Oral History Fieldwork, Production and Archiving (G5020), Fall Semester 2017

Wednesdays, 10:10-1 PM, 308 Lewisohn Hall
Professor: Amy Starecheski
aas39@columbia.edu   **212 851 4395**
Office hours: Thursday 10-12 and by appointment
Office: 404 Burke Library, in Union Theological Seminary

Course Description
This seminar is a year-long practicum in which students will learn and practice the skills required to conceptualize, conduct, analyze and disseminate oral history interviews.

In the Fall semester, we will learn project design, interviewing, audio recording, transcribing, indexing, and digital archiving. Students will have the option of working on oral history projects conducted in partnership with New York City groups or working on their own projects. We will weave together several strands of inquiry through the fall semester, some of which we will follow into the spring:
- nuts and bolts (audio recording, project design, transcribing, indexing)
- interview strategies (peer interviews, balancing life history and a research focus, using research in an interview, working with embodiment in the interview, doing interviews in public)
- power (legal and ethical issues, the interview relationship, oral history from an anti-oppression standpoint)
- archiving (digital archiving, and this strand will carry over into the spring)
- oral history and anthropology (comparative approaches to fieldwork, anthropological studies of oral history)

By the Spring semester, students will be expected to be primarily working on their own projects. In the Spring we will focus most of our attention on the analysis and dissemination of oral histories, including audio editing, online presentation, museum exhibits, and other public oral history genres. Our spring work will culminate in a collaboratively curated public multimedia exhibit.

Course Requirements
This course requires active engagement in both in-class and out of class activities. Students will be required to conduct at least five oral history interview sessions, and to share their work with the class in various ways. All assignments should be submitted via the assignments feature on Canvas. **Please name your files in the following format: lastname_assignment_date.** For example, Choe_PeerInterview_Sept12. Note that Canvas automatically will not accept submissions after the deadline. For all assignments, I have set the assignments to close at 9 AM the day AFTER the due date, as I will not be reviewing your work overnight and I know some of you work late.

Each student should select two interview sessions from the five done for the class to be submitted for feedback from the instructor. When you submit an interview for evaluation, please include a short description of the context of the interview, some of your reflections on it, and areas in which you would like feedback. Note that you may not be able to send audio files via Canvas due to file size limits. Please use Dropbox or another file sharing service to share MP3 audio files with me (not .wavs), and include links to the files with the interview context via Canvas. You may choose any two interviews you want, but please do not wait until the deadline to submit both of your interviews for evaluation. The deadline to submit interviews for evaluation is Nov. 22. Submit your first interview through the assignment called "Interview

#1 for Feedback from Amy" and your second interview through the assignment called "Interview #2 for Feedback from Amy."

The semester's work will culminate in a final project, the exact details of which will be determined by the project design you create. The final project will incorporate your work over the course of the semester, and will be evaluated based on how well you apply what we have discussed in class, whether you achieve what you planned in your project design, and (if applicable) whether you deliver what you promised to your project partner.

The work in this course builds cumulatively on previous assignments as the semester continues. In-class work depends on fieldwork and assignments conducted out of class. Because of this structure, late assignments will disrupt the entire class, and it is essential that you complete assignments on time. I understand that some of these assignments depend on the cooperation of interviewees, over which you do not have control. Please plan ahead to allow time for schedule changes. If you want to request an extension on any assignment, you must contact me at least 3 days in advance of the due date to discuss it.

As this class requires ongoing, active fieldwork, there will be limited reading, but the readings assigned are crucial. Please come to class prepared to discuss them on the day they are listed in the syllabus. There are three required books for the course:

> *History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology*, edited by Thomas L. Charlton, Lois E. Myers and Rebecca Sharpless. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2007.

> *Oral History off the Record: Towards an Ethnography of Practice*, edited by Anna Sheftel and Stacey Zembrzycki. New York: Palgrave, 2013.

> *The Oral History Reader, 3rd Edition*, edited by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson. New York: Routledge, 2016. (The 2nd edition also works – most of the assigned pieces for fall are in it. But as a longer-term resource I suggest buying the 3rd if you can.)

These books are available at Book Culture, 536 West 112th Street and are on reserve at Butler Library. All other readings will be supplied as PDFs through Canvas.

You are also required to download InqScribe for transcribing and install it on your computer. You may use the free trial version or purchase the software. If this will present any problems for you, speak to me immediately.

Class Conduct
I expect all students to arrive on time and ready to participate. Please do not be late. The use of laptops, phones, or tablets is not allowed in class unless you have a specific reason and speak with me in advance. I expect all students to be actively engaged in our collective work, and these devices can be extremely distracting both to those using them and to others. Texting, browsing the internet, using Facebook etc. in class are not allowed.

Grading and Assignments
I will give qualitative feedback rather than letter grades for individual assignments for this course. Your letter grade for the course will be determined based on the overall quality of your work. The emphasis in the course is on process, learning and reflection, meaning that if you have a flop of an interview your grade will

not suffer. If you seriously engage with the class discussion and assignments and hand your work in on time you will do well. I expect all students to participate in class discussion – if this is an issue for you please let me know right away. Please speak with me if at any point you are concerned about your performance in the class.

Class Participation (including attendance, preparation, timeliness, and engagement): 30%
Interviews and Accompanying Assignments: 70%

Assignment	Due Date
Peer Interview Part 1	9-13
Project Design Draft	9-18
Project Design Final	9-27
Legal Release and Explanation	9-27
Peer Interview Part 2 with Field Notes	9-27
Recording to Evaluate for Audio Quality	10-11
Interview 3	10-16
Peer Review 1	10-18
Transcript and Index	10-18
Interview 4	11-1
Archiving Plan	11-15
Peer Reviews 2 and 3	11-20
Interview 5	11-22
Deadline to Submit Interviews for Eval by Amy	11-22
Revised Project Design	12-6
Final Project	12-14
Reflective Essay	12-14

September 6 *Nuts and Bolts, Part 1: Audio Recording; Interview Strategies, Part 1: Introduction to Oral History*
Introduction to course and classmates; syllabus review; peer interviews. Audio recorder training.

Assignment: Record a 1.5-2 hour first session of a life history interview with a peer from the class. Have them sign a consent form (to be distributed in class). NOTE: You do NOT have to hand in this interview unless you want it to be one of the two you submit for instructor feedback. Due Sept. 13.

   NOTE: This first session will include a basic introduction to audio recording. Please bring your full recording kit to this first class session.

September 13 *Nuts and Bolts, Part 2: Project Design*
Discussion of peer interviews; project design, IRB. Audio recording trouble-shooting.

   Readings:

Anderson, Kathryn and Dana C. Jack, "Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses." In *The Oral History Reader, 3rd Edition*, edited by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, 179-192. New York: Routledge, 2016.

Columbia University Institutional Review Board. "IRB Review of Oral History Projects." http://www.columbia.edu/cu/irb/policies/documents/OralHistoryPolicy.FINAL.012308.pdf, 2007.

High, Steven. "Interviewing Survivors" in *Oral History at the Crossroads: Sharing Life Stories of Survival and Displacement*, 33-65. Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press, 2014.

Larson, Mary A. "Research Design and Strategies." In *History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology*, edited by Thomas L. Charlton, Lois E. Myers and Rebecca Sharpless, 95-124. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2007.

Leavy, Patricia. "Research Design." In *Oral History: Understanding Qualitative Research*, 27-36. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Yow, Valerie. "Interviewing Techniques." In *The Oral History Reader, 3rd Edition*, edited by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, 153-178. New York: Routledge, 2016. (If you have the 2nd Edition of the Reader, you can read the longer version of this in *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences,* 92-120. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2005 – a scan is in Canvas)

Optional:

Sheftel, Anna and Stacey Zembrzycki. "Introduction." In *Oral History off the Record: Towards an Ethnography of Practice*, edited by Anna Sheftel and Stacey Zembrzycki, 1-19. New York: Palgrave, 2013. **YOU MAY SKIM FOR INSETS ON FIRST INTERVIEW EXPERIENCES.**

Terkel, Studs and Tony Parker. "Interviewing an Interviewer." In *The Oral History Reader, 3rd Edition*, edited by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, 146-152. New York: Routledge, 2016.

Assignment: Working with your assigned partner group or thinking about your thesis or capstone, create a draft project design for your semester's work. In this project design, you will need to balance the needs of your partner group or the end goals of your research with the requirements of the course. You should submit a complete draft by Sept 18. We will discuss the drafts in class on the 20th and final drafts are due Sept. 27. Please include the following information and documents in the final draft *as a single word document*.

- Project Title
- Partner Group (if applicable)
- Project Goal(s) – Why are you doing this project?
- Who will you interview and why?
- What kind of research will you do to prepare?
- How will you approach interviewees and explain the project to them? Include a letter of invitation.
- What will you ask about in the interviews? (This is your interview guide.)

