

## **SYLLABUS 2009 – Some changes will be made for the 2010 seminar**

### **Listening to Women: Documenting Women's Lives Through Oral History**

“I took it for granted that like most of the billions of people who are born and die on this planet I was just an accident. There was no reason for me. Yet my life burned inside me. Even such as it was, it was the only record of me, and it was my only creation, and something in me would not accept that it was insignificant. Something in me must have been waiting to stand up and demand to be counted. Because eventually, when I was presented with an opportunity to talk about myself, I grasped at it.”

— Nuala O’Faolain in her book *Are You Somebody? The Accidental Memoir of a Dublin Woman* (Henry Holt 1996)

#### **Seminar Information:**

Six week non-credit course meeting once per week for 2 hours at the Brooklyn Historical Society, 128 Pierrepont Street, Brooklyn, New York 11201

#### **Instructor Information:**

Sady Sullivan

Oral History Program Coordinator, Brooklyn Historical Society

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#### **Seminar Description and Objectives:**

This seminar will introduce the practice of Oral History as an historical methodology, a unique narrative genre, and a tool in the reconciliation of social injustices. It will be interdisciplinary, drawing from history, sociology, memoir, and gender studies. We will examine oral history in all its forms -- audio, video, print, and exhibit -- and in a variety of settings -- museums, schools, archives, performance, radio, and online. In particular, we will consider the dynamics of listening to, recognizing, and validating the voices of women, who may not know their stories have an audience. In addition to learning the theory and background of oral history, students will learn the practical and technical information needed to conduct their own interviews.

#### **Requirements:**

**All selected readings and multimedia materials will be distributed via email and will be discussed on the date under which they are listed.**

#### **Meeting 1**

2/9/10 1 Sady Sullivan

Introductions to Oral History, Women's History, Brooklyn Historical Society, & Fellow Students

**Readings:**

**“An Oral History of Our Time”** from *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Oxford Univ Press 2003) by Donald A. Ritchie

**“Historians and Oral History”\*** from *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (Oxford Univ Press 2000) by Paul Thompson

\*I've given you the whole chapter which is an excellent review of uses of oral history going back as far as the 18<sup>th</sup> century so, if pressed for time skip to Page 60 when it starts to get contemporary.

**“Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses”** by Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jack from *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History* (Routledge 1991), Edited by Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patal

**“A Feminist Frame for the Oral History Interview”** by Kristina Minister from *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History* (Routledge 1991), Edited by Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patal

**“Introduction” and “Chapter Seven”** from *Writing a Woman's Life* (W.W. Norton & Co 1988, 2008) by Carolyn G. Heilbrun

**Multimedia:**

**Audio: VOAHA: The Virtual Oral/Aural History Archive**, California State University, Long Beach (Sherna Berger Gluck)  
<http://salticid.nmc.csulb.edu/cgi-bin/WebObjects/OralAural.woa/wa/collection?ww=560&wh=400&pt=109&bi=1>

**Audio: Oral History Interview with Ida Pollack (b. 1922)**  
Interviewed by Diane Esses on 3/20/1989 for the Brooklyn Navy Yard Oral History Project, from the Brooklyn Historical Society Oral History Collection

**Meeting 2**

Women's and Girls' Voices: communication, development, socialization & psychology

**Readings:**

**“A Journey of Discovery”** from *Meeting at the Crossroads: Women's Psychology and Girls' Development* (Diane Pub Co 1998), Lyn Mikel Brown & Carol Gilligan

**“Woman’s Place in a Man’s Life Cycle”** from *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development* (Harvard Univ. Press 1993), Carol Gilligan

**“Family Life and the Politics of Talk”** from *Women’s Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (Basic Books 1997), Mary Belenky, Blythe Clinchy, Nancy Goldberger, Jill Tarule

**“Toads and Snakes”** by Elizabeth Strout from *The Friend Who Got Away* (Doubleday 2005) Edited by Jenny Offill & Elissa Schappell

Excerpts from *A Shared Authority* (SUNY Press 1989) by Michael Frisch

### **Multimedia:**

**Audio: *The Obama Effect Perhaps*, RadioLab Podcast, WNYC**  
<http://blogs.wnyc.org/radiolab/2009/01/27/the-obama-effect-perhaps/>

