting requirements. To review such, see the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Here is a link to a quick guide online for Chicago: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html.

Format

- Title page: with no number on it. And the title page is considered 0. Therefore, the first non-title page of anything you write for me should be numbered as 1, with subsequent pages numbered accordingly (place the number in the upper right).
- Times New Roman: Yes, this font is the most boring font known to humankind, but still use it please; precisely because uniformity and standardization across all papers and all students makes things easier on me (and that is what matters, after all!).
- 12-point font.
- Double spaced.
- 1-inch margins all around.
- You can print on both sides of the paper if you want.
- Footnotes: again, I like uniformity and standardization across all papers and all students. Please be sure to place the footnotes on the bottom of the page the citation occurs.
- Bibliography: Note the format is different than footnotes.

Academic Integrity (A-9.1): Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

Definition of Academic Dishonesty: Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit. Please read the complete policy at http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp

Withheld Grades (*Semester Grades Policy, A-54*): Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

Students with Disabilities: To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to <http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/>.

COURSE CALENDAR

Week 1, Jan. 23: *Syllabus Handout / Course Introduction*

Week 2, Jan. 30: *Big Picture/What is Oral History*; Read: Baylor Institute of Oral History's Introduction to Oral History, pp. 1-4; OAH Principles and Standards; *Oral History Reader*, chs. 1, 3-5, 23, 33; Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, chs 1, 4; Sommer and Quinlan, *The Oral History Manual*, ch. 1; and Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, chs. 1, 2, 6, 7, 12.

Week 3, Feb. 6: *Oral History, Memory, and Activism*; Read: Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, chs. 5-8; Hamilton and Shopes, *Oral History and Public Memories*, chs. 2, 9, and 12; Perks and Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*, chs. 6, 7, and 28; Sandul, "Of Sharing Authority and Historic Blocs"; and Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, ch. 8.

Week 4, Feb. 13: *Background/Context for Oral History project in Houston County*; Skim Through: Barr, *The African Texans*; Valk and Brown, *Living with Jim Crow*; and Read Sandul et al, "In the Pines." Skim: *Houston County History*.

Week 5, Feb. 20: *Houston County Visitors*; Skim more of *Houston County History*.

Week 6, Feb. 27. *Doing Oral History, part 1 (Before and During the Interview)*; *Oral History Reader*, chs. 9, 10; Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, chs. 2, 3; Sommer and Quinlan, *The Oral History Manual*, chs. 2, 3, 6, 7; Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, ch. 10 and pp. 393-402; LSU Oral History Workshop Packet; *Oral History For Texans: How to Organize A Project*, pp. 39-49; *Oral History for Texans: How to Interview*; Baylor Institute of Oral History's Introduction to Oral History, pp. 8-13; and Sandul's Guide on How to Interview.

Week 7, March 6: *Doing Oral History, part 2 (After the Interview—and other concerns throughout *Doing Oral History*)*; Read: Baylor Institute of Oral History's Introduction to Oral History, pp. 5, 14-18; Baylor's Style Guide for Transcribing; *Oral History for Texans: How to Organize a Project*, 49-59; *Oral History Reader*, chs. 31, 32, and 38; Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, chs. 6, 8; Sommer and Quinlan, *The Oral History Manual*, chs. 4, 5, 8; Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, ch. 9, 11. Review following handouts/examples: Interview Checklist; donor release form; interview request letter—Houston County; example of an interview request letter; interviewee release form; oral history biographical sketch; preserving oral history collections; Transcribing and Editing the Interview; Peruse Example Packet of What You are to Turn in for Final Project.

Week 8, Mar. 13: Audit of Oral History (assignment due/presentation in class).

Week 9, Mar. 20: Spring Break/No Class

Week 10, Mar. 27: Out of Class Assignment: Work on Practice Interview and Transcription. Be sure to have sent your materials to classmates and professor by Saturday, **March 30 so they can review your work for the next class.**

Week 11, April 3: Peer Reviews of Practice Interviews and Transcriptions (**peer review assignment due**).

Week 12, Apr. 10: Pow wow: go over Houston County/African American History (**collaborative history assignments/presentations due**).

Week 13, Apr. 17: Out of Class Assignment: Conduct Final Project Interview and Transcription.

Week 14, Apr. 24: Out of Class Assignment: Conduct Final Project Interview and Transcription.

Week 15, May 1: Out of Class Assignment: Conduct Final Project Interview and Transcription. Be sure to send materials to classmates and professor by **May 3** for review assignment due next class (May 8).

Week 16, May 8: Peer Reviews of Rough Draft Transcriptions of Final Project Interview (**review assignment due**).

Week 17, May 15: **Turn in Final Project Materials and Reflection Essay**