

HISTORY 536– SECTION # 040 / CALL # 11000
ORAL HISTORY

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Office Hours: TBA.

Department: History.

Class meeting time and place: Room F-477; MTWR, 5:00 pm – 6:55 pm: 6/7/10 – 7/9/10.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This graduate seminar is both a reading seminar and a practicum of sorts concerning oral history theory and practice, as well as public history. Indeed, oral history and public history are intimately related, particularly 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 several local groups and individuals in and around Nacogdoches.

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 (15th or most recent edition).

This section of this course will focus on PLOs 3 & 5.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR HISTORY 536:

A student who completes this course will be expected to be able 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. Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide, Second Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).
2. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1988). but not new editions, say second edition or third edition or expanded edition, etc.
3. Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, second edition (New York: Oxford University, 1988).

ADDITIONAL READING MATERIAL (PROVIDED BY PROFESSOR):

In the “Schedule” section of this syllabus you will see additional reading material has been assigned throughout the semester. All additional reading materials are available as .pdf or word.doc at <http://docsandul.wordpress.com>.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Participation: 25

Audited Oral History and Critique: 50

Transcription Rough Draft: 25

Peer Review of Interview and Transcription: 25

Final Transcription: 50

Archival CD of Interview: 50

Reflection Paper: 25

Total: 250 points

GRADING SCALE (IN %):

A 90-100 = 225-250 total points

B 80-89 = 200-224 total points

C 70-79 = 175-199 total points

D 60-69 = 150 – 174 total points

F 59→ = 149 points and below

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- A NOTE ON HOW WE ARE GOING TO DO ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS AND TRANSCRIPTIONS :
To our fortune, the African American Heritage Project of Nacogdoches (AAHP) has graciously and excitingly agreed to work with the students of this course by providing interviewees for oral history interviews. Despite impressive efforts by AAHP already, not to mention other local organizations like the East Texas Research Center, much more is needed regarding African American history in Nacogdoches. All groups have expressed lament over the current dearth of information. Unsurprisingly, then, AAHP actively supports this class and are collaborative partners. This class project will hence complement current efforts by the AAHP and other organizations to gather new information and materials, as well as to identify and preserve resources important to African American organizations and residents in Nacogdoches. Because African Americans, their resources, and their history have been largely underrepresented in Nacogdoches and Deep East Texas this class project will help, if only in a small way, to correct that. Moreover, this project represents a unique opportunity to play a role in fostering a broader community identity for the Nacogdoches African American community in general, African American organizations specifically, and for all Nacogdoches residents regardless of race. Oral history, as many historians have claimed, can thus be a device of cohesion in Nacogdoches.

- PARTICIPATION (OUT OF 25 POINTS):
Much of this class revolves around class discussion and field work. So attendance, to be sure, is critical. You are therefore expected to show up to class prepared, having read the assigned readings, and ready to (enthusiastically) participate in class discussion and both in and out of class activities. Oh, please, have fun and, well, dare to think (yes, I just said that).
- AUDITED ORAL HISTORY AND CRITIQUE (OUT OF 50 POINTS):
Select a Web site from the handout “Oral History Web Sites” (available on www.docsandul.wordpress.com) 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 a 3-4 page audit and critique of the interview and transcription that focuses on, at the least, the interviewer’s style and questions, question quality, interviewer presence, sound quality, and transcription clarity and accuracy. Relate your review to the readings done for class. Determine what the interviewer did well and poor, why or why not, and what would you do different (or not) and why. The purpose here is to obviously think about what makes a good oral history interview and hence better prepare you to conduct an interview yourself.
- TRANSCRIPTION ROUGH DRAFT (OUT OF 25 POINTS):
Once you have completed your 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 July 2 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.
- PEER REVIEW OF ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW AND TRANSCRIPTION (OUT OF 25 POINTS):
In a 4-5 page essay you are responsible for peer reviewing one fellow student’s oral history interview (copies of which are to be distributed by June 30) and transcription rough draft. Like the audited and critique assignment, please review the interviewer, quality, presence, etc. Of particular 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 end product. For a more thorough review of the dos and don’ts of peer reviewing, see handout at www.docsandul.wordpress.com.
- FINAL TRANSCRIPTION AND ARCHIVAL CD OF INTERVIEW (EACH WORTH 50 POINTS):
The final transcription and oral history interview is 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 in Nacogdoches. Specifically, AAHP will receive a copy of your final transcript and oral history interview CD (which you can simply provide your professor with on CD or, in case of the transcript, via email). Also, on archival quality paper, which the professor will provide you with, 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 an archival-quality CD, which the professor will also provide you. These will be donated to and housed at the East Texas Research Center so they can be made available to future researchers.