**Audio: Oral history interview with Joan Furey b 1946**  
Interviewed by Phil Napoli in 2007 and included in the exhibit In Our Own Words: Portraits of Brooklyn Vietnam Veterans at the Brooklyn Historical Society

**Audio: Joan Furey’s response and editing suggestion upon hearing her audio portrait**

### **Seminar 3**

Women: intersections and constructions of race/ethnicity/class/gender/sexuality, talking across differences, structural & cultural

### **Readings:**

**“Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference”** by Audre Lorde from *Sister Outsider: Essays & Speeches by Audre Lorde* (Crossing Press 1984, 2007)

**“White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack”** by Peggy McIntosh  
<http://www.lilithgallery.com/feminist/modern/WhitePrivilege-MalePrivilege.html>

**“Waiting”** by Maria Rivera from *Without A Net: The Female Experience of Growing Up Working Class* (Seal Press 2003) Edited by Michelle Tea

*You'll Like This Film Because You're In It: The 'Be Kind Rewind' Protocol*  
(PictureBox 2008) by Michel Gondry

**Multimedia:**

**Audio: Oral history interview with Ellen Bulzone b 1923**

Interviewed by Sady Sullivan and Jennifer Egan 2009 for the Brooklyn Navy Yard Oral History Project, from the Brooklyn Historical Society Oral History Collection

**Audio: William Julius Wilson on The Leonard Lopate Show, WNYC**

3/26/2009

<http://www.wnyc.org/shows/lopate/episodes/2009/03/26>

**Video: Married to the Eiffel Tower parts 1 – 3 [Blocked, unfortunately]**

<http://www.veoh.com/browse/videos/category/entertainment/watch/v15067234mmpcQ7Xm>

**Seminar 4**

Listening and Interview Techniques: how we are perceived, how we are as listeners, how we can help women tell their stories, theory and practice

**Readings:**

**“Situating Locations: The Politics of Self, Identity and ‘Other’ in Living and Writing the Text”** by Jayati Lal from *Feminist Approaches to Theory and Methodology: An Interdisciplinary Reader* (Oxford Univ Press 1999) Edited by Sharlene Hesse-Biber, Christina Gilmartin, Robin Lydenberg

**“Preface & Intro”** from *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn* (Univ. of CA Press 1991, 2001) by Karen McCarthy Brown

**“Deep Listening”** from *Anger: Wisdom for Cooling the Flames* (Riverhead 2002) by Thich Nhat Hanh

**“The Interview”** from *The Tape-Recorded Interview: A Manual for Field Workers in Folklore and Oral History 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (Univ of TN Press 1974, 1995) by Edward D. Ives

**“A Life-Story Interview Guide”** from *The Voice of the Past: Oral History 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition* (Oxford Univ Press 2000) by Paul Thompson

**“Listener’s Guide”** from *Meeting at the Crossroads: Women’s Psychology and Girls’ Development* (Diane Pub Co 1998), Lyn Mikel Brown & Carol Gilligan

**Oral History How-To and Resources: Florida Voices, FLCA**  
<http://www.fcla.edu/FloridaVoices/guidelines.shtml>

**Activity:**

Practice interviewing in pairs, practice deep listening

**Seminar 5**

Turning Points in Women's Life Narratives: things that men don't usually get asked about, discuss developing an interview guide to touch upon key moments

**"Women's Oral History Resource Section" from *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies*, Vol 2, No 2, Summer 1977, University of Nebraska Press**

**"Stepchildren's Memories of Love and Loss: Men's and Women's Narratives"** by Gwyn Daniel and Paul Thompson from *Gender and Memory* (Transaction Publishers 2008) Edited by Selma Leydesdorff, Luisa Passerini, Paul Thompson

**"Other Women"** by Kate Bernheimer from *The Friend Who Got Away* (Doubleday 2005) Edited by Jenny Offill & Elissa Schappell

**"I Do. Not: Why I Won't Marry"** by Catherine Newman from *The Bitch in the House* (Perennial 2003) Edited by Cathi Hanauer

