

HIST 410
U.S. Queer Oral History

Winter 2022
Thurs. 4-6:50 pm
MCK 471

Office hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

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Oral history is the practice of gathering and interpreting others' spoken memories. It emerged with vigor out of the social movements of the late twentieth century, particularly feminist and ethnic studies movements, as a way to reclaim histories that had been excluded or marginalized in traditional historical narratives.

In this class, we will examine aspects of LGBTQ history in the twentieth-century United States through scholarly work based on oral histories. We will also conduct and interpret original oral histories while learning interviewee-centered oral history methodology. Each week we will split the class session between discussions of readings, and methodological issues.

At the last class students will report on their projects choosing from options for traditional, digital, or creative presentations.

What this course is designed to help you do:

- Develop a body of knowledge of modern American history with range and depth in order to enable you to make sense of current issues in historical perspective
- Make and evaluate historical interpretations based on evidence and with historical context
- Practice oral history methodology and ethical interview techniques
- Demonstrate in writing and oral presentation how various sources may be synthesized into a cohesive argument
- Collaborate with others in a way that builds on and enhances the skills of each individual
- *What do you hope to take from this class?* _____
- *How will you know if you've achieved your goal?* _____

How can YOU succeed in this class?

Come to office hours: I strongly encourage you to visit me during office hours to discuss the class, the process of writing, or studying history in general. Research has shown the benefits of 1:1 conversation for learning; office hours also provides **participation credit** for this course. I look forward to getting to know each student as an individual. **Please make sure to see me at least once**, preferably before mid-quarter.

- My office hours are listed on page 1 of this syllabus and can be held either in person or via Zoom – if you cannot make my regular office hours, **I am also available by appointment.**

- Please find my office hours with the appropriate links via the calendar on Canvas. Once a week I will hold individual office-hour meetings; the other day I will host a drop-in office hour, also linked in Canvas.
- We will also have a running discussion forum on our Canvas called “Class Questions and Answers” for our entire group to ask and answer. Feel free to email me during the week as well but allow at least 24 hours for me to respond during regular business hours.

Why should you reach out to me?

Talking with my students about our course material is a true pleasure—confused or excited about something? Wondering how what we’re learning relates to current events, career choices, or other classes you can take UO? Please be in touch! **Please also be in touch to tell me how you are doing**—are you having a tough week? Having trouble with some aspect of the course? I would like to strategize with you. Reach out EARLY if you encounter difficulty.

How can you make a paced weekly schedule that works for you?

Students consistently say that spreading out the reading so that they’re able to process the information makes a big difference in how much they get out of it and how successful they are with the assignments. This class will involve consistent work patterns that you can plan around. Leaving all the weekly work to the last minute will not be enough time or mental space to achieve the learning goals of the course. Come to office hours for individual help strategizing!

- There will be an average of 6-8 hours of work outside of class time per week. If that feels like a lot, ask for help!

Showing Up: In this class, the full learning experience doesn’t happen remotely, but instead through readings combined with in-class discussions. Please arrive promptly.

- Each student is allowed one “freebie” absence; however, perfect attendance will enrich your experience and your preparation. Up to three excused absences will be granted with advance notice, severe illness, or for a documented emergency and must be made up with a written reading response. (Contact me for instructions.) After the “freebie,” each *unexcused* absence will result in a lowered grade. If you have any questions about this policy, please see me at the beginning of the quarter.
- **You are responsible for all information given in class.**

What it means to be part of a learning community: Come prepared to share your ideas based on the reading and to listen and respond to others. I encourage everyone to see themselves as a co-facilitator of the discussion: keep an eye on where the discussion is going and actively participate in a respectful manner. Challenge yourself to speak at least once every class. If public speaking is difficult for you, make a plan to work up to it (and feel free to meet with me!). Not only will speaking enrich your learning, it is also an essential skill to learn for life after college. If you are someone who speaks up more readily, after you’ve participated once or twice in a class discussion make sure to leave room for others to contribute; challenge yourself to make any future comments directly engaging with or responding to something another student has said.

- Please be aware of how digital technology can interfere with others' and your ability to learn: ensure cell phones are silent and put away. Please do not use any recording devices without my prior written consent. Computers demand special levels of responsibility. Come talk to me!

How can you retain knowledge and learn from what you read?

In order to actually have your reading time pay off, it is important to interact with the text by taking notes, writing in the margins, and writing questions that come up. **Bring annotated copies of the assigned reading and/or your notes with you to class.**

But what about the big picture?

After creating your outline notes, write brief answers to these questions to solidify the big-picture takeaways from each reading.

1. What was the main argument or takeaway, in your own words?
2. What is the meaning and significance of the title of the book, article, film, or chapter (where applicable)?
3. Identify and prioritize a few key passages in the text that illustrate the main takeaway.

What will you need to produce in this class?

The assignments in this class will use **writing as a process of thinking** to build an **intellectual community**. They aim to facilitate intellectual growth, foster essential skills of collaboration, and be enjoyable as well.

- Every week you will annotate a shared reading due Monday night and participate in a Canvas discussion due Wednesday night. These will set the groundwork for an enriching conversation in class, while also extending beyond class time to foster meaningful dialogue. You will evaluate yourselves halfway through and again at the end of the class.
- Each week you will give yourself credit for the work you completed in a "Participation Declaration" on Canvas. It will also serve as a helpful reminder of weekly expectations.
- The main project will be an oral history. Students can choose between writing a paper, creating a museum exhibit (potentially digital), or creating a performance. More details provided in class.

What if you need an extension?

Talk to me *in advance of a deadline* with questions about extensions. **When in doubt: ask!** If you foresee a major scheduling conflict, we can work together to find a solution – if at all possible, please plan ahead. If you find yourself struggling with late work that is suddenly snowballing, email me *immediately*. Without additional communication, late work will be graded down a third of a letter grade per day. Please raise any concerns right away.

I also understand that the pandemic may provide more unexpected changes than usual. The University will continue to issue more details about our situation and our syllabus and course activities may need to be adjusted after the start of the term. I will be mindful of the many effects the unfolding events related to COVID-19 may be having on you. During this unusual time, if you need accommodations for the timing or form of assignments, please

communicate with me in advance and we will strive to create an alternative plan to complete required coursework.

Recommended Texts:

- John D’Emilio and Estelle Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (3rd edition)
 - o This book helped create the field of the history of sexuality when it was first published in 1988. It remains an extremely helpful source for historical context
- Nan Alamilla Boyd and Horacio Roque Ramírez, *Bodies of Evidence: The Practice of Queer Oral History*
 - o This text is available as an ebook from the UO library, but we will be reading multiple chapters from it, so it’s up to you if you’d like to get your own copy
- You’ll be researching other sources to provide context for your interviews and I am happy to be a resource! There is a rich and relevant bibliography.

All readings will be available for free – either on Canvas or accessed via the UO Library.

Some readings may include disturbing material and offensive language. History demands honest examination of painful and complex legacies. However, we each carry our own experiences that may make certain material especially difficult. I am here to help create an approach to history that works for you. Please see me if you have any questions or concerns.

How will your course grade be calculated?

- 30% Discussions and annotations
- 20% Class attendance and verbal participation
- 20% Final project
- 15% Engagement with project process
- 10% Working draft peer commentary
- 5% Group grade for compilation and presentation (note: this grade can help but not hurt an individual’s grade)

- If you are planning to take the course P/NP (pass/no pass), you can complete an alternative reduced Final Assignment – ask me for more information. (Be sure to check with your academic advisor regarding P/NP course credit.) NOTE: In order to pass the course with a reduced Final Assignment, you will need to complete all other course material at a high-quality level, with strong participation throughout, including completing a final reflection.

Extra credit is an opportunity to dig into a subject that interests you &/or to get credit for going to the writing center. (Bring a purple slip from the writing center to confirm your visit or upload a photo of it to “extra credit” on Canvas.) I strongly encourage you to pursue your passion and dig into possibilities! Up to a third of a letter grade can be earned for engaging with optional

scholarly readings, documentaries, and relevant news. (Credit is proportional to the scale of the project.) You can demonstrate your learning through writing that draws connections to the course content or can take other creative forms. Look at the instructions on Canvas and talk with me about your ideas in advance. Note: Only those who complete course requirements are eligible for extra credit.

UO has resources for you:

If you are in crisis, please contact the Office of the Dean of Students for help navigating your options. You are not alone. Email dos@uoregon.edu or call 541-346-3216.

The University offers a number of really helpful and FREE academic resources, including writing feedback and tutoring, as well as time management strategies: <https://engage.uoregon.edu/>

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center in 155 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoac@uoregon.edu.

All work must be original for this class. Students are responsible for understanding and complying with standards for academic integrity. And again, do not record or distribute recorded materials from class without prior written permission. What someone produces, whether prerecorded materials or group conversations, is their intellectual property. For more details please consult: <https://studentlife.uoregon.edu/conduct>

Below is a list of the **core themes** that will structure each week's material.

- Additional elements may also be in each week's module on Canvas.
- **Each week we will have shared material, while you will also be pursuing your own secondary research – finding articles or book chapters to learn relevant historical context for your interviewee's life.**
- Treat this preliminary outline as an early overview; keep up to date with Canvas. It is a living document – anticipate changes.

Week 0: *What to prepare to start the quarter on a strong foot*

Week 1: *Approaches to Queer Oral History*

Week 2: *Imagining a Project*

- ❖ Project step: Email me your oral history subject: what is their name and relationship to you? What date will you complete your interview? How will you meet?

Week 3: *Life Cycles and Trajectories*

Week 4: *Intersections of Race and Class*

- ❖ Project step: By now you will have **completed** your oral history. Come to class with a basic biographical summary that includes a timeline of your narrator's life AND find a secondary source article relevant to the historical context of your subject's life.

Week 5: *Queer Families*

- ❖ Course engagement step: Reflective self-assessment of annotations and discussions

Week 6: *Empathy, Ethics, and Challenges of Interpretation*

- ❖ Project step: Circulate a solid partial draft (e.g. 6-7 pages of paper or script, drafted museum exhibit, etc.)

Week 7: *Discussing Sex*

Week 8: *Gender Nonconformity and Trans Histories*

- ❖ Project step: Provide 2-3 single spaced pages of commentary for two members of your group, according to directions

Week 9: *Activism and Organizations*

Week 10: *Presentations*

Finals week: Final projects due, Reflective self-assessments due