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HSTR 370.01: Practicing Oral History

Joann C. Pavilack

University of Montana, Missoula, jody.pavilack@umontana.edu

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HSTR 370.01: Practicing Oral History
CRN 339556, University of Montana, Department of History
Professor Jody Pavilack jody.pavilack@umontana.edu
Spring 2022, Th, 2-4:50
[co-convening with HSTR 595, Professor Kyle Volk]



This class will meet face-to-face in LA 234 when we can, and on Zoom at [Professor Pavilack's ZOOM classroom & office](#) when we have to. Some Zoom days that we already know about are noted on the syllabus (1/20, 2/17, 2/24); other weeks, I will let you know as much in advance as I can.

HSTR 370 and HSTR 595 (Spring 2022) are core courses for the [UM Undergraduate and Graduate Certificates in Public History](#). Contact me or [Professor Anya Jabour](#) for more information!

Course Description

This course trains students in a vital area of public history: the practice of conducting, interpreting, and using oral history as a source of knowledge about our society. We will study different methods, uses, and meanings of oral history, and students will learn best practices for conducting and processing interviews. Each student will then carry out several interviews focused on the COVID-19 experiences of Asians and Asian Americans, Native Americans, and rural residents in Western Montana, in broader community and life history contexts, particularly highlighting issues of equity, discrimination, and diversity in health care. These interviews will become part of [the collection of COVID-19 oral histories](#) maintained on Scholarworks by the Mansfield Library Archives.

Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes:

- Students will learn about the history and significance of different forms oral testimony for human knowledge
- Students will learn about real-time (rapid response & crisis) collection of historical sources
- Students will learn about the COVID-19 era living and working conditions of select populations in western Montana, particularly in terms of access to and equity in health care and social resources.

- Students will learn and practice the skills of setting up, designing, and conducting oral interviews
- Students will learn different modes of processing, preserving, and disseminating oral histories
- Students will learn to write an interpretive narrative from their oral histories
- Students will process and contribute their oral history interviews to the Mansfield Library Archives, and will help develop promotional materials to disseminate them to the public

Required readings:

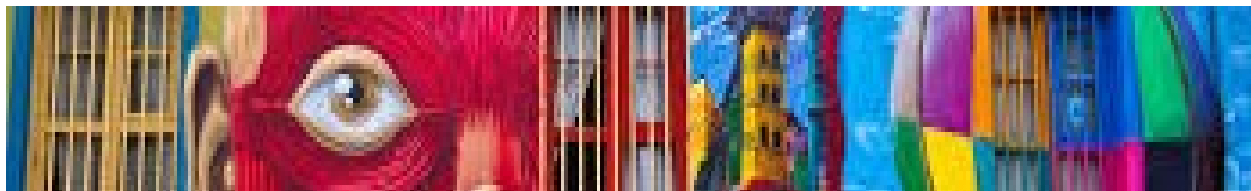
- Articles, chapters, websites, and archival collections listed in the schedule below and posted on Moodle as pdfs.
- For an extensive list of oral history readings and resources, see the Oral History Mega Bibliography.

Assignments and Assessment

Weekly Participation:	25%
Weekly Exercises & Journal Entries:	25%
Completion of 3 Interviews:	30%
Processing & Promotion of Interviews:	10%
Essay of Interpretive Narrative or Methodological Reflection (5 pp):	10%
TOTAL:	100%

COVID-19 Protocols

- Mask use is required at all times in the classroom. Social distancing (6 feet) should be maintained as much as possible. Drinking liquids and eating food is discouraged within the classroom. Class attendance and seating may be recorded to support contact tracing efforts.
- UM recommends students get the COVID-19 vaccine. Please direct your questions or concerns about vaccines to Curry Health Center.
- If you feel sick, exhibit COVID-19 symptoms, or are a close contact of a person with COVID-19, please do not come to class and contact the Curry Health Center at (406) 243-4330.
- If you are required to isolate or quarantine, contact me so we can work out the support you need to maintain your continued progress in the course.



Weekly Schedule

1) Jan 20: Introduction to the Class & to Each Other




2) Jan 27: The History & Practice of Oral History

FOR CLASS TODAY:

- *READ:* [Erica Fugger, "The Practice and Application of Oral History,"](#) U.S. History Scene, April 11, 2015. Watch the embedded video, "Voices from the Time of Slavery."
- *WATCH:* [Ronald J. Grele, "The History of Oral History,"](#) (6:48 mins) recorded Jun 8, 2010.
- *WATCH:* [Sandro Portelli, "Speaking of Oral History,"](#) (8:23 mins) Canada's History, April 27, 2016.
- *WATCH:* [Alexander Freund, The Oral History Centre \(Winnepeg\), "What is Oral History?"](#)
- *EXPLORE:* [UM History Covid-10 Oral Histories on Scholarworks in the Mansfield Library Digital Archives,](#) conducted in summer 2020.
- *DO:* Set up a journal (as a Word folder or a notebook)—this will be used for reading notes, exercises, pre-interview notes, outlines, questions, post-interview reflections, etc.
- *DO:* Make an entry in your journal of your thoughts from this week's readings and videos.

GRADUATE STUDENTS ADDITIONAL REQS:

- Perks, Robert and Alistair Thomson, "Introduction to the third edition" and "Part I, Critical Developments: Introduction: A History of Oral History," in *The Oral History Reader*, pp. xiiv-xx, 1-21.
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3) Feb 3: Oral Interviews as part of Rapid Response & Crisis Documentation

FOR CLASS TODAY:

- *READ:* Lucie Levine, ["How to Gather the Oral Histories of COVID-19: The Federal Writers' Project Offers Vital Lessons,"](#) J-Stor Daily, December 2, 2020 (12 pp.)
- *EXPLORE:* [Library of Congress website "American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1940"](#)

- *READ*: Mark Cave, "What Remains: Reflections on Crisis Oral History," in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds., *The Oral History Reader*, 3rd ed. (Routledge, 2016), pp. 92-103.
- *DO*: Think about the kinds of people you would find most interesting to interview and what kinds of questions you would want to ask them.. . Write up.
- *EXPLORE*: Anything you can find on the web about the groups, organizations, people you think would be interesting to interview. ... Write up in your journal.

4) Feb 10: Best Practices in Oral History

FOR CLASS TODAY:

- *EXPLORE*: [Oral History Association \(OHA\) website](#)
- *READ*: [OHA Principles & Best Practices](#) (revised 2018); especially be sure to read the [link on "Best Practices"](#).
- *READ*: "Studs Terkel with Tony Parker, Interviewing an Interviewer," Ch. 10 in *The Oral History Reader*, 3rd ed. (Routledge, 2016), pp. 147-152.
- *READ*: Valerie Yow, "Interviewing Techniques and Strategies," Ch. 11 in *The Oral History Reader*, 3rd ed. (Routledge, 2016), pp. 153-178.
- *DO*: Review the list of possible interviewees; continue researching organizations, communities, people; rank your topic 10 in order.

GRADUATE STUDENTS ADDITIONAL REQS:

- *READ*: Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds., "Part II: Interviewing," in *The Oral History Reader*, 3rd ed. (Routledge, 2016), pp. 135-146.

5) Feb 17: Native Americans in Western MT & Covid-19 (guest: Professor Wade Davies)

FOR CLASS TODAY:

- *READ*: Raymond Foxworth, et.al., "[Covid-19 Vaccination in American Indians and Alaska Natives — Lessons from Effective Community Responses,](#)" *New England Journal of Medicine*, Dec. 23, 2021.
- *READ*: Claire Galofaro, "[As COVID fueled the drug crisis, Native Americans hit worst,](#)" *Missoulian*, Dec. 23, 2021.
- *READ*: Gloria Oladipo, "[Native American communities lashed by Covid, worsening chronic inequities,](#)" *The Guardian*, Dec. 13, 2021.

- *READ*: Emily Schabacker, "[COVID No. 1 cause of death among Montana Native Americans,](#)" *Missoulian*, Dec. 21, 2021.
- *DO*: Contact possible interviewees to explain the project and set up pre-interview times

6) Feb 24: Cross-Cultural Interviewing: Preparation & Deep Listening (guest: Professor Wade Davies)

FOR CLASS TODAY:

- *READ*: *READ*: Susan K. Burton, "Issues in Cross-Cultural Interviewing: Japanese Women in England," in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds., *The Oral History Reader*, 3rd ed. (Routledge, 2016), pp. 223-33.
- *READ*: Belinda Bozzoli, "Interviewing the Women of Phokeng: Consciousness and gender, insider and outsider," Ch. 14 in *The Oral History Reader*, 3rd ed (Routledge, 2016), pp. 212-222.
- *EXPLORE*: TBA
- *DO*: TBA

GRADUATE STUDENTS ADDITIONAL REQS:

- *READ*: Alexander Freund, "Toward an Ethics of Silence? Negotiating off-the-record events and identity in oral history," Ch. 17 in *The Oral History Reader*, pp. 253-66.

7) March 3: Asians & Asian Americans in Western MT & Covid-19

FOR CLASS TODAY:

- *READ*: Randol White, "['The Race Epidemic' documentary looks at the rise of hate crimes during the COVID-19 pandemic,](#)" capradio.org, Dec. 10, 2021.
- *READ*: Nicole Chavez, "[Asian American leaders fear Covid-19 origin report could fuel more bigotry and violence,](#)" cnn.com, Aug. 24, 2021.
- *READ*: "[For Asian Americans, a Dual Pandemic of COVID-19 and Racism,](#)" *The Dose*, Apr. 19, 2021.
- *READ*: Amy Yee, "[COVID's Outsize Impact on Asian Americans Is Being Ignored,](#)" *Scientific American*, May 6, 2021.
- *READ*: "Spit On, Yelled At, Attacked: Chinese-Americans Fear for Their Safety," *New York Times*, May 5, 2021.
- *DO*: Conduct pre-interview meetings; set up interview schedule; work on interview questions.

GRAD STUDENTS ADDITIONAL REQS:

- Trangdai Tranguyen, "From Childhood Storytelling to Oral History Interviews," *Oral History Review*, vol. 29, no. 2 (Summer/Fall 2002), pp. 119-126.

8) March 10: Rural Residents of Western MT & Covid-19

FOR CLASS TODAY:

- *EXPLORE*: [Rural Health Information Hub](#)
- *READ*: Liz Carey and Tim Marema, "[Why Are Rural Americans Dying Twice as Fast from Covid-19?](#)," *The Daily Yonder*, Dec. 20, 2021.
- *READ*: Karen Houghton, "[Families, Communities Divided Over COVID Vaccination In Rural Montana](#)," npr.org, May 11, 2021.
- *READ*: Olga Khazan, "[Rural America's False Sense of Security](#)," *The Atlantic*, Nov. 18, 2021.
- *[RE-]READ*: Valerie Yow, "Interviewing Techniques and Strategies," in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds., *The Oral History Reader*, 3rd ed. (Routledge, 2016), pp. 153-78.
- *DO*: Take notes on the Yow chapter in your class journal and continue developing interview questions
- *EXPLORE*: Background information relevant to your narrators.
- *DO*: Continue conducting pre-interviews, setting up interviews, writing outlines or questions, and begin interviewing, if you and your narrator are ready **[You must have the narrator's signed release before you conduct the interview]**.

9) March 17: Preparing to Interview and Conducting Interviews


FOR CLASS TODAY:

- *READ*: Anderson and Jack, "Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses," Ch. 12, in *The Oral History Reader*, pp. 179-92.
- *EXPLORE*: Continue doing background research related to your narrators.
- *DO*: Finalize your interviews outlines or questions. Conduct practice interviews. Begin conducting your interviews.

* March 24: Spring Break

10) March 31: Conducting Interviews, Assessment & Adjustment

FOR CLASS TODAY

- *DO*: Continue conducting interviews
 - *DO*: Take notes in your journal about what is working, what is not, and what ideas you have for your next scheduled interview
 - *EXPLORE*: Continue to do research and refine your notes, outlines, questions for your next interviews.
- 


11) April 7: Conducting Interviews, Transcribing, Processing

- Assignments TBA
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12) April 14: Conducting Interviews, Transcribing, Processing

- Assignments TBA
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13) April 21: Interpreting & Using Interviews

- *READ*: Alessandro Portelli, "The Death of Luigi Trastulli: Memory and the Event," pp. 1-26.
 - *DO*: Begin writing a paper of approx 5 pp either offering interpretive analysis of one or more of your interviews OR methodological reflections on the practice and meanings of oral history.
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14) April 28: Interpreting & Using Interviews

- *READ*: Daniel James, Excerpts from *Doña María's Story: Life History, Memory, and Political Identity*, pp. 31-36, 68-74, 119-25, 213-43.
 - *DO*: Continue working on your paper
- 

15) May 5: Interpreting & Using Interviews

- *READ*: TBA
 - *DO*: Submit your paper
- 

16) May 11 (WED), 1:10-3:10: Final Exam slot

