

HIS-581-01: ORAL TRADITIONS AND ORAL HISTORY
Tuesdays, 3:30 - 6:20

Fall 2005
McIver Building, Room 222

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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 1 - 2 PM, and other times by appointment

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Course Objectives: This course is an introduction to “Orality”— oral primary sources in and for history, the nature of those sources, and how they are to be gathered, analyzed, and interpreted for historical research. Hence this course is about historical methods and historical methodology, and so it is not restricted to any particular geographical area or time period. Students will be engaged in the very practical matters of research design and procedures, as well as the theoretical implications and issues raised when using oral primary sources of various kinds. Along the way, we will develop a greater awareness of and appreciation for the history of history itself.

Student Learning Goals

At the completion of this course, students should be able to:

- 👉 Demonstrate an understanding of what kinds of oral sources are used in historical research and what are their respective strengths and weaknesses;
- 👉 Demonstrate greater skepticism and improved skills in evaluating all historical sources, including written ones;
- 👉 Demonstrate a sharper awareness of how archives are created and history is written.

Undergraduate Course Requirements: 10 short (1 p.) position papers on course readings, to be handed in and also for use in class discussions, and 5 short papers (1-2 pp.) on research exercises, to be handed in and also presented in class (together, worth 35% of final grade); attendance, attentiveness, participation in class discussions, and written summaries of graduate student presentations (worth 25% of final grade); and an original research paper based entirely on oral sources gathered during the semester, including an appendix of oral evidence, research design and methodology, and evaluation of evidence (maximum 10 pp. of text, plus appendix, together worth 40% of final grade).

Graduate Course Requirements: 10 short (1 p.) position papers on course readings, to be handed in and also for use in class discussions, and 5 short papers (1-2 pp.) on research exercises, to be handed in and also presented in class (together, worth 35% of final grade); attendance, attentiveness, leadership in class discussions, in-class presentation reviewing a book on oral history, written summaries of other graduate students’ presentations (worth 25% of final grade); and an original research paper based entirely on oral sources gathered during the semester, including an appendix of oral evidence, research design and methodology, and evaluation of evidence (maximum 20-25 pp. text, plus appendix, together worth 40% of final grade).