



**HIST 566.01E (#23349)  
Oral History Theory and Methods  
Course Syllabus: Spring 2020**

**Location and Time:** W 4:30-7:20 pm, Ferguson SS 150

**Instructor:** Dr. Andrew C. Baker

**Office Location:** Ferguson 106

**Office Hours:** M 2 – 5 pm, T/R 3:30 – 4:30 pm and by appointment

**Office Phone:** 903-468-8742

**Office Fax:** 903-468-3230

**University Email Address:** [Andrew.Baker@tamuc.edu](mailto:Andrew.Baker@tamuc.edu)

**Required Materials**

Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, Routledge, 2010.

Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 3rd ed., Oxford, 2015

Anna Deavere Smith, *Fires in the Mirror*, Anchor Books, 1993.

Additional readings and course materials can be found on D2L, under the document sharing tab, or through links provided in this syllabus.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will collect, index, and interpret oral history interviews.
2. Students will understand the ethical, moral, and theoretical issues involved in conducting and interpreting oral history interviews.

Course Philosophy

This course will equip you propose, conduct, and interpret a professional-quality oral history project. As such, our class time and readings will focus on theory and skills rather than content. We will practice oral and public history. Course grades, in turn, will be based on engagement in classroom discussions and the quality of the finished product produced.

**Course Assignments**

Theory Paper

Students are to submit through the D2L dropbox and in-class hard copy a 5-7 page paper responding to the following question: "What responsibilities does the oral historian have to the interviewee, the university, the historical profession, and the public? How should we respond when these responsibilities come into conflict?" Before conducting interviews in the field, students must both complete the required university (IRB) training **and** satisfactory complete the theory paper from this course (grade of B or higher). Students may revise and resubmit as necessary to achieve this grade.

Book Reviews

Graduate students are responsible for locating and reviewing a historical monograph that uses oral histories as a major component of its primary source base. This book may be in any field of the student's

interest. The review should pay special attention to the use of oral history sources and should follow the requirements listed in the guide on D2L.

### Interviews

Students will conduct two mock interviews, observe two interviews, and conduct two of their own interviews over the course of the semester. These interviews should follow all the standard policies and procedures as outlined through the materials available on D2L. They will be housed in the Northeast Texas Digital Collections site. For each interview conducted or observed each student must submit a written reflection via D2L describing their actions, the process, and opportunities for improvement. These should be at least 300 words.

### Indexes

You will be responsible for completing three indexes over the course of the semester. These indexes should follow the style guide located on D2L and will be graded for accuracy, comprehensiveness, and quality of interpretation.

### Oral History Project

Over the course of the semester the students will design and create a large public history project that uses the interviews conducted along with local and regional historical materials. This project will be due at the end of the semester and will include both a group and individual grade.

### Grading

Final grades in this course will be based on the following scale:

A = 90%-100%   B = 80%-89%   C = 70%-79%   D = 60%-69%   F = 59% or Below

### Assessment

IRB Forms/RCR Training	50
Theory Paper	100
Mock Interviews (2x25)	50
Observations (2x25)	50
Conducting Interviews (2x50)	100
Indexes (3x50)	150
Book Reviews (2x50)	100
Project Group	300
Project Individual	100
Participation	100
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Total	1100

### **Course Schedule**

Weeks 1-3 (work due on January 30 via D2L)

Read: Belmont Report ([online](#)), Oral History and IRB ([online](#)), and IRB Minimal Review Form ([online](#)).

Assignment: Responsible Conduct of Research Training (bring a printed report to class)

Submit: Book review 1

In consultation with Dr. Baker, select oral history interview from Northeast Texas Digital Collections to index

Week 4, February 5: Course Introduction

Read: Abrams chapter 1-2, Ritchie chapter 1-2

Lecture: How to Index

Week 5, February 12: Memory and Narrative

Class Discussion: Analyze Talbot interview

Conduct Mock Interview #1 before class

Class Activity: Debrief Mock Interview #1

Week 6, February 19: Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity

Conduct Mock Interview #2 before class

Class Activity: Diagram an OH

Reading: Abrams chapter 3-4

Due: Archival interview index

Class Activity: Debrief Mock Interview #2

Week 7, February 26: No Class

Theory Paper due via D2L

Week 8, March 4: Questions and Narrative

Class Discussion: Lance/Oprah ([here](#) and [here](#)), Larry King ([here](#) and [here](#))

Read: Abrams chapter 6, Ritchie chapter 3

Week 9, March 11: No Class

Due: Review # 2 via D2L

Week 10, March 18: Project Planning

Interview Debriefing and Project Planning

Read: Ritchie chapters 4-8

Week 11, March 25: Race and Oral History

Read: Smith, *Fires in the Mirror*

Read: Abrams chapter 7

Week 12, April 1: Power and the Interviewer

Read: Abrams chapter 8

Week 13, April 8: Story Corps

Class Activity: Story Corps listening

Reading: Alexander Freund, "Under Storytelling's Spell? Oral History in a Neoliberal Age," *Oral History Review* 42.1 (2015): 96-132 and "Confessing Animals," *Oral History Review* 41.2 (2014), 314-24

Week 14, April 15

Conduct Interviews; Plan and execute class project

Week 15, April 22

Conduct Interviews; Plan and execute class project

Week 16, April 29

Conduct Interviews; Plan and execute class project

Week 18, May 6

Submit final project; all indexes and work completed

### **Student Responsibilities**

#### Classroom Participation

All students enrolled at the university shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. Students are expected to contribute to classroom discussions. Thoughtful participation means more than talking frequently, although this is encouraged. It means demonstrating both a knowledge of and a willingness to think critically about the assigned readings. Students are encouraged to engage not only with the professor and the material, but also with each other where appropriate. Students must remain a respect for their colleagues at all times.

#### Technology

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See current Student Guidebook). Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum: [Netiquette](#)

Some course materials will be posted to the course website, managed through Pearson LearningStudio. To get started with the course, go to [myLeo](#). <http://www.tamuc.edu/myleo.aspx>

#### Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism

Do not engage in any of the following:

- Plagiarism: The adoption or reproduction of ideas, words, statements, images, or works of another person as one's own without proper attribution. This includes self-plagiarism, which occurs when an author submits material or research from a previous academic exercise to satisfy the requirements of another exercise and uses it without proper citation of its reuse.
- Cheating: Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise. This includes unapproved collaboration, which occurs when a student works with others on an academic exercise without the express permission of the professor. The term academic exercise includes all forms of work submitted for credit or hours.
- Fabrication: Unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.

Going online and taking information without proper citations, copying parts of other student's work, creating information for the purposes of making your paper seem more official, or anything involving taking someone else's thoughts or ideas without proper attribution is academic misconduct. If you have a question about an assignment, please come see me to clarify. Any cases of academic misconduct may be reported to university administration for violating the academic honesty requirements in the student handbook. They will also result in failure of the assignment in question and possibly for the course.

### **Procedures and Policies**

#### Drop/Withdrawal

If you decide that you need to drop or withdrawal from this course, it is your responsibility to complete the necessary paperwork. I will not drop you from the course if you stop attending.

### Electronic Devices

Students are permitted to bring laptop computers to class for the purpose of note taking. Students are NOT permitted, however, to check e-mail, use the internet, complete other assignments, update facebook profiles, or use their computer or cell phone for any purpose other than taking notes unless expressly instructed to by the professor. Please silence your phones when you arrive each day.

### Email Communication

All course communications will come through your university email account. Be sure to check it regularly. You should contact me through my TAMU-C email address (Andrew.Baker@tamuc.edu). I check my email regularly between 8 am and 5 pm Monday – Friday. I do not check my campus email on Sunday. A failure of planning on your part does not constitute a crisis on my part.

### Attendance

Regular attendance is vital so success in the course. Each unexcused absence after the third will result in a loss of 30 points from a student's participation grade. Only medical and family emergencies and university approved absences will be excused. Normal sickness does not qualify as an emergency and will only be excused with a doctor's note. Students are expected to obtain class notes from fellow students when absent. Students who show up more than five minutes late to class will be considered absent for that day.

### Make-up Work

Make-up tests will only be offered in the case of an excused absence as described above. Students who anticipate university-approved absences must make arrangements to complete the work at an alternate time. Late work will be penalized a letter grade per day late (including weekends) to a maximum penalty of half credit.

### Syllabus Changes

The syllabus is a plan, not a contract. Circumstances and events may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced as far in advance as is practicable.

### **ADA Statement**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services, Gee Library, Room 162  
(903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835 phone  
(903) 468-8148 fax

Website: [Office of Student Disability Resources and Services](#)

### Nondiscrimination Notice

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from

discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

#### Campus Concealed Carry

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations. For a list of locations, please refer to (<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>) and/or consult your event organizer). Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.