UO Student Vets Oral History Project

History 410/510
Winter 2014, CRN 24030
Tuesday/Thursday – 12:00-1:20; Lillis 175

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Office hours: Wed. 2:00-3:30; Thurs. 10-11:30; or by appointment.

I wish to emphasize by appointment - later in the term I will be meeting with each interview team and we will make arrangements for each meeting individually.

What this class is about

This course is designed to support the UO Vets Oral History Project. Its central purpose is to prepare for and conduct interviews with military service men and women and to prepare those interviews for deposit in the university archive. Each person in the class will be assigned to an interview team of two or three individuals; each interview team will be assigned two or three interviews. Everyone in the class will be responsible for transcribing and otherwise preparing one or possibly two interviews for deposit in the archive.

To that end we will look at oral history, both as a form of historical memory and as a method of historical research. Most of the first half of the term will be devoted to preparing to conduct and transcribe the interviews. In the second half of the course we will turn to the uses of oral history and look several examples of oral history in the field of military history.

The UO Student Vets Oral History Project documents for permanent safekeeping in the University of Oregon’s archive the experiences of a significant part of the university community, its military veterans and those serving in the active service, reserves, and guards. The project is intended to be all-inclusive: any service, any place, any time. Its primary aim is to allow those who have or continue to serve a chance to document their experiences as they wish them to be documented. Where there is sufficient interest and resources, the project also seeks to document the experiences of select individuals within the wider community as well.

Acknowledgments

Before proceeding to a schedule of the actual class, I wish to acknowledge the generous financial support of the Williams Council and the logistical support of Special Collections in Knight Library. Without their support this project would not exist. I also
wish to thank John Fenn for his help in putting together this course and Kevin Wiles for his encouragement and collaboration.

This is now the third iteration of the class and it is now time to acknowledge the contributions of two further groups: the veterans who have agreed to volunteer their time, experience, and memories, and the students who have taken this class (often one and same person). Their on-going support is what makes the continuation of the project possible.

Assignments/expectations

Because of the nature of the class, attendance is mandatory. There is a possibility that we will cancel a class or two in the second half of the term but you are otherwise expected to be here.


In addition, the following are the assignments for the term.

1. *CITI certification*: an online training program in the ethics of research that you must complete by end of Week 3. To begin go to the following web page:

http://humansubjects.uoregon.edu/citi.cfm

Instructions and an explanation are on that page, but we will also be discussing this in class as well.

   **This must be finished by the end of the week 2.**

2. *In-class interview* exercises. A series of exercises that we will work on during class periods for the first four weeks. The three exercises include: composing an oral history interview; interviewing a classmate; and creating a transcript.

   These interview transcriptions will be due in in week 4 (Thursday, Feb. 2)

3. *Interviews*: Preparing for your interviews; conducting the interviews; transcribing the interviews; and putting together the documentation for deposit in the archive is the bulk of the formal work for the term.

4. *Final paper*: Together with the interview, you will submit a paper describing and analyzing your interviews, what you think went where, points you think you might have
managed more effectively, the choices you made in transcriptions, and the main interest and uses you see in the interviews you conducted.

Both the finalized interviews and paper will be due during finals week. However, because I am the editor, I welcome the submission all such work at any point before the end of the term.

The interview and your paper together constitute the formal work for the term (the equivalent of a term paper, so to speak).

If you wish a formal breakdown of relative values of these assignments:

1. CITI certification: 5% (but you may not conduct an interview without completing this task)
2. In-class interview exercise: 10%
3. Interview(s) and transcript(s): 70%
4. Final Paper: 15%

Grading policy is as follows:

A single interview (with all documentation and a properly edited transcript ready to be transferred to the archive) guarantees a B+ (and may go higher depending on length of the interview and quality of the transcript and final paper).

A second interview (with all documentation and a transcript ready to be transferred to the archive) guarantees an A- (and may go higher depending on length of the interview and quality of the transcript and final paper).

All course materials are due on the last day of tenth week, March 14.

Week 1

Jan. 7: Intro: about the project and what we’ll be doing in this class

Jan. 9: What is oral history? Doing oral history: setting up the project and why we’re doing it this way

    Read: Ritchie, Doing Oral History, ch. 1 and 2 (skip 64-75: we’ll return to transcriptions later)

Week 2
Jan. 14: Conducting interviews, pt. 1

   Read: Ritchie, Doing Oral History, ch. 3, “Conducting Interviews”

   Procedural issues: setting up and preparing for an interview; how to use the recorders

   You **should have started (if you haven't already)**: CITI certification:
   [http://humansubjects.uoregon.edu/citi.cfm](http://humansubjects.uoregon.edu/citi.cfm)

   Also: you and your interview partner should peruse the list of interviewees and let me know if you have any preferences.

Jan. 16: Last year’s interviews: what worked, what did not

   Read: We’ll all read Kelley Hickman’s interview. You should read at least one other interview.
   They can be found at: [http://library.uoregon.edu/tools/exhibits/uovets/?page_id=8](http://library.uoregon.edu/tools/exhibits/uovets/?page_id=8)

   You **should have finished (if you haven't already)**: CITI certification:
   [http://humansubjects.uoregon.edu/citi.cfm](http://humansubjects.uoregon.edu/citi.cfm)

   I will announce interview assignments: you should start contacting your interviewees.

**Week 3**

Jan. 21: Conducting interviews, pt. 2 – in-class interviews of classmates followed discussion

   Conducting an interview; interview outline, questions, managing interview

Jan. 23: Basics of interview ethics and dealing with potential problems: Attendance is **mandatory**

**Week 4**:

Jan. 28: Preparing for interviews and dealing with potential problems
N.B.: You should all be scheduling your interviews

Jan. 30: No class: set aside for in class meetings with interview teams

Week 5

Here on out: we’ll start each day talking about anything that has come up in your interviews. We will not be meeting everyday – we’ll decide as the quarter continues.

Feb. 4: Transcription: how and why (more interesting than it sounds)

Read: Ritchie, Doing Oral History, 64-75

Assignment: transcribe five minutes of an interview (I will announce the section to be transcribed) and bring the transcription to class. We will compare our transcriptions in class. I strongly urge you to read the Ritchie before doing the transcription.

Feb. 6: How the interviews are going - discuss problems/issues

Week 6:

Feb. 11: How interviews are going


Week 7

Feb. 18: Oral history: what for?

Read: Ritchie, Doing Oral History, ch. 4, “Using Oral History”

Feb. 20: Oral histories: different styles, pt. 1
Read: TBA and posted to the course Blackboard site

For the next few days we’ll read some examples of oral history in the field of military history. I’ll be selecting works that represent a range of styles. We’ll be reading them with an eye to two issues: 1) contrasting interview techniques; and 2) contrasting ways of using interviews and presenting the materials obtained in an interview.

Week 8

Feb. 25: Oral histories, continued

Feb. 27: No class – work on transcripts.

Week 9:

March 4: Preparing interviews for archiving – technical issues and review of what must be done

March 6: Oral histories, continued

Week 10

March 11: No class? - Work on transcripts

March 13: Talk about the project and where you think it should go

March 14: all materials for the course are due, my office