- What are the final products of the project? (Archive? Edited audio? Transcripts? Abstracts? Indexes?) Why did you choose these final products?
- What will you give back to narrators? Project partners? The community in which you're working?
- Legal release and explanation (note that this need not be a part of the first draft)

September 20 *Power, Part 1: Legal and Ethical Issues*
Discussion of project designs; field notes; interviewing protocols.

Readings:
Dougherty, Jack and Candace Simpson. "Who Owns Oral History? A Creative Commons Solution," in *Oral History in the Digital Age*, edited by Doug Boyd, Steve Cohen, Brad Rakerd, and Dean Rehberger. Washington, D.C.: Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2012, http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/2012/06/a-creative-commons-solution/

High, Steven. "Blurred Boundaries" in *Oral History at the Crossroads: Sharing Life Stories of Survival and Displacement*, 265-289. Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press, 2014.

Neuenschwander, John A. "Legal Release Agreements." In *A Guide to Oral History and the Law*, 3rd Edition, 3-19. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Oral History Association Principles and Best Practices: http://www.oralhistory.org/do-oral-history/principles-and-practices/, 2009.

Shopes, Linda. "Legal and Ethical Issues in Oral History." In *History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology*, edited by Thomas L. Charlton, Lois E. Myers and Rebecca Sharpless, 125-159. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2007.

Assignment: Create a legal release for your project, **with a short preface explaining why you structured it as you did**. Due with project design Sept. 27.

Assignment: Schedule and record a second session of your peer interview. Take field notes, submit them via Canvas assignments, and come prepared to share an excerpt from them in class. Due by Sept. 27. NOTE: You do NOT have to hand in this interview unless you want it to be one of the two you submit for instructor feedback.

September 27 *Nuts and Bolts, Part 3: Transcribing and Indexing; Interviewing Strategies, Part 2: Balancing Focus and Life History*
Discussion of peer interviews; workshop on transcribing and indexing; balancing focus and life history.

Readings:
Mazé, Elinor A. "The Uneasy Page: Transcribing and Editing Oral History." In *History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology*, edited by Thomas L. Charlton, Lois E. Myers and Rebecca Sharpless, 227-261. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2007.

Shopes, Linda. "Transcribing Oral History in the Digital Age," in *Oral History in the Digital Age*, edited by Doug Boyd, Steve Cohen, Brad Rakerd, and Dean Rehberger. Washington, D.C.: Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2012, http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/2012/06/transcribing-oral-history-in-the-digital-age/

Umpster, Thadeaus. Oral history interview by Amy Starecheski. Squatters' Rights Collection, OH068. The Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University Libraries, 2010.

NOTE: We will be using InqScribe transcription software. Please bring a laptop to class with this software installed and the audio from your first interview uploaded.

Assignment: Bring in a recording you would like to have evaluated for audio quality on October 11. Prepare to play a short (no more than 1-2 minutes) clip for the class. I suggest you also bring in your kits, so we can troubleshoot.

Assignment: Schedule and record an interview by October 16. By October 18, index this entire interview and transcribe at least five pages of it. Introduce your transcription with a paragraph describing your approach to transcribing, citing the course readings, and annotate it to show places where you made important choices about how to transcribe.

NO CLASS OCTOBER 4 – ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING

October 11 *Nuts and Bolts, Part 4: Audio Recording Troubleshooting*
Sharing and discussion of audio recordings; fine-tuning our recording skills. OHA debrief.

Assignment: For October 18, listen to another student's two session peer interview. Share written feedback directly with your peer AND submit it to Amy via Canvas.

October 18 *Power, Part 2: Doing and Teaching Oral History from an Anti-Oppression Standpoint*
Discussion of peer reviews; anti-oppression workshop.

Readings:
Kerr, Daniel. "'We Know What the Problem Is': Using Oral History to Develop a Collaborative Analysis of Homelessness from the Bottom up." *Oral History Review* 30:1 (2003): 27-45.

Nguyen, Nicole and Tina Catania. "On Feeling Depleted: Naming, Confronting, and Surviving Oppression in the Academy." The Feminist Wire. 2014. http://thefeministwire.com/2014/08/feeling-depleted-naming-confronting-surviving-oppression-academy/

Torre, María Elena. "Participatory Action Research and Critical Race Theory: Fueling Spaces for Nos-Otras to Research." *The Urban Review* 41.1 (2009): 106–120.

Additional Resources:
http://aorta.coop/resources/
http://www.oralhistoryforsocialchange.org/blog/2016/6/17/0ddgw3kt10deh6kc7fgwg55uc0xm2b

Assignment: Schedule, prepare for, and conduct an interview by November 1.