**"The Woman-Identified Woman: Bisexuality and The Second Wave"** from *Look Both Ways: Bisexual Politics* (FSG 2007) by Jennifer Baumgartner

**"What Independence Has Come to Mean to Me: The Pain of Solitude, The Pleasure of Self-Knowledge"** by Vivian Gornick from *The Bitch in the House* (Perennial 2003) Edited by Cathi Hanauer

**"It Felt Like Love"** by Vivian Gornick from *The Friend Who Got Away* (Doubleday 2005) Edited by Jenny Offill & Elissa Schappell

**"Baby Food: If Breast is Best, Why are Women Bottling their Milk?"** by Jill Lepore, *The New Yorker*, Jan 19, 2009.  
[http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2009/01/19/090119fa\\_fact\\_lepore](http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2009/01/19/090119fa_fact_lepore)

**"Public Memory, Gender, and National Identity in Postwar Kosovo: The Albanian Community"** by Silvia Salvatici from *Oral History and Public Memories*, edited by Paula Hamilton and Linda Shopes, Temple Univ. Press 2008.

Excerpts from *In Our Time: Memoir of a Revolution* (The Dial Press 1999) by Susan Brownmiller.

## **Multimedia:**

**Audio:** **After the Forgetting**, produced by Erica Heilman & Vermont Folklife Center

<http://transom.org/?p=518>

**Activity:** Think about turning points, important moments in your own life - with a partner discuss what kind of spine for an interview, themes, questions, would touch upon all those key moments

## **Seminar 6**

The Impact of Being Heard: uses of oral history

**Activity:** Everyone will choose their own oral history/memoir/biography/performance/multimedia/other to share and discuss

## **Multimedia:**

*Here are some examples of online archives/exhibitions that may be of interest:*

### ***Human Rights***

*Video: Voices of Rwanda*

<http://www.voicesofrwanda.org/>

*Video: ACT-UP Oral History Project*

<http://www.actuporalhistory.org/>

*Performance: Enduring ACT-UP*

<http://deblevine.blogspot.com/>

*Book Series: Voice of Witness*

<http://www.voiceofwitness.com>

*Multi: Iraqi History Project*

<http://www.iqhp.org/>

### ***Community Building & Mapping***

*Essay-In-Sound: I Can Almost See the Lights of Home: A Field Trip to Harlan County, Kentucky by Allesandro Portelli*

<http://www.albany.edu/jmmh/vol2no1/lightssoundessay.html>

*Theater: The Civilians*  
<http://www.thecivilians.org/company.html>

*Multi: City of Memory*  
<http://www.cityofmemory.org/map/index.php>

*Audio: Invisible-5*  
<http://www.invisible5.org/>

### ***Finding Women and Oral Histories in Archives***

*Archive: Maria Rogers Oral History Program*  
<http://www.boulder.lib.co.us/carnegie/collections/mrohpc.html>

*Archive: Michigan Oral History Database Project*  
<http://xserve2.reuther.wayne.edu/index.php>

*Archive: National Women's History Project*  
<http://www.nwhp.org/>

*Archive: American Life Histories, Federal Writers' Project 1936 - 1940*  
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/wpaintro/wpahome.html>

*Multi: The Pembroke Center Archives*  
[http://www.pembrokecenter.org/farnham\\_archives/ftp.php](http://www.pembrokecenter.org/farnham_archives/ftp.php)

*Multi: Alan Lomax's Association for Cultural Equity*  
<http://www.culturalequity.org>

*Archive: Library of Congress - American Folklife Center*  
<http://www.loc.gov/folklife/>

*Archive: Columbia Oral History Research Office*  
<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/oral/>

*Multi: Vermont Folklife Center*  
<http://www.vermontfolklifecenter.org>

*Book Series: Palgrave Macmillan Oral History Series*  
<http://www.palgrave-usa.com/series/serieslist.aspx?page=1&series=Palgrave%20Studies%20in%20Oral%20History>

*Oral History Association*  
<http://www.oralhistory.org/>

## **Optional Seminar 7**

Recording Equipment and Tips: equipment suggestions

Digital Audio Best Practices

<http://www.bcr.org/cdp/best/digital-audio-bp.pdf>