

Oral History
Social Documentation 220.01
Professor Paul Ortiz
University of California, Santa Cruz
Spring, 2007
Thursdays, 2:00 pm to 5:00
Oakes Media Room, 109

Memories are never neutral.

This seminar is an intensive introduction to the theory and practice of oral history. Spoken memories have constituted the foundations of lineage-group societies throughout the past several millennia. The rise of the “written record” was originally premised on unwritten epic poems, songs, and histories told and passed on by storytellers from ancient African, Greek, and Roman civilizations (among many others.)

More recently, oral history has reemerged as a serious field of inquiry even as the written or “documentary” record has been subjected to increasing skepticism and outright scorn. This process has been particularly acute in the western hemisphere. In the wake of the Haitian Revolution, the great anti-colonial movements one after another undermined imperial narratives and chronicles of the powerful with stories of subaltern struggles and/or pre-colonial experiences. Heroic sagas of Indigenous cultures such as Galeano’s *Memoria del fuego* involved a re-imagining of the colonial epoch that privileged oral traditions or folk memories of enslaved Africans, Bolivian *mineros*, and other besieged groups. The deaths of millions of Indigenous miners in the hellish *Rosario* pits were not faithfully documented by the Spanish; they were mourned, commemorated, and remembered by the survivors.

Official national histories in the postcolonial period have been written and re-written using the oral testimonies of truth commissions, courts of inquiry, and other forums where victims of state terror (and their erstwhile tormentors) duel over the past. At the same time, oral interviews and testimonies have been used in recent decades to uncover stories of “ordinary people,” as well as forgotten or disappeared events. The Rosewood Hearings of 1994 in Tallahassee, Florida relied on survivor’s spoken memories to chronicle the story of the massacre of African Americans—a story that had been omitted from official state records.

We will discuss oral history, memory, and memoir and examine the ways these approaches are used in historical texts, human rights discourse, social documentaries, fiction and other fields. We will cover a wide range of debates including the paradox of memory, the question of privileging certain sources (and certain group experiences) over others, and the role of class, gender, and racial inequalities in shaping memories. Students will be able to use the skills learned in this class in order to become more effective interviewers, researchers and writers in various media including film, radio, as well as ethnography and modern history.

Students are encouraged to use this seminar to further their own dissertation or thesis projects. My expectation is that you will conduct two short oral history interviews informed by theories learned in this class. However, you may use the audio labs to edit as well as transcribe interviews you may have already conducted in past research.

This course will require a concurrent Social Sciences audio media lab. (SOCD-291-03)
Students will receive training on digital audio recorders and computer software (Pro Tools 7.3) for editing and transcribing purposes.

Weekly Response Papers

You will write a total of seven (7) response papers incorporating your analysis of the weekly readings. These papers will be from 2 to 3 pages in length. Please write each paper in a narrative format and write always for a general audience.

Partial Transcript/Interview Index

You will complete a six to eight page (double-spaced) partial interview transcript as well as an interview index of a significant part of an oral history interview. Preferably, this transcript and index will come from your own field work. Follow the methodology presented by Valerie Yow in Recording Oral History to complete this project. You should complete the transcript/index exercise by the end of week 7.

Research Paper

You will write a final research paper of 20 to 25 pages that highlights an analytical piece of your oral history interview work. Please meet with me before mid-quarter to discuss your project. The paper may be presented in the form of a dissertation or M.A. chapter as well as a documentary treatment. You should plan to present an overview of your research to the seminar starting on week 8.

Audio Labs

Will be held at the Social Science Media Lab. *Audio Labs: Mondays, 10:00-11:45; Media Labor open hours: Tuesdays, 10:00 to 11:45.* (See the lab schedule at the end of this syllabus. Our audio advisor will be Marc Ramos who has kindly organized several special topics workshops for us this quarter. Marc's email is: boricua@ucsc.edu

Grades

Grading will be based on: response papers (30%); transcripts/index (20%); research paper, (40%); seminar participation (10%).

Office Hours

My office is located at Oakes, 319. My regular office hours will be on Tuesdays from 2:30 to 4:00 and Wednesdays, 2:30 to 4:00. My office is at Oakes, 319. My cell phone number is 831-334-0131. My email is portiz@ucsc.edu

Reading/Book List: (Books available at Bay Tree, should be on reserve)

Valerie Yow, Recording Oral History, Second Edition: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences
Allesandro Portelli, Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue
Allesandro Portelli, The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History;
William H. Chafe, et.al., Remembering Jim Crow: African Americans Tell About Life in the Segregated South;
Lee Smith, Oral History: A Novel
Sherna Berger Gluck, Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History
Paul Thompson, The Voice of the Past: Oral History
Jack Metzgar, Striking Steel: Solidarity Remembered
Michael Frisch, A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History
Syllabus and Reading List

WEEK OF APRIL 5: Introductions

Oral History Seminar: 2

Topics Include: Basic Introduction of Oral History as an academic discipline

WEEK OF APRIL 12: Oral History: Getting Started

*Topics Include: Framing Questions; Preparation; Ethics; Legal Issues; Oral history and memory
Oral History and Social Movements*

Reading Discussion: Valerie Yow, Recording Oral History, 1-187

Fred Andrie interview with Paul Ortiz on Remembering Jim Crow
WOSU-Ohio State, www.wosu.org/audio/Openlinearchive/042006b.MP3

WEEK OF APRIL 19: Memory and Power

Race and interviewing; "insiders" and "outsiders" in the interview process; interpretive conflicts; symbolic representation; what makes oral history a distinct methodology; functions of time in oral history; heritage and memories; being interviewed; analysis and interpretation of interviewing; collaboration; history and the community.

Allesandro Portelli, The Death of Luigi Trastulli, introduction; 1-76

Sherna Berger Gluck, Women's Words, 61-106.

James West Davidson, Mark Hamilton Lytle, "The View from the Bottom Rail," in After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection, 169-202.

Chafe, et.al., Remembering Jim Crow, 56-88.

Valerie Yow, Recording Oral History, 188-219; 282-310. (indexing)

Listen: KPFA Morning Interview with Paul Ortiz, on Emancipation Betrayed, on "The Morning Show," Monday, June 27th, 2005, <http://www.kpfa.org/archives/index.php?arch=8808>

View and Listen: "The Whole World Was Watching: An Oral History of 1968," at:
<http://www.stg.brown.edu/projects/1968/>

WEEK OF APRIL 26: Learning to Listen

Communities: insiders/outsiders; activism and academia; oral history as genre; social movements and oral histories;

Sherna Berger Gluck, Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History, 1-58.

Valerie Yow, Recording Oral History, 311-334; and read appendices including Legal Release Forms, interview questions, principles of the Oral History Association; IRB Review.

Allesandro Portelli, The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue, introduction; 1-54; 183-198; 232-289.

'Zulu Sofola, "Feminism and African Womanhood," in Sisterhood, Feminisms and Power: From Africa to the Diaspora, ed., Obioma Nnaemeka, 51-64.

Gertrude Fester, "Closing the Gap—Activism and Academia in South Africa: Towards a Women's Movement," in Sisterhood, Feminisms and Power: From Africa to the Diaspora, ed., Obioma Nnaemeka, 215-237

Michael Frisch, A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History, "Preparing Interview Transcripts for Documentary Publication," chapter. (Skim as useful.)

View and Listen: American Radio Works, Remembering Jim Crow site at:
<http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/remembering/>

WEEK OF MAY 3: Is Shared Authority Possible?

Insider/outsider dilemmas; oral history in institutional settings; the search for shared authority;

Michael Frisch, A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History, introduction, 1-80.

Special Issue of the Oral History Review (Winter/Spring 2003). Choose and read two of the articles in the "Shared Authority" Section:

Kerr, "Using Oral History to Develop a Collaborative Analysis of Homelessness"

Rickard, "Collaborating with Sex Workers in Oral History"

Rouverol, "Collaborative Oral History in a Correctional Setting"

Sitzia, "A Shared Authority: An Impossible Goal?"

Read: Allistair Thomson's introduction and Linda Shopes's commentary in same edition of Oral History Review

Paul Thompson, "History and the Community," in The Voice of the Past: Oral History, 1-24.

Review, Oral History Association web site: <http://alpha.dickinson.edu/organizations/oha/>

WEEK OF MAY 10: Truth

Human rights and oral testimony; ethics, cont., release forms, IRB; memory, nation-building, and truth commissions; form and meaning of historical representation; myths, meaning, and memory; disputed community memories vs. outside documentarians

Special Issue of Radical History Review: "Truth Commissions: State Terror, History, and Memory."

(Winter 2007); Read essays by Greg Grandin, Sally Avery Bermanzohn, Paul Ortiz, and Felipe Aguero or Charles F. Walker

Lawrence Goodwyn, "Populist Dreams and Negro Rights: East Texas as a Case Study," American Historical Review, 76 (December 1971), 1435-1456.

Judith Tydor Baumel, "'You Said the Words You Wanted Me to Hear But I heard the Worlds you Couldn't Bring Yourself to Say': Women's First Person Accounts of the Holocaust," Oral History Review (Winter/Spring 2000), 17-56.

Allesandro Portelli, The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue, vii-xx; 3-23; 91-179.

Greg Grandin, "The Instruction of Great Catastrophe: Truth Commissions, National History, and State Formation in Argentina, Chile, and Guatemala," American Historical Review (February 2005), 46-67

View and Listen: Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, (read selected parts of Commission summary and listen to survivor and perpetrator testimony in the statement archives, at:

<http://www.greensborotrc.org/>

(Look under "statement archives" for broadcasts of testimony

Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Blog Spot, <http://gtrc.blogspot.com/>

WEEK OF MAY 17: Arts of Story Telling: From Transcript to Narrative

Chafe, Gavins, Korstad, Ortiz, et.al., Remembering Jim Crow, African Americans Talk about Life in the Segregated South

Selected Transcripts and tapes from "Behind the Veil" Oral History Project.

WEEK OF MAY 24: Social Movements

Uncovering social movements with oral history; what is to be uncovered; memory and silence

Allesandro Portelli, The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue, 40-54.

Sherna Berger Gluck, Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History, 175-219.

Paul Ortiz, Emancipation Betrayed: The Hidden History of Black Organizing and White Violence in Florida from Reconstruction to the Bloody Election of 1920, 171-191; 205-236.

Michael Frisch, A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History, 159-178.

Jack Bloom, "The Solidarity Revolution in Poland, 1980-1981," Oral History Review, (Winter/Spring 2006), 33-64

Frantz Fanon, "This is the Voice of Algeria," from: A Dying Colonialism

WEEK OF MAY 31: Pedagogy, Public Programs, and Education

Marjorie L. McLellan, "Case Studies in Oral History and Community Learning," Oral History Review, 81-112.

James R. Green Taking History to Heart: The Power of the past in Building Social Movements 25-49; 51-97

Michael Frisch, A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History 179-263.

WEEK OF JUNE 7: Literature

Lee Smith, Oral History: A Novel

Oral History Seminar: 5

All response papers due Friday, June 8.
Final papers due finals week. (TBD)

LAB SCHEDULE (ALL LABS TO BE HELD AT SOCIAL SCIENCES MEDIA LAB)

Lab 1, Monday, April 9, 10-11:45 (Equipment Orientation, Oral History Workshop)

Lab 2, Monday April 16th, 10-11:45, EQUIPMENT ORIENTATION, Microphones, Meters, etc.

Lab 3, Monday, April 23rd, 10-11:45, Audio Equipment Practicum

Lab 4 Monday or Tuesday April 30 or (May 1 Workshop with Nikki Silva, of the “Kitchen Sisters”)

Lab 5 Monday or Tuesday May 7 or May 8

Lab 6, Monday, May 7, 10-11:45, Audio Editing/Transcription Workshop

Lab 7 Monday, May 14 10-11:45, Pro Tools Practicum