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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA
EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP & POLICY STUDIES
EDG 7931 CRN: 22029
Oral History, Life History and Biography Methods
Spring 2013

Class Meetings: Begins Monday January 7th, 2013 and every Monday thereafter for 10 weeks. The final class is Monday March 18th. There is no class during Spring Break week March 11th. This is a ten week course. Three graduate credits. 5:15- 9: 25 PM. EDU 155

Instructor:

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THEME:

Tell me a fact and I 'll learn.
Tell me a truth and I'll believe.
But tell me a story and it will
Live in my heart forever.
Indian Proverb

The Theoretical Frame of the College

The College of Education CAREs:

The College of Education is dedicated to the ideals of Collaboration, Academic Excellence, Research, and Equity/Diversity. These are key tenets in the Conceptual Framework of the College of Education. Competence in these ideals will provide candidates in educator preparation programs with skills, knowledge, and dispositions to be successful in the schools of today and tomorrow. For more information on the Conceptual Framework, visit:
www.coedu.usf.edu/main/qualityassurance/ncate_visit_info_materials.html

How this framework connects to the current class:

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In this course, learners will conduct reading, writing, and research with the spirit of excellence in technique, collaboration with participants, and with an awareness of finding ways to address key issues in society through research,

Course Description:

In this course students will focus on reading about and conducting an oral history, life history, or biography research project. Methods to be studied include interviewing, document review, content analysis, along with use of video, photography and web based techniques and software. Historical methods will be reviewed and discussed.

Goals:

In this course you are expected to:

1. Extend reflective practice learned in other qualitative courses and/or experiences to designing an inquiry project potentially for your dissertation specifically using one of these narrative approaches: Oral history, Life History, or Biography.
2. Examine critically the role of the researcher in creating questions pertinent to your dissertation or project.
3. Expand understanding and use of technology to represent your data.
5. Gain experience in reading, selecting and interpreting literature for your dissertation or project.
6. Develop a multicultural perspective of inquiry to provide equitable and sensitive treatment of all participants.
7. **Complete a mini project using oral history, life history or biography methods. Possibly, this could be a pilot for your dissertation.**
8. **Complete IRB certification**

Definitions: Documenting Lived experience

Oral History is the collection of stories and reminiscences of a person or persons who have first hand knowledge of any number of experiences. (Janesick, 2010).

Life History Inquiry is about gaining insights into the broader human condition by coming to know and understand the experiences of other humans. (Cole & Knowles, 2001).

Biography is a written account of another person's life. (Dictionary.com)

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DIGITAL EQUIPMENT FOR RECORDING INTERVIEWS

Do check out "Ask Doug" on Oral History in the Digital Age for the latest reviews on recorders by Doug Boyd.

<http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/askdoug/>

Methods of Instruction:

Students in this course will be engaged in reading and questioning, writing and reflection, small group work, large group work, whole group discussion and dialogue, library work, analysis of narrative and visual data, journal writing, critique of texts, self- and peer-assessment, individual inquiry, and presentations to the whole group. **This is a writing intensive course.**

Assignments:

There will be two written assignments:

1. Oral history, Life History Interview Project with analysis and interpretation, or Narrative Biography through Initial Document Review

The Project: Each student will design an individual inquiry project, conduct at least one interview, transcribe it and develop a thematic analysis and model of what occurred. The point of the project is to design and describe an oral history or life history interview, code the transcript, and analyze and interpret the person's lived experience. OR the project could be a biography project through narