

**History 405:
Collecting Memphis Histories
11:00-11:50 AM, Monday/Wednesday/Friday
302 Barret Library**

Prof. Charles L. Hughes
Office: 221 Buckman Hall
Office Hours: 2:00-4:00 PM, Monday and Wednesday (or by appointment)
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Memphis is one of the most fascinating cities in the United States, with a rich and complex history that has not yet been fully explored. In this class, we will help tell that story by conducting oral histories with community members and using them as the foundation for extended research projects. But first, we'll spend some time talking about the theory and practice of oral history. How and why do historians conduct them? What makes them good or bad? What are the potential pitfalls to avoid? How can we effectively use oral histories in our scholarship? By examining these questions (and others) in a Memphis-specific context, we'll both enrich their understanding of the historian's process and significantly add to the historical record of Rhodes' home city.

Course Requirements

Your final grade will consist of the following components:

Attendance/Participation (including "Bring to Class" assignments): 30%
Short Essay #1: 10%
Short Essay #2: 10%
Final Paper: 50%

I use the following grading scale for the Short Essays and Final Paper, as well as in calculating your final grade:

99-100 – A+	89-90 – B+	79-80 – C+	69-70 – D+	0-60 – F
93-98 – A	83-88 – B	73-78 – C	63-68 – D	
91-92 – A-	81-82 – B-	71-72 – C-	61-62 – D-	

The Short Essays are described in the Course Schedule of this syllabus, and the Final Project is discussed on the last page. I assess a penalty of **10 percentage points for each day** that a Short Essay or the Final Paper is late.

Your Attendance/Participation grade is comprised of three parts.

1) Attendance – This course has a strict attendance policy. Students will be allowed **two** unexcused absences. *All other absences after the second one must be excused. Each unexcused absence after the second one will cost you 5% of your **final** grade. If you miss three weeks' worth of classes, you can be dropped from the class or flunked.* Valid excuses for missing class include religious observances, college-sanctioned academic or athletic travel, personal illness or injury or family emergency. Excuses must be documented by a note from a doctor, the Dean's office, or a relevant

faculty member.

2) Participation – This class is a seminar, which means that its success requires everyone’s active participation. Please come to class prepared – with all readings and assignments completed beforehand – and ready to discuss the material. A failure to do this will negatively impact your Attendance/Participation grade.

3) “Bring to Class” assignments – Throughout the semester, we will have several short assignments which you will be asked to bring to class. They are not as formal or in-depth as the Short Essays or Final Paper, and you will not have to turn them in. Still, they are important additions to your overall coursework. See the course schedule for more information. A failure to complete them will negatively impact your Attendance/Participation grade.

Readings

There are five required books for this course, available at the Rhodes College Bookstore.

Wayne Booth, etc., *The Craft of Research* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008, 3rd edition)

Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2006, second edition)

Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History* (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 2003, second edition)

Wanda Rushing, *Memphis and the Paradox of Place* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009)

Studs Terkel, *The Good War: An Oral History of World War II* (New York: New Press, 1997 edition)

Additionally, there will be other readings that will be available on Moodle or at web addresses provided in the syllabus. See the course schedule for specific details.

Abilities and Accessibility

I'm committed to making sure that this course is accessible to all students. Anyone who receives accommodations through the Office of Disability Services should contact me as soon as possible.

Academic Conduct

All work for this course is to be completed in accordance with Rhodes' Honor Code. You are expected to be familiar with the requirements of the Code and to act accordingly in all classroom matters. To demonstrate your commitment, you must write “pledged” and sign your name on every written assignment.

I take academic misconduct very seriously, but I'm also aware that it can be difficult to understand what qualifies as plagiarism. If you have any questions, please contact me and/or consult the “Guide To Effective Paper Writing” published by the Rhodes College Writing Center. **It is your responsibility to understand the specifics of what constitutes misconduct and what does not.**

Classroom Atmosphere

Everyone is a crucial part of making this class successful. So, for the sake of those around you

(including me!), please refrain from sleeping, reading the newspaper, talking, text messaging, or using a laptop for non-academic purposes.

Controversy

We are likely to discuss complex and contentious topics, and I hope that we can create an environment in which everyone feels free to speak openly and honestly. Disagreements will – and perhaps should – occur, and I hope that all of us are willing to use these moments of controversy to better understand the larger themes of the course. However, we must all make sure to keep our discussions constructive and avoid personal attacks. If I sense a discussion going astray, I reserve the right to redirect it or shut it down completely. If anybody feels uncomfortable at any point this semester, please let me know.

Writing Center

One of Rhodes' best resources is the Writing Center, located in 122 Barret Library. I encourage you to utilize the Center's services as you prepare your written assignments. Get more info at <http://www.rhodes.edu/writingcenter>

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COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

Wednesday, January 9th – Introductions

Friday, January 11th – Why Do Oral Histories?

Bring to Class: Without consulting any readings, try to answer the question “Why do oral histories?” Think about 2 or 3 potential answers, and bring the ideas to class for discussion.

Week 2

Monday, January 14th – The History of Oral History

Readings

Ritchie, Chapter 1, 19-24 (up to “When journalists interview...”)

Perks and Thomson, “Critical Developments: Introduction,” Reader, 1-13

Wednesday, January 16th – What Does Oral History Do?

Readings

Ritchie, Chapter 1, 24-30 (up to “Memory and Oral History”)

Paul Thompson, “The Voice of the Past,” Reader, 25-31

Alessandro Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” Reader, 32-42

Lynn Abrams, “Turning Practice Into Theory” and “The Peculiarities of Oral History,” in “2012 ROHO SI Reader,” Moodle

Bring to Class: Investigate each of the following online oral-history archives, and think about these four questions: 1) What do they do?, 2) How do they do it?, 3) Why do they do it?, and 4) Who's the audience?

“Storycorps” – <http://storycorps.org/>

“Documenting the American South” – <http://docsouth.unc.edu/sohp/>

“Veterans’ History Project” – <http://www.loc.gov/vets/vets-home.html>

Friday, January 18th – How Do Scholars Use Oral History?

Readings

Linda Shopes, "Oral History and the Study of Communities," Reader, 261-270
Oral History Association, "Principles & Best Practices," at
<http://www.oralhistory.org/about/principles-and-practices/>

Two of the following articles, all on Moodle:

Catherine Ceniza Choy, "Your Cap Is A Passport"
Pete Daniel, "The Rhythms of the Land" or "A Little of the Rebel"
Catherine Fosl, "Marriage and Movement"
John Howard, "Movements"
Kennedy and Davis, "Maybe 'Cause Things Were Harder"
Charles Payne, "Greenwood"
Ji-Jeon Yuh, "Immigrant Encounters"

Week 3 –

Monday, January 21st – Memory, Forgetting and "the Truth"

Readings

Ritchie, "Memory and Oral History," 30-41
Daniel James, "Listening In The Cold," Reader, 83-101
Ruth Finnegan, "Family Myths, Memories and Interviewing," Reader, 177-183
Fred H. Allison, "Remembering a Vietnam War Firefight," Reader, 220-229
Mark Roseman, "Surviving Memory," Reader, 230-243

Wednesday, January 23rd – Oral History as a Means of Empowerment (or Disempowerment)

Readings

Armitage and Gluck, "Reflections on Women's Oral History," Reader, 73-82
Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy, "Telling Tales," Reader, 271-282
Sherna Berger Gluck, "What's So Special About Women?," at

<http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/3346006?uid=2&uid=4&sid=21101504429603>

EVENING EVENT, WEDNESDAY JANUARY 23rd: "How Yellow Fever Changed Memphis: A Conversation with Molly Caldwell Crosby," 5:30 PM, Orgill Room (Clough)

Friday, January 25th – Case Study: Studs Terkel's The Good War

Readings

Terkel and Tony Parker, "Interviewing an Interviewer," Reader, 123-128
Terkel, read two sections closely and skim the rest

Short Essay #1, due February 1st: Write a 3-page paper about some aspect of World War II, based primarily on material from Terkel's oral histories. You can use other sources to *confirm* or *clarify* the information that you use from the oral histories, but the oral histories must be the basis of your essay. (Yes, this will provide some interesting challenges and limitations!) Your grade will be determined primarily by how effectively you use the oral histories to craft a historical argument.

Week 4 –

Monday, January 28th – Who Owns The Story?: Ethical Questions and Legal Concerns

Reading

Ritchie, "Legal Concerns," 75-79, and Appendix 1
Susan K. Burton, "Issues in Cross-Cultural Interviewing," Reader, 166-176
Katherine Borland, "'That's Not What I Said'," Reader, 310-321

Kathleen Blee, "Evidence, Empathy and Ethics," Reader, 322-331
Marjorie Shostak, "'What The Wind Won't Take Away,'" Reader, 382-392

Wednesday, January 30th – Oral Historians at Rhodes: A Visit from Dr. Charles McKinney, Dr. Gail Murray and Mr. Anthony Siracusa

Friday, February 1st – How To Do The Interview

Reading

Ritchie, Chapter 3

Anderson and Jack, "Learning to Listen," Reader, 129-142

Slim and Thompson, "Ways of Listening," Reader, 143-154

Valerie Yow, "Introduction to the In-Depth Interview," in "2012 ROHO SI Reader,"
Moodle

Charles T. Morrissey, "The Two-Sentence Format..." in "2012 ROHO SI Reader,"
Moodle

Short Essay #2, due February 8th: Write a 2-3 page biography of a classmate, based on an oral history which you'll conduct with that classmate. Include at least 3 quotes from the classmate in your biography. As with the Terkel paper, you can use other sources to *confirm* or *clarify* the information that you use from the oral histories, but the oral history must be the basis of your essay.

Week 5 –

Monday, February 4th – The Politics and Practicalities of Transcribing

Reading

Francis Good, "Voice, Ear and Text," Reader, 362-373

John W. Blassingame, "Using The Testimony of Ex-Slaves: Approaches and Problems,"
Moodle

Paul D. Escott, "The Art and Science of Reading WPA Slave Narratives," Moodle
Archive of WPA slave narratives, at

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snhome.html>:

-2-3 of the interview transcripts

-“An Introduction to the WPA Slavery Narratives”

-“A Note On The Language of the Narratives”

Wednesday, February 6th – Case Study: The Good War, Part 2

Bring to Class – Listen to at least 2 different interviews from The Good War on Studs Terkel's audio archive (found at <http://www.studsterkel.org/gwar.php>). How do they compare to the transcribed versions? How does that relate to our discussions about listening and transcription? Bring three specific comparisons – either similarities or differences – that you'd like to discuss.

Friday, February 8th – Presentation of Oral Histories of Each Other

Week 6 –

Monday, February 11th – Memphis Histories, Part 1

Reading

Rushing, Introduction-Chapter 4

Wednesday, February 13th – Memphis Histories, Part 2

Reading

Rushing, Chapter 5-Chapter 7

Friday, February 15th – Choosing Topics, Finding a Subject

Bring to Class: Three topic ideas for your final project. Think about what questions you're interested in exploring, who you might interview, and what other sources you might use.

Week 7

Monday, February 18th – Doing Your Homework: How To Find and Prepare For The Interviews

Bring to Class: Three **specific** ways you plan to prepare for the interviews you want to conduct. This can include everything from finding people to background research.

EVENING EVENT, TUESDAY FEBRUARY 19th: Prof. Christopher Morris, "The Big Muddy: An Environmental History of the Mississippi River and its Peoples," 7:00 PM in Blount Auditorium (Buckman)

Wednesday, February 20th – Before, During and After The Interview

Readings

Ritchie, Chapter 2, 47-75 (up to "Legal Concerns")

Friday, February 22nd – Doing Oral History at Rhodes: A Visit from Dr. Suzanne Bonefas

Bring to Class: A polished, one-page research proposal for your oral-history project.

TRAINING WITH DR. SUZANNE BONEFAS, SATURDAY FEBRUARY 23rd, 10:00 AM, LOCATION TBA

Week 8

Monday, February 25th – **NO CLASS: INTERVIEWS AND RESEARCH**

Wednesday, February 27th – **NO CLASS: INTERVIEWS AND RESEARCH**

Friday, March 1st – Group Check-In

Week 9

Monday, March 4th – **NO CLASS: INTERVIEWS AND RESEARCH**

Wednesday, March 6th – **NO CLASS: INTERVIEWS AND RESEARCH**

Friday, March 8th – Group Check-In

Week 10

SPRING BREAK

Week 11

Monday, March 18th – What Have We Learned So Far?

Bring to Class: 3 things that have gone well and 3 things that haven't in your research so far.

Wednesday, March 20th – A (Virtual) Tour of Local Library Resources

Friday, March 22nd – How to Build A Research Paper: From A Question To An Answer

Reading

Booth, Part 2

Week 12

Monday, March 25th – How to Build A Research Paper: Evidence and Argument

Readings

Richie, Chapter 4

Booth, Part 3

Bring to Class: 3 things that Booth discusses that you see as potential obstacles as you craft your paper. How might you go about overcoming those obstacles? Is there anything that you need help with from your colleagues?

Wednesday, March 27th – Peer Review of Outlines

Bring to Class: A polished, 2-page outline for your final paper. Include the general organization of each section, the argument, and the evidence for that argument. Be as detailed as you can, but don't go over 2 pages.

Friday, March 29th – **NO CLASS: EASTER RECESS**

Week 13

Monday, April 1st – How To Build A Research Paper: Writing and Revising

Reading

Booth, Part 4 (101 pages)

Wednesday, April 3rd – **NO CLASS: RESEARCH AND WRITING TIME**

Friday, April 5th – **NO CLASS: RESEARCH AND WRITING TIME**

Week 14

Monday, April 8th – Peer Review of Paper Segments

Bring to Class: A polished 5-page segment of your paper for peer review.

Wednesday, April 10th – **NO CLASS: INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS**

Friday, April 12th – **NO CLASS: INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS**

Week 15

Monday, April 15th – **NO CLASS: RESEARCH AND WRITING TIME**

Wednesday, April 17th – In-Class Presentations

Friday, April 19th – **NO CLASS: PROF. HUGHES OUT OF TOWN**

Week 16 –

Monday, April 22nd – In-Class Presentations

Wednesday, April 24th – In-Class Presentations

Friday, April 26th – **NO CLASS: URCAS**

FINAL PROJECT DUE: FRIDAY, MAY 3rd, 7:00 PM

**Final Project:
Due Friday, May 3rd at 7:00 PM**

For your final project, you will produce a polished essay based primarily on the oral histories that you conducted during the semester. With this essay, you have a unique opportunity to add to the ever-growing body of knowledge about Memphis and its rich historical legacy. The topic is of your choosing, and I encourage you to think creatively about a project that will both inspire you and fulfill the requirements of the project.

Now, about those requirements...

First, the big stuff.

- The essay must be well-written and well-organized. It must possess a clear argument that is sufficiently supported by the evidence.

- The argument must be original. This part can get tricky – you don't need to come up with something that revolutionizes the way that we think about Memphis. (Although you might do just that!) All you need to do is make sure that you're not simply regurgitating an argument that scholars have already made. You can do that by adding a new perspective, bringing in new evidence, or changing the way that a certain issue has been discussed or presented. It takes time and effort to do this correctly, and we'll work together to make sure that it happens for all of us.

- You must include information from **two or three** oral histories in your final essay. This information should be the bedrock of your essay, not simply the source of a few small quotes or pieces of information. Please include photo-copies of the release forms from your interview subjects. You do not need to include recordings or transcripts of your interviews, but make sure that you use information from the oral histories as accurately as possible.

- These oral histories will be the main source for your paper, but you also must use other primary-source material. This could include historical newspapers or magazines, photographs, archival materials, manuscripts, or even other collections of oral histories. We'll talk more about how best to find other good sources. Also, you must also support your argument with information from several secondary sources.

Now, the boring-but-important small stuff.

- The paper must be 20-25 pages long, using 12-point font (either Arial or Times New Roman is fine) and standard margins.

- Please use Chicago-style footnotes for all references. For more information on how to the proper format, see <http://history.hanover.edu/courses/handouts/footnotes.htm>.

- Please include a properly-organized, Chicago-style bibliography at the end of the essay. I'll provide a hand-out offering a suggested organization. The bibliography does not count toward the final page count.

- No title page is necessary.

- The paper is due at 7:00 PM on Friday, May 3rd. **For each day that it is late, I will assess a penalty of 10 percentage points.**

Finally, the most important thing...

Have fun! You're doing important historical work here, and I can't wait to see what you come up with!