



School of Information Sciences

Course Profile: Oral History: A Methodology for Research

Course Number: INF 7770 and HIS 7860

Credits: 3 credits

Prerequisite(s): None

Rationale for Inclusion in Curriculum:

Oral history is a useful method of collecting data to complement written knowledge. With the use of video, tape recorders, and digital recorders, the spoken word can be preserved and provide an additional form of primary documentation. Oral history recordings are an accepted feature of library and archival collections that require unique skill in conducting, as well as preserving and providing access to. Edited versions are occasionally used as tools for teaching at secondary and college levels.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the course students will be able to:

1. Apply background knowledge of proposed interviews through library research.
2. Prepare fair and relevant questions during a formal oral history.
3. Establish rapport and show sensitivity to factors affecting the taping process such as advanced age of the interviewee, health handicaps, appropriate sites for the interview, excessive noise, etc.
4. Design interviews and prepare for interruptions.
5. Identify interviewer biases and distinguish between "closed" and "open" questions.
6. Collect "clues" on dating of events.
7. Organize types of memorabilia used to enhance an interview.
8. Be aware of the advantages and limitations of oral history as a source in social science research.
9. To understand the proper way to process, and provide access to oral history sources in a library or archival institution.
10. To understand the technology associated with oral history.

Content:

1. Interviewing procedures.
2. Maintaining chronological order; maintaining flexibility.
3. Special problems: What to do about preserving accuracy and avoiding elaboration/fantasy.
4. Continued cooperation of the interviewee; ability to expand basic interview design.
5. Familiarity with technical problems in the use of oral history technology.
6. Legal and ethical considerations of oral history.
7. Transcribing and editing oral history.
8. Developing, operating, and funding oral history programs.
9. Arranging and describing oral history collections.

Course Methodology:

Discussions, lectures, analyzing oral history sources, conducting interviews.

Bases for Evaluation of Student Performance:

1. Participation,
2. Written assignments
3. Oral history interview including preparation, interview, and transcription.

Text: To be determined

Approved: 1/12

Updated: 4/17