American Public University System

The Ultimate Advantage is an Educated Mind

Department of History and Military Studies

HIST 523
Theory & Practice of Oral History

3 Credit Hours Length of Course 16 Weeks

Graduate students are encouraged to take required or core courses prior to enrolling in the seminars, concentration courses or electives.

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Instructor Information

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Course Description

This course explores oral history as a research methodology and studies the current historiography of oral history. The topics examine how oral history projects are initiated, how projects are administered, how interviews are conducted, and how oral history interviews are preserved and made available to researchers. Special emphasis is on the use of technology in making oral histories available to researchers on the Web. Students will gain practical experience in oral history interviewing and related aspects of oral history, such as transcribing, editing, and publishing oral histories.

Catalog Information

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Course Scope

This course offers an introduction to the practice, theory, and interpretation of oral history. Oral history is inherently interdisciplinary, linking historical research to cultural studies and influencing work in a wide range of fields. Oral history interviews enable historians to address the experiences of ordinary people as well as to look at historical events from different perspectives. Oral history interviews provide access to the motivations behind, responses to, and reflections on events. Oral history methods and the analysis of oral histories have raised questions about the practice of history and the construction of historical narratives.

The practice of oral history connects the work of the academy with the public practice of history and popular engagement with the past. Oral history often blurs the lines between the researcher and subject, raising issues about agency, subjectivity and authority. We will examine meaning, memory, documentary, narrative theory, identity, and public history in relation to both oral history collections and published studies in oral history.

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Course Objectives

APUS policy requires that undergraduate courses provide a transition from the basic, recall of facts and information ("knowledge" and "comprehension" categories from *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*, by Bloom) to the higher orders of cognitive performance.

The policy also infers that graduate courses stress development of the student's ability to research, reason and write in a scholarly way, aiming at the higher order cognitive skills of "analysis," "synthesis," "evaluation," and defense of logic and conclusions. Course learning objectives should be established accordingly, and instructional techniques should be used to achieve them.

For additional background, go to: <u>University Learning Outcomes Assessment</u>

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- 1. Demonstrate an understanding of oral history theory and practice, how it has developed within the broader historical community and how it is used in the conduct of documentary history.
- 2. Comprehend the difference between memory and experience in an oral history.
- 3. Recognize the relationship between traditional history, oral history, and the media-rich world.
- 4. Demonstrate an understanding of theory and the conduct of oral history.
- 5. Develop an oral history plan, conduct a series of interviews, and accurately transcribe those interviews for appropriate uses.
- 6. Analyze contemporary uses of select oral histories and evaluate their effectiveness as a learning tool and method of historical research.

7. Demonstrate an understanding of oral history practice and theory through reading assignments, practice exercises, and conduct of interviews.

Course Delivery Method

This History and Military Studies course is delivered via distance learning and enables students to complete academic work in a flexible manner, completely online. Course materials and access to an online learning management system are made available to each student.

Online assignments are usually due by Sunday midnight each week (may vary based on the type of weekly learning activities) and must include Discussion Board questions (accomplished in groups through linear, threaded or roundtable discussion board forums), examinations and quizzes (graded electronically), and individual written assignments (submitted for review to the faculty member).

In online courses we construct knowledge not just by completing readings and assignments. An important part of the process is communicating with classmates and learning from what they have to say. As such, we need to share online conversations about ideas.

Direct interaction between faculty members and students is a key feature of the educational experience. For that reason, faculty members have a responsibility to ensure that students interact with fellow students and the course instructor during the course as specified in the course syllabus, and can contact the instructor during posted office hours. The faculty member should initiate contact if a student is absent from class and makes no attempt to contact the faulty member during the week. This is especially important if the student fails to make contact at the start of the course. Students are dropped from the class if they do not log into the classroom during the first week of class.

Students are expected to submit classroom assignments by the posted due date and to complete the course according to the published class schedule. As adults, students, and working professionals we understand you must manage competing demands on your time. Should you need additional time to complete an assignment please contact the faculty before the due date so you can discuss the situation and determine an acceptable resolution. Routine submission of late assignments is unacceptable and may result in points deducted from your final course grade.

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Course Materials

All students majoring in any field of history should have a mastery of online research methods; these include researching appropriate primary resources through the Web, belonging to relevant professional discussion forums, and understanding the historiographical literature for this course so that they can do required assignments involving research. Faculty must actively encourage students to:

- Demonstrate the proper techniques for conducting advanced online historical research, with initial focus through The Online Library.
- Locate and evaluate online primary and secondary source materials.
- Identify errors and apply corrective measures in online historical research methodologies.
- Explore existing literature and digital archives in support of research interests.

Historical skills in a possible developmental history curriculum: The example of primary sources involves:

| Analytical Skills | 100 Level | 200 Level | 300 Level | 400 Level |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| Dealing with evidence: Primary sources | Discriminate between a primary and a secondary source and their uses in research. Learn how to analyze/question a primary source: Who wrote it, when, why, its audience, its historical context, inferences that can be drawn from it, etc. In other words, students will comprehend how to extract information from artifacts and relate it to broader course themes. Recognize the place, time, and human agency behind the production of a primary source. | which it was produced. | Evaluate the trustworthiness of sources. Compare and contrast diverse and potentially conflicting primary sources for a single historical problem. | Develop relationships among multiple sources and synthesize the major connecting issues among them. |
| Bottlenecks and difficulties for students in acquiring those skills | Recognizing the variety of primary sources and interpreting them. Re-creating historical context and connecting it to a document. Beginning to empathize with people from another place and time. | Re-creating historical context and connecting it to a document. •Identifying and empathizing with people from another place and time. | Dealing with ambiguity and contradiction in historical sources. | Recognizing major points in primary and secondary sources. Producing some sense through connecting multiple sources. |

This table shows primary-source analysis skills that history instructors can teach their undergraduate students and the difficulties that students encounter when learning them. Instructors gradually teach students more difficult skills as they progress from introductory to advanced courses. Source: Developmental curriculum created by Arlene Díaz, Joan Middendorf, David Pace, and Leah Shopkow for the Indiana University Department of History, fall 2007, based on Lorin W. Anderson and David R. Krathohl, eds., A Taxonomy of Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (New York, 2001). See: The History Learning Project

As indicated by successful completion of research and writing requirements, students should also demonstrate proficiency in Web navigation, including exploration of the evolving environment of the "Invisible College, primary resources, historical research sites, and such advanced web applications as:

• Web 2.0: H-Net offers the most established forum for scholarly communications, but may be augmented by other discussion groups, blogs, wikis, or Second Life-type of experience.

Graduate students, must explore the research holdings of <u>The Online Library</u>, Department's Study Portals <u>History and Military Studies</u>, and their ability to support research needs. Each student may be required to write a scholarly review of a particular research issue, with specific attention afforded to:

• Online Scholarly Journals: Students will identify and monitor the key refereed journals in

•

their research area as part of their ongoing scholarly portfolio; and

• Electronic Books/Subject Clusters: Students will identify key texts or clusters or resources (e.g., Praeger Security International) in their research area and explore the electronic researching ability for such genre as a complement to print-based immersion.

University libraries, including the APUS Online Library, national libraries, and college professors have created major sites with information resources, links to other trusted sites, and electronic networking potential. Students will determine appropriate archival repositories and government agencies for their research interests. Students are expected to learn about archival research and the use of government documents, but also advanced Web tools like Encoded Archival Description, finding aids and associated online searching tools for government and academic sites. While certainly not inclusive – as the student is expected to conduct their own independent research – examples and links to relevant sites include:

- The Valley of the Shadow: Two Communities in the American Civil War http://valley.vcdh.virginia.edu
- National Geographic: Remembering Pearl Harbor http://plasma.nationalgeographic.com/pearlharbor
- American Memory: Historical Collections for the National Digital Library, Library of Congress, http://lcweb2.loc.gov/amhome.html
- H-Net Humanities and Social Sciences Online http://www.h-net.msu.edu/
- World History Matters http://chnm.gmu.edu/worldhistory
- <u>H-Diplo: diplomatic and international history</u> H-Net discussion group dedicated to diplomatic history and international affairs. Features archive, reviews, bibliographies, reading lists, course syllabi etc.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- *Doing Oral History* by Donald A. Ritchie. Oxford University Press, USA; 2 edition (August 2003) **ISBN-10**: 0195154347
- The Oral History Manual (American Association for State and Local History Book Series) by Barbara W. Sommer Mary Kay Quinlan. AltaMira Press, Knoxville; (June 2003) ISBN-10: 0759101019
- History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology by Thomas L. Charlton. AltaMira Press, Knoxville; (March 2007) ISBN-10: 0759102309

RECOMMENDED REFERENCES (For All History Majors)

- The Chicago Manual of Style, 15th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
- Turabian, Kate L. *Manual for Writers of Term Papers*, 6th Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. *Purchase Optional*.
- Marius, Richard, and Melvin E. Page. *A Short Guide to Writing about History*, 6th ed. New York: Longman, 2007.

Accessible through The Online Library.

IMPORTANT NOTE: The Department of History and Military Studies requires conformity with the traditional University of Chicago Style Manual and its Turabian offshoot. Citations will follow traditional footnote attribution. Do not use endnotes or parenthetical (MLA) variation.

WEB-BASED READINGS

A substantial portion of the weekly reading requirements are drawn from the reflections and writings of oral history professionals found on the web site of the Oral History Association. The URLs are hyperlinked in the weekly assignments below. See also:

http://www.history.army.mil/books/oral.html This link will take you to the US Army Oral History Manual.

SOFTWARE REQUIREMENTS

- Microsoft Office 2003 or newer versions (MS Word, MS Excel, MS PowerPoint)
- Adobe Acrobat Reader (for PDF files)
- To view streaming media and audio, individuals should have the following installed on their machines (all are free downloads):
 - Real Audio http://www.real.com
 - Windows Media Player http://www.microsoft.com
 - Quick Time http://www.apple.com/quicktime

EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS

RECORDERS

There are a number of excellent digital records available on the market today. **The basics required for this course are the ability to record/play in MP3 format.** The best option is a recorder that plugs directly into a PC via a wire (USB) connection as opposed to media-based models that use memory cards. These cards are easy to lose, often difficult to manage, and usually require a unique reader to operate with many computers. That said, below are some recommendations:

- OLYMPUS WS-210S A simple recorder for personal notes, interviews or lectures. Its 256 MB of
 integrated memory is limiting, but the digital voice recorder can still hold up to 130 hours at its
 lowest-quality settings (although for this course I advise using high-quality settings). Aside from
 the smaller memory capacity and the ability to play MP3 music files, this recorder is largely
 identical to the Olympus WM-331M profiled below. Usually runs about \$75.00.
- 2. OLYMPUS WM-331M The Olympus WS-331M is well received in reviews. This digital voice recorder has 2 GB of internal memory -- enough for nearly 36 hours of best-quality stereo recordings or approximately 520 hours of mono recordings at its lowest-quality setting (again not recommended). With a pop-out USB connector, the Olympus plugs directly into a computer's USB port for downloading WMA recordings to a PC or Mac equipped with Windows Media Player. Usually runs about \$125.00 but well worth it if you plan on practicing oral history beyond this class.

- 3. SONY ICD-MX20. I used this one in the field in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Sony ICD-MX20 is the most accurate voice recorder for under \$250. The 32 MB of internal flash memory can hold just under 12 hours of recordings at the lowest-quality setting, but an expansion slot for Memory Stick Pro Duo flash memory lets you add up to 16 GB of replaceable memory. However, the Sony ICD-MX20 records files in a non-standard format that must be converted in software that's not compatible with the Mac operating system. Usually runs about \$200.
- 4. APPLE MAC GARAGE BAND If you are a Mac book user, you can save a few bucks and this option gets a very high quality recording right on your machine. Using the Mac's Garage Band software set on "pod cast" and a low-cost microphone the Mac can record crystal clear conversations and interviews for easy editing and transcribing. Outside the cost for a USB microphone (about \$25); this is free if you own a Mac.

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Evaluation Procedures

The grading for this course will be based on four Discussion Board Responses, one Oral History Evaluation, one recorded oral history (to include transcription), and the creation of a mock oral history project plan.

Discussion Board (20 points each = 240 points)

Discussion Board assignments are designed to promote interactivity among all students and to enhance the online learning experience. These discussions provide maximum flexibility for asynchronous exchanges between students and faculty. Complete guidance for the Discussion Board can be found in the PACKETS folder inside COURSE MATERIALS along the left column of the classroom.

Oral History Evaluation (300 points)

The Oral History Evaluation is designed to develop the student's critical reading, thinking, and writing skills. The Professor will issue a topic that the student will then analyze based on an assigned oral history. Topics for the Oral History Evaluation are more general in nature and seek to see how well you comprehend key thoughts in the development and effectiveness of an existing oral history. Complete guidance for the Oral History Evaluation can be found in the PACKETS folder inside COURSE MATERIALS along the left column of the classroom.

Record an Oral History (400 points)

Using an approved recording device each student will plan and develop an oral from the start. The topic/subject is open to selection and is not restricted to any specific subject (for example military). The student will identify the topic, select a person to be interviewed, develop a question list, conduct the interview (to include collecting the appropriate right/permissions/and approvals), and transcribe the interview. Interviews should be approximately 30 minutes in length; however, they must not exceed 50 minutes in length. To fulfill the requirements of this assignment each student will forward their question list, an MP3 file of the interview, and a .doc file of the transcribed interview to the instructor.

Oral History Project Plan (300 points)

Using assigned readings each student will develop a comprehensive oral history collection plan on a subject of their choosing but it can not be the same topic as their recorded oral history. The purpose of this assignment is to give each student a complete understanding of the complex nature of developing a plan. The final, submitted plan will include, at a minimum, a prospectus (what is the project and why), a question list, a list of potential interviewees, a bio of the interviewer (you), a list of the equipment planned for use, and a project budget. This is a mock plan only; you are not required to act on it. With this in mind, be creative and think big – this is how Ken Burns got his start. Examples of various plans can be found in your textbooks.

Interaction: Students are expected to maintain routine contact throughout the course. While the number of these may vary according to the specific course and individual student need, you may correspond with me as much as you wish to in order to complete the course and enhance your interpretation of the course objectives. In this course, I require that these be made over the net primarily as this allows me to answer in a timely and complete manner.

The final grade in the course will be based on total points. Grades will be assigned based on the following term composite scores:

| Grade Instruments | Points Possible | % of Final Grade |
|---------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Discussion Board | 240 | 19.3% |
| Oral History Evaluation | 300 | 24.2% |
| Record an Oral History | 400 | 32.3% |
| Oral History Project Plan | 300 | 24.2% |
| | | |
| TOTAL | 1240 Points | 100% |

| Week | Topic(s) | Learning Objective(s) | Reading(s) and Web Activities | Assignment(s) and Discussion Boards |
|------|----------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
|------|----------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|

| 1 | An Introduction to Oral History | Synthesize general trends in the development and use of oral history | Doing Oral History Chapters 1 and 2 | Week 1 Forum: Virtual Introduction to classroom. |
|---|--|---|--|--|
| 2 | The Use and Practice of Oral History | Understand how oral history was developed and how it is used by modern historians, museums, and businesses. | History of Oral History Chapters 1 and 2 http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/digital/collections/nny/index.html | Week 2 Forum: Discuss the historical uses of oral history. |
| 3 | Personal Narrative as Testimony | Develop an understanding of the power and effectiveness of personal narratives in developing contemporary history | Chrysler Corporation Newark Assembly Plant oral history collection http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/findaids/html/mss0643.html | Week 3 Forum: Discuss the effectiveness of personal narratives in developing contemporary history. Start to develop your interview topic, subject, and question list. |
| 4 | Sound and Text | Explore new media concepts and the effective use of oral history | Oral History in the Digital Age, http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/category/projects/ . | Week 4 Forum: Discuss the effects of new media concepts on the effective use of oral history. |
| 5 | Oral History & The Documentary | Evaluate the importance and uses of | Studs Turkel, The Good War: An Oral History of World War II" Doing Oral History Chapter 5 and Chapter 8 | Week 5 Forum: Oral history as a historical |

| | | documentary history. | | source. What are the advantages, and disadvantages, to oral history as a historical source. The discussion should relate to the assigned reading for the week. |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| 6 | Evaluating Oral History | Understand the value of oral history to the modern study of history. | U.S. Army Guide to Oral History | Week 6 Forum: No forum discussion this week. Look in the Course Materials Folder and select one oral history to evaluate. |
| 7 | Developing an Oral History | Develop the fundamentals of creating an oral history question list. | The Oral History Manual (AASLH) | Week 7 Forum: Discussion on developing a list of questions for your oral history interview. Oral History Evaluation Due Sunday |
| 8 | Developing Personal & Family Narratives | Evaluate and understand the place of family history and the "audio-bio" in the broader context of history. | Paul Thompson and Daniel Bertaux, Between Generations: Family Models, Myths, and Memories. Oral Autobiography Historiography | Week 8 Forum: After reading both Chap. 3 in Doing Oral History and the essay "Between Generations," discuss the factors that go into an effective oral history. |
| 9 | Conduct of | | Doing Oral History | Week 9 Forum: |

| | an Oral History Interview | Develop an understanding of how to conduct and oral history interview. | Chapter 3 Ref: US Army Guide to Oral History and <i>The Oral History Manual</i> | Discuss the effectiveness of both the documentary you viewed and the oral history you evaluated. Continue to develop your interview. |
|----|---|---|---|---|
| 10 | Meaning in Oral History | Recognize the power and weaknesses of personal memory in oral history | Alessandro Portelli, The Order Has Been Carried Out: History, Memory, and Meaning of a Nazi Massacre in Rome. | Week 10 Forum: No discussion forum this week. Conduct your interview. |
| 11 | Transcribing Oral History Interviews | Understand the complex nature and existing tools for transcribing and oral history | None: Use this time to transcribe your interview | Week 11 Forum: No discussion forum this week. Transcribe your interview. |
| 12 | Developing an Oral History Project | Synthesize the fundamentals of project management | None: Use this time to transcribe your interview | Week 12 Forum: Oral History Interview Debriefing— discuss what you learned about interviewing Transcribe your interview. |
| 13 | Oral History & Public Memories | Develop an understanding of public memory during memorable events | Sources for Memory, Trauma, and Genocide in Rwanda http://www.brooklynhistory.org/oral_history/oral_hist.html The above interviews are by VN War vets, you will need to listen to them as the transcripts are unavailable. | Week 13 Forum: discuss the interaction between oral history and memory, as illustrated by the reading you have done, the oral histories |

| | I APUS. | | History of Oral History | you listened to this week, and your own experience. Complete Oral History Interview Due |
|----|--|---|--|--|
| 14 | Accuracy in Oral History | Identify and alleviate those problems that tend to lead to inaccuracies. | Chapters 3 & 5 Read Alessandro Portelli, "The Death of Luigi Trustulli" (find in resources) | Week 14 Forum: Accuracy in Oral History. |
| 15 | Preserving Oral History in Archives and Libraries | Understand how oral history is managed and preserved for future use. | Doing Oral History Chapter 6 | Week 15 Forum: Oral History, Archives, and Libraries Oral History Project Plan Due |
| 16 | Legal Issues in Oral History | Develop an appreciation for the legal requirements of conducting and preserving oral history. | History of Oral History, chapter 4 Blog regarding the Belfast Project Doing Oral History Appendix 2 | Week 16 Forum: Legal Issues. After reading chapter 4 in the History of Oral History and the exploring (and reading) the material on Boston College's Belfast Project, discuss the legal and ethical ramifications of conducting oral history interviews, and providing access to the material. |

CITATION AND REFERENCE STYLE

Assignments completed in a narrative essay or composition format must follow the accepted guidelines of the American historical profession, which is the *Chicago Manual of Style*. This course will require students to use the citation and reference style established by Kate Turabian in *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations,* 6th ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), which is the most readily available distillation of the *Chicago Manual*. See <u>Chicago Style Manual</u>

The *Chicago Style Manual* for book-length works and its *Turabian* offshoot for research papers have long been the standard across all fields of study, as well as much of the publishing industry. These texts cover the layout and production gamut--including rules for chapter headings and subheadings, abbreviations, alphabetizing non-English names, and table design/designation.

- 1. Front matter--e.g., <u>title page</u>, copyright statement, dedication, table of contents, lists of illustrations or tables, acknowledgements, <u>abstract</u>.
- 2. Narrative with scholarly attributions.
- 3. Back matter--bibliography, appendices.

NETIQUETTE

Online universities promote the advance of knowledge through positive and constructive debate--both inside and outside the classroom. Discussions on the Internet, however, can occasionally degenerate into needless insults and "flaming." Such activity and the loss of good manners are not acceptable in a university setting--basic academic rules of good behavior and proper "Netiquette" must persist. Remember that you are in a place for the fun and excitement of learning that does not include descent to personal attacks, or student attempts to stifle the discussion of others.

STUDENT HANDBOOK

The staff at American Public University System (APUS) knows how hard it is for students to balance work and other commitments while pursuing a college education. We created the APUS Student Handbook as the ultimate reference for answers to questions about administrative and academic policies and procedures. APUS students do not have to wait for our offices to be open in order to find the information they need to succeed. No matter what location or time zone our students are in, they can consult the online Student Handbook with any questions about financial aid, tuition assistance and refunds, registration, drop/withdrawal or extensions, the University System's grading system, and the electronic classroom. The handbook also covers issues related to various student services, academic guidance, and each student's rights and responsibilities. Of course, there may be a unique question that requires additional information outside that which is covered in the handbook. APUS students should use the contact information listed online inside their campus to contact the APUS staff with any additional questions. See Student Handbook.

DISCLAIMER STATEMENT

Course content may vary from the outline to meet the needs of this particular group.

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Online Library Research Center & Learning Resources

The Online Library Resource Center is available to enrolled students and faculty from inside the electronic campus. This is your starting point for access to online books, subscription periodicals, and Web resources that are designed to support your classes and generally not available through search engines on the open Web. In addition, the Center provides access to special learning resources, which the University has contracted to assist with your studies.

APUS Library Tools

- Book Catalog Link to thousands of electronic
- books

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• <u>Databases</u> - Find *articles* and reports from scholarly

journals, magazines, and newspapers

- o <u>ABC Clio US at War</u>
- o <u>CIAO</u>
- o <u>EBSCO</u>
- o <u>Praeger Security International</u>
- o **ProQuest**
- <u>Journal Title Search Engine</u>
 - American Historical Review from 2/01/1975 to 1 year ago in EBSCO
- o Cold War History from 08/01/2000 to 1 year ago in EBSCO
- o Early Medieval Europe from 03/01/1998 to 1 year ago in EBSCO
- <u>Journal of American History</u> from 03/01/1983 in EBSCO
- Journal of Early Modern History from 02/01/1999 to 1 year ago in EBSCO
- o <u>Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies</u> from 01/10/1997 to 1 year ago in EBSCO
 - Journal of World History from 04/01/1998 to present in ProQuest
- Historical Research Methods
- The Historical Approach to Research
- Historical Research Methods
- Reading, Writing, and Researching for History: A Guide for College Students
- A Student's Guide to the Study of History

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Selected Bibliography

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