- REFLECTION PAPER (OUT OF 25 POINTS):

In a 4 page essay, write a reflection paper that considers 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.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: June 7-10:

June 7: Introductions & Discussion

June 8: Have read and be prepared to discuss in detail Paul Thompson's *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, chs. 1-6.

June 9: Workshop: Equipment and Gizmos (guest: Dr. Perky Beisel)

June 10: Oral History Theory, Issues, and Practice. Have read and be prepared to discuss in detail:

- * Chs. 3, 4, 5, 6, 16, 23, 25, 28 from *The Oral History Reader*

- * Ch. 1 from Ritchie's *Doing Oral History*

- * Additional Readings (found on www.docsandul.wordpress.com):

1. OAH Principles and Standards

2. Baylor Institute of Oral History's Introduction to Oral History, pp. 1-4.

Week 2: June 14-17:

June 14: How to Interview and Develop Questions. Have read and be prepared to discuss in detail:

- * Chs. 9 & 10 of *The Oral History Reader*

- * Chs. 3 & 4 of Ritchie's *Doing Oral History*

- * Ch. 7 of Thompson's *Voice of The Past*

- * Additional Readings (found on www.docsandul.wordpress.com):

1. LSU Oral History Workshop Packet

2. Oral History Kit by Alcoholics Anonymous

3. *Oral History For Texans*: How to Organize A Project, pp. 39-49.

4. *Oral History for Texans*: How to Interview

5. Example of Oral History Interview History List

6. Interview Checklist

7. LSU Oral History Sample Questions

8. Baylor Institute of Oral History's Introduction to Oral History, pp. 8-13.

June 15: Workshop: Formatting, Technicalities, and Legal Papers

See legal documents for this day posted on www.docsandul.wordpress.com.

- * Read: Baylor Institute of Oral History's Introduction to Oral History, p. 5 (earlier readings will have discussed this as well)

June 16: The Art of Transcribing and Presenting to a Public Audience. Have read and be prepared to discuss in detail:

- * Chs. 32, 35, 38 of *The Oral History Reader*
- * Ch. 6 of Ritchie's *Doing Oral History*
- * Additional Readings (found on www.docsandul.wordpress.com):
 1. *Oral History for Texans*: How to Organize a Project, 49-59.
 2. Baylor's Style Guide for Transcribing
 3. Preparing an Oral History Biography
 4. Transcribing and Editing the Interview
 5. Example of Oral History Interview History and Context Page
 6. Example of Oral History Transcript
 7. Example of Audited Oral History Interview
 8. Baylor Institute of Oral History's Introduction to Oral History, pp. 14-18.

June 17: No class. Time off to listen to interviews and write critiques

Week 3: June 21-24:

June 21: Due and discuss Audited Oral History and Critique assignment

June 22: Open discussion of Oral history / finalize oral history interview questions

June 23 & 24: No class. Off to conduct interviews and start transcriptions.

Week 4: June 28 – July 1: No class. Off to conduct interviews and start transcriptions.

June 30: While no class will be held, please turn in two CD copies of your oral history interview for peer review assignment. For those picking up a copy to review, one will be placed in your graduate box adjacent to Dr. Beisel's office once it is received.

July 2: While not a class day, please have your transcription rough draft emailed to everyone by midnight for peer review assignment.

Week 5: July 5-8

July 5: Peer review of transcripts and oral history interviews.

July 6 & 7: No class. Off to fix and finalize your transcriptions.

July 8: Meet for reflection, general discussion of oral history, and outcomes of the class project

- We can meet somewhere off campus for this, say Clear Springs or a pizza joint (we'll go Dutch, of course).

NOTE: Final transcriptions on archival paper, oral history interviews on archival quality CDs, and your reflection papers are due to Dr. Sandul's office by noon on July 12.

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/>.

PAUL SANDUL'S HISTORY WEBSITE: www.docsandul.wordpress.com

I have created a website for all my students. On this website you will have electronic access to additional reading material in .pdf or word.doc format. Simply click on the "Oral History" link. Once there, go to "Additional Reading Material" or other relevant sections. I have also placed other potentially valuable information there, such as all handouts and assignment descriptions, writing guidelines and tips, style advice and useful website links, syllabi for all my courses, and examples of well written and properly formatted essays. So, please feel free to use and/or peruse the website.