

## **Oral History for Social Change**

**Fall 2012**

**Wednesdays 9-12 am**

**SAC 5.124**

Shannon Speed

Email: [sspeed@mail.utexas.edu](mailto:sspeed@mail.utexas.edu)

Office: SAC 5.120

Office Hours: Wednesday 1:00-3:00 pm

### **Course Objectives**

This course will explore the ethics, politics, and practice of oral history as an activist research methodology. The first weeks of the course will entail readings and class discussion of theoretical perspectives on oral history as a method and its potential for social impact/change. The second part of the course will focus on the practice of oral history, including training on how to conduct oral history interviews, how to transcribe interviews, and what the products of oral history are. This section will include a consideration of important ethical and practical issues at each stage, including Institutional Review Board Human Subject Review processes and questions of informed consent. In the third part of the course, students will be engaged in documenting oral histories with subjects of their choice. In the final weeks of the class, we will reflect on the experience, particularly focusing on the challenges and contradictions, as well as the liberatory potential, of oral history. The course offers students a unique opportunity to engage in the production of oral history in the supported context of a course.

Requirements:

Your final grade will be based on the following:

- 1) Completion of readings and participation in class discussion
- 2) Leading of one in-class discussion session
- 3) Participation in on-line discussion through Blackboard
- 4) Production of one 20-30 minute oral history
- 5) Final in-class presentation of oral history you have produced
- 6) Final reflection paper, 3-5 pages

All of these requirements are mandatory (including Blackboard discussion participation) and failure to adequately complete any one of them will negatively affect your grade.

### **Readings:**

All readings will be available on Blackboard or via the Internet.

The Instructor reserves the right to change the syllabus.

## **Course Schedule:**

**Week 1 August 29:** Introduction to the class

**Week 2 September 5: What is Oral History?**

Readings:

Oral History Association. 2009. Principles for Oral History and Best Practices for Oral History. Available on-line at:

<http://www.oralhistory.org/do-oral-history/principles-and-practices/>

Shopes, Linda. 2002. "Making Sense of Oral History," *History Matters: The U.S. Survey Course on the Web*, <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/oral/>.

Hurston, Zora Neale. 1935. *Mules and Men*. Introduction and chapters 1 & 2.

Available on line at: <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ma01/grand-jean/hurston/chapters/introduction.htm>

Portelli, Alessandro. 1991. "The Death of Luigi Trastulli: Memory and Event," in *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning In Oral History*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1991. Available on Blackboard.

**Week 3 September 12: Anthropology's Past: Why research for social change?**

Readings (all on Blackboard):

Gough, K. 1968. "Anthropology and Imperialism" *Monthly Review*, 19: pp. 12-27.

Willis, W.S. 1969 "Skeletons in the Closet" *Reinventing Anthropology* D. Hymes, ed. Patheon Press. pp. 121-152.

Multiple authors. 1971. *Declarations of Barbados*

Asad, Talal. 1970. "Introduction" *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* London: Ithaca press.

Haraway, Donna. 1988. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies* 14(3): 575-99

Clifford, James. 1988. "On Ethnographic Authority" in *The Predicament of Culture*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Assignment: begin selecting research subject

## **Week 4 September 19: Research “Subjects”**

Guest speaker: Chan Kean IRB

Readings:

[http://www.utexas.edu/research/rsc/humansubjects/special\\_topics/vulnerable\\_populations.html](http://www.utexas.edu/research/rsc/humansubjects/special_topics/vulnerable_populations.html)

<http://www.utexas.edu/research/rsc/humansubjects/whatis.html>

[http://www.utexas.edu/research/rsc/humansubjects/student\\_research.html](http://www.utexas.edu/research/rsc/humansubjects/student_research.html)

[http://www.utexas.edu/research/rsc/humansubjects/special\\_topics/vulnerable\\_populations.html](http://www.utexas.edu/research/rsc/humansubjects/special_topics/vulnerable_populations.html)

Assignment: prepare brief 2-page description of your research project and research protocol.  
Share for in-class discussion

## **Week 5 September 26: Participatory/collaborative research**

Readings:

Lassiter, Luke Eric. 2005. “Collaborative Ethnography and Public Anthropology” *Current Anthropology* 46( 1). On-line through UT Libraries.

*Engaging Contradictions: Theory, Methods, and Politics of Activist Research*. Charles Hale, ed. University of California Press, Berkeley. READ: Introduction (Hale), Chapter 8 (Speed), and Chapter 12 (Greenwood)

On-line at <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/7z63n6xr>

Assignment: File for IRB waivers

## **Week 6 October 3: Oral History and “Shared Authority”**

Readings (All available through UT Library on-line)

Kerr, Daniel. ““We Know What the Problem Is”: Using Oral History to Develop a Collaborative Analysis of Homelessness from the Bottom up.” *The Oral History Review* 30, no. 1 (Winter – Spring 2003): 27-45

Rouverol, Alicia J. “Collaborative Oral History in a Correctional Setting: Promise and Pitfalls.” *The Oral History Review* 30, no. 1 (Winter – Spring 2003): 61-85

Sitzia, Lorraine. “A Shared Authority: An Impossible Goal?” *The Oral History Review* 30, no. 1 (Winter – Spring 2003): 87-101

Shopes, Linda. “Commentary - Sharing Authority.” *The Oral History Review* 30, no. 1 (Winter – Spring 2003): 103-110

## **Week 7 October 10: Engaged Forms of Oral History: Advocacy Oral History, Feminist Oral History, Testimony and Human Rights Documentation**

Readings:

Janesick, Valerie J. "Oral History as a Social Justice Project: Issues for the Qualitative Researcher." *The Qualitative Report* 12, no. 1 (March 2007): 111-121. Blackboard

Gluck, Sherna Berger. "Advocacy Oral History: Palestinian Women in Resistance." In *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, edited by Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai, 201-219. New York: Routledge, 1991. Blackboard.

Lovell, W. George and Lutz, Christopher. "The Primacy of Larger Truths: Rigoberta Menchú and the Tradition of Native Testimony in Guatemala." *The Rigoberta Menchú Controversy*, Arturo Arias, ed. University of Minnesota Press. Blackboard.

Solis, Gabriel, Kimberly Bacon and Virginia Raymond. Unpub ms. "The Texas After Violence Project: Listening for a change" Blackboard.

Texas After Violence Website at [www.texasafterviolence.org](http://www.texasafterviolence.org). Read at least two narratives under the "Narrative" tab and watch at least two short videos under the "Videos" tab.

Assignment: Mock IRB protocol due

## **Week 8 October 17: Ethics in Engaged Research**

Guest speaker Virginia Raymond

Readings:

Introduction to Ed Moloney, *Voices from the Grave: Two Men's War in Ireland*, London: Faber & Faber, 2011, pp. 5-11.

Boston College Subpoena News, a blog, beginning at <http://bostoncollegesubpoena.wordpress.com/>. Read the first post; the materials found at "background information;" and Ed Moloney's August 2, 2012 article "A Blow to Freedom and Academic Research" (originally posted in the *Irish Echo*). The case is really interesting, so people may want to browse through more of the site.

## **Week 9 October 24: Practical Matters – how do you do oral history? Interviewing, recording, transcribing**

Readings:

Texas Historical Commission. "The Fundamentals of Oral History: Texas Preservation Guidelines." Available on-line at:

<http://www.thc.state.tx.us/publications/guidelines/OralHistory.pdf>

Telling their Stories: Oral History Archives Project. The Urban School of San Francisco.  
<http://www.tellingstories.org/>

Assignment: signed informed consent form due

**Week 10 October 31: Political Matters – analytical contextualization, product choices and social engagement**  
**Readings TBA**

**Week 11 November 7: Field day** – begin recording oral history

Assignment: Blackboard discussion group report on recording issues, problems, concerns, etc.

**Week 12 November 14: Field day** – complete oral history recording

Assignment: Blackboard discussion group report on recording issues, problems, concerns, etc.

**Week 13 November 21: Field Day – Work on transcription of oral histories**

Assignments: Blackboard discussion group report on how issues addressed, how project completed, issues involved in transcription

Transcriptions due

**Week 14 November 28: presentation of oral histories**

**Week 15 December 5: presentation of oral histories**

**Week 16 December 12: Final reflection paper due**

3-5 pages on your research project and how it engaged the question of research for social change. Due via email by 5:00 pm.