

HISTORY 581-040
ORAL HISTORY

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

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Office Hours: **Mondays 9:00-10:00am** (for even weeks [starting week 4] on the course calendar, so: Feb. 9; Feb. 28; Mar. 9; Mar. 23; Apr. 6; Apr. 20; May 4);

Wednesdays 9:00-10:00am (for odd weeks on the course calendar, starting week 3, so: Feb. 4; Feb. 18; Mar. 4; Apr. 1; Apr. 15; Apr. 29); Every **Tuesday/Thursday 9:30-11am & 12:30-1pm**

Department: History

Class meeting time and place: Ferguson 474; T, 6:00pm-8:30pm

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 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 (15th or most recent edition).

This section of 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. Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (New York: SUNY Press, 1990).
2. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*, second edition (New York: Routledge, 2006).
3. Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*, Third Edition (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014)
4. Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide, Second Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).
5. Renee C. Romano and Leigh Raiford, eds., *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory* (University of Georgia Press, 2006).
6. Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, third edition (New York: Oxford University, 2000).

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.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

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| 1. Participation: 25 pts | 8. CD of Interview: 50 |
| 2. Audited Oral History and Critique: 50 | 9. <u>Reflection Paper</u> : 75 |
| 3. Practice Oral History and Transcription: 50 | Total: 500 points |
| 4. Peer Review of Practice Oral History and Transcription: 50 | GRADING SCALE (IN POINTS): |
| 5. Transcription Final Project Rough Draft: 50 | A 450-500 total points |
| 6. Peer Review of Final Project Interview and Transcription: 50 | B 400-449 total points |
| 7. Final Transcription/Materials: 100 | C 350-399 total points |
| | D 300-349 total points |
| | F 299 points and below |

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

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

To our fortune, local members of the African American community have graciously agreed to work with the students of this course by agreeing to be interviewees for oral history interviews. This class project complements current efforts to gather new information and materials, 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. Moreover, this project represents a unique opportunity to play a role in fostering a broader community identity for the African-American community in general, African-American organizations specifically, and for all East Texas residents regardless of race. Oral history, as many historians have claimed, can thus be a device of cohesion.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students are expected to attend all classes.

PARTICIPATION (OUT OF 25 POINTS):

Much of this class revolves around discussion. Therefore, attendance, on the one hand, is critical as you cannot participate if you are not in attendance. On the other hand, you must possess the ability to participate. That means you are required to have read everything assigned, preferably more than once.

AUDITED ORAL HISTORY AND CRITIQUE (OUT OF 50 POINTS):

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 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.

PLEASE NOTE: All written assignments must follow *Chicago Manual of Style* and formatting requirements.

PRACTICE ORAL HISTORY AND TRANSCRIPTION (OUT OF 50 POINTS):

Interview someone, anyone (perhaps an elder relative?). Whatever (or whomever) the case, you must interview someone for at least 30 minutes and have it done by the end of Week 10 (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 your interview (and to the Professor). In addition, 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 will need to only transcribe ten pages worth or 15 minutes worth). You are to provide a rough draft of your transcription (as complete, or not, as it is) by April 2 to your classmate (and the Professor) to give him/her enough time to peer review it as well (via email).

PEER REVIEW OF PRACTICE ORAL HISTORY AND TRANSCRIPTION (OUT OF 50 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 (copies of which are to be exchanged as you two determine—get the Professor copies

too) 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. We will do the peer reviews of the interview on March 31 and then the transcription on April 7 (your peer review paper will be due April 7).

TRANSCRIPTION FINAL PROJECT ROUGH DRAFT (OUT OF 50 POINTS):

Like the Practice Interview 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 May 1 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 FINAL PROJECT ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW AND TRANSCRIPTION (OUT OF 50 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 May 1) 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.

FINAL PROJECT TRANSCRIPTION (100 POINTS) AND CD OF INTERVIEW (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 East Texas. Specifically, the East Texas Research Center 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, 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. 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 75 POINTS):

In a 8-10 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.

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. 20: Syllabus Handout

Week 2, Jan. 27: Thompson, chs. 1-4, 9; Yow, chs. 1, 9-10; Ritchie, ch. 4; OH Reader, chs. 1, 3, 20, 25, and 28; OAH Principles and Standards (on D2L); Baylor Institute of Oral History's Introduction to Oral History, pp. 1-4 (on D2L).

Week 3, Feb. 3: Oral History and Memory; Read: Thompson, ch. 5; Frisch, chs. 1-3; Yow, ch. 2, Ritchie, ch. 1; OH Reader, chs. 4, 19, and 35.

Week 4, Feb. 10: *Civil Rights Movement in American Memory*; and "In the Pines," By Sandul, et al (on D2L).

Week 5, Feb. 17: How to Interview and Develop Questions (and some prep considerations). Have read and be prepared to discuss in detail; OH Reader, chs. 10-11

(12-16 apply too, but not required); Ritchie, chs. 1& 2; Thompson, ch. 7, and pp. 309-323; Yow, chs. 3, 4 and 7; ;LSU Oral History Workshop Packet; Oral History Kit by Alcoholics Anonymous (on D2L); *Oral History For Texans: How to Organize A Project*, pp. 39-49 (on D2L); *Oral History for Texans: How to Interview* (on D2L); Example of Oral History Interview History List (on D2L—see example packet of what to turn in); Interview Checklist (on D2L); LSU Oral History Sample Questions (on D2L); Baylor Institute of Oral History's Introduction to Oral History, pp. 8-13 (on D2L).

Week 6, Feb. 24: The Art of Transcribing and Presenting to a Public Audience Selections; Frisch, chs. 5-7, 12; Yow, chs. 11-12; Ritchie, ch. 8; Thompson, ch. 6; OH Reader, chs. 31, 32, and 35; *History for Texans: How to Organize a Project*, 49-59; Baylor's Style Guide for Transcribing; Preparing an Oral History Biography (on D2L); Transcribing and Editing the Interview (on D2L); Example of Oral History Interview History and Context Page (on D2L—see example packet of what to turn in); Example of Oral History Transcript (on D2L—see example packet of what to turn in); Baylor Institute of Oral History's Introduction to Oral History, pp. 14-18 (on D2L).

Week 7, Mar. 3: Formatting and Legal Papers & Equipment: Yow, chs. 5-6; Thompson, ch. 8; Ritchie, ch. 6; Baylor Institute of Oral History's Introduction to Oral History, p. 5 (on D2L); Our release forms (on D2L).

Week 8, Mar. 10: Audit of Oral History (assignment due)

Week 9: Spring Break/No Class

Week 10, Mar. 24: Out of Class Assignment: Work on Practice Interview

Week 11, Mar. 31: Peer Reviews of Practice Interviews

Week 12, Apr. 7: Peer Reviews of Practice Transcriptions (assignment due)

Week 13, Apr. 14: Out of Class Assignment: Conduct Final Project Interview

Week 14, Apr. 21: Out of Class Assignment: Conduct Final Project Interview

Week 15, Apr. 28: Oral History Review and Reflection

Week 16, May 5: Peer Reviews of Rough Draft Transcriptions of Final Project Interview (assignment due)

Week 17, Finals Week: Turn in Final Project Materials