October 25 *Archiving, Part 1: Digital Archiving*
What is metadata? What are the archiving best practices for oral history, and how can we plan to meet them?
Guest: Kimberly Springer, Curator, Columbia Center for Oral History Archives

Readings:
Boyd, Douglas A. "Case Study: Interviewer-Generated Metadata." In *Oral History in the Digital Age*, edited by Doug Boyd, Steve Cohen, Brad Rakerd, and Dean Rehberger. Washington, D.C.: Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2012, http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/2012/06/interviewer-generated-metadata/

Fogerty, James E. "Oral History and Archives: Documenting Context." In *History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology*, edited by Thomas L. Charlton, Lois E. Myers and Rebecca Sharpless, 197-211. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2007. **NOTE: THIS IS NOT THE FULL CHAPTER!**

Mazé, Elinor A. "Metadata: Best Practices for Oral History Access and Preservation." In *Oral History in the Digital Age*, edited by Doug Boyd, Steve Cohen, Brad Rakerd, and Dean Rehberger. Washington, D.C.: Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2012, http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/2012/06/metadata/. **NOTE: YOU DO NOT HAVE TO MASTER THE DETAILS IN THIS MATERIAL. JUST FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH THE LANGUAGE AND IDEAS.**

Nelson, Cyns and Lauren Kata. "The OHA Metadata Task Force: The Force Behind Our Task" In *Oral History in the Digital Age*, edited by Doug Boyd, Steve Cohen, Brad Rakerd, and Dean Rehberger. Washington, D.C.: Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2015, http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/2015/10/the-oha-metadata-task-force-the-force-behind-our-task/

Assignment: Create an archiving plan for your thesis, capstone or fieldwork project. Reach out to potential repositories. Describe if, where and when the interviews will be archived, what other documentation will accompany them, and why you have made the (admittedly) tentative decisions you have. You should also include a metadata collection plan. This could look like a table or spreadsheet, and should indicate what kind of metadata you will collect and how it will be organized. Include the metadata for interviews you have already conducted. If you are planning to archive with the Columbia Center for Oral History Archives, you can just use all of their forms. Due Nov. 15.

November 1 *Nuts and Bolts Part 5: Sustaining Our Work: Fundraising and Developing Support for Oral History*

Readings:

Review successful oral history grant applications, filed in a folder in the readings section of Canvas. There are a lot here – look at them all, and read at least a few in depth. **PLEASE DO NOT SHARE THESE BEYOND THE CLASS. I COMPILED THEM ONLY FOR THE USE OF CURRENT OHMA STUDENTS.**

Review these successful oral history crowdfunding sites and an essay on crowdfunding:

- o   http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/416514342/wild-abandon-stories-of-wyoming-lesbians
- o   http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1745642955/lompoc-oral-history-project?ref=search
- o   https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/memoria-presente-one-community-s-struggle-for-memory?show_todos=true
- o   http://chronicle.com/blognetwork/tenuredradical/2013/02/how-i-learned-to-stop-worrying-and-love-crowdfunding/

Review applications for the Schlesinger Library Oral History Grant, the OHA Emerging Crises Research Grant, the Charlton Oral History Research Award, and Humanities New York.

Smith, Andrea. "Introduction: The Revolution Will Not Be Funded." In *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*, edited by INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, 1-18. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2004.

Assignment: Listen to and comment on two of your peers' interviews. What do you notice about their styles? What does listening to others teach you about your own style? Come prepared to share at least one important moment from your listening. Share written feedback directly with your peer AND submit it to Amy via Canvas. Due Nov. 20.

Assignment: By November 22, conduct one more interview for your project.

November 8 *Interviewing Strategies, Part 3: Using Research in Interviews*

Readings:
Morrissey, Charles T. "Oral History Interviews: From Inception to Closure." In *History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology*, edited by Thomas L. Charlton, Lois E. Myers and Rebecca Sharpless, 160-196. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2007.

Urbina, Ricardo. Oral history interview by Myron Farber. Rule of Law Oral History Project. Columbia Center for Oral History Archives, 2013.

November 15 *Power, Part 3: Becoming an Interviewer: The Oral History Relationship*
Sharing and discussion of peer reviews.

Readings:
Freund, Alexander. "Towards an Ethics of Silence? Negotiating Off the Record Events and Identity in Oral History." In *Oral History off the Record: Towards an Ethnography of Practice*, edited by Anna Sheftel and Stacey Zembrzycki, 223-237. New York: Palgrave, 2013.

James, Daniel. "Listening in the Cold: The Practice of Oral History in an Argentine Meatpacking Community." In *The Oral History Reader, 3rd Edition*, edited by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, 73-91. New York: Routledge, 2016.

Norkunas, Martha. "The Vulnerable Listener." In *Oral History off the Record: Towards an Ethnography of Practice*, edited by Anna Sheftel and Stacey Zembrzycki, 81-96. New York: Palgrave, 2013.

Optional:

Yow, Valerie. "'Do I Like Them Too Much?': Effects of the Oral History Interview on the Interviewer and Vice-Versa." *Oral History Review* 24:1 (1997): 55-79.

NO CLASS NOVEMBER 22 – THANKSGIVING BREAK

November 29 *Nuts and Bolts, Part 6: The Iterative Process of Project Development; Interviewing Strategies, Part 4: The Embodied Interview*
Revisiting our project designs; planning to complete the projects. Planning for thesis and capstone work; discussion of Spring semester. Discussion of embodiment and oral history.

Reading:

Project Development:

Cruikshank, Julie and Tatiana Argounova-Low. " 'On' and 'Off' the Record in Shifting Times and Circumstances." In *Oral History off the Record: Towards an Ethnography of Practice*, edited by Anna Sheftel and Stacey Zembrzycki, 43-58. New York: Palgrave, 2013.

Jessee, Erin. "The Limits of Oral History: Ethics and Methodology Amid Highly Politicized Research Settings." *Oral History Review* 38:2 (2011): 287-307.

Embodiment:

Bhagwati, Sandeep. "Lamentations: A Gestural Theater in the Realm of Shadows." In *Remembering Mass Violence: Oral History, New Media, and Performance*, edited by Steven High, Edward Little, and Thi Ry Duong, 77-90. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014.

Boyd, Nan Alamilla. "Talking About Sex: Cheryl Gonzales and Rikki Streicher Tell Their Stories." In *Bodies of Evidence: The Practice of Queer Oral History*, edited by Nan Alamilla Boyd and Horacio N. Roque Ramirez, 95-112. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Assignment: Revise your project design to reflect your work over the semester and your deliverables for your partner groups. Use track changes and comments and/or include a cover letter to explain how and why your plans have evolved since September. Due Dec. 6.

December 6 *Oral History and Anthropology: Fieldwork and Ethnography of Oral History*
Discussion of relationship between participant observation and interviewing and between anthropological life histories and oral histories. Discussion of anthropological approaches to the study of oral history as a social practice.

Readings:

Duneier, Mitchell, Hakim Hasan, and Ovie Carter. "Introduction" and "Afterword." In *Sidewalk,* 1-14, 312-330. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999.

Shostak, Marjorie. "Introduction" in *Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman*, 1-7, 17-43. New York: Vintage Books, 1981.

Linde, Charlotte. "The Acquisition of a Speaker by a Story: How History Becomes Memory and Identity." *Ethos* 28.4 (2001): 608–632.

Trouillot, Michel-Ralph. "The Power in the Story." In *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, 1-30. Boston: Beacon Press, 1995.

Optional:

Angrosino, Michael V. "Conducting a Life History Interview." In *Doing Cultural Anthropology, 3rd Edition*, 33-44. Prospect Heights: Waveland, 2007. **(SKIM)**

di Leonardo, Micaela. "Oral History as Ethnographic Encounter." *The Oral History Review* 15.1 (1987): 1–20.

Papailias, Penelope. "Writing Home in the Archive: 'Refugee Memory' and the Ethnography of Documentation." In *Archives, Documentation, and Institutions of Social Memory: Essays from the Sawyer Seminar*, edited by Francis X. Blouin Jr. and William G. Rosenberg, 402-416. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006.

Stack, Trevor. "The Skewing of History in Mexico." *American Ethnologist* 33.3 (2006): 427–443.

Assignment: Write a short (3-5 pp) essay reflecting on your development as an interviewer, the development of your project, and your plans for the Spring. Hand in with your Final Project. Due Dec. 14, 9AM.

By December 14, 9AM:
- **Submit final projects to partner groups (if applicable) and to Amy. The content of your final project depends on your project design. You should be submitting everything you said you would produce for your project, including signed legal releases. You may want to use Dropbox if you're submitting audio files – you could even share the same Dropbox folder with me and with your project partner. Please organize all of your materials, name your files in a coherent way, and include a cover sheet showing what is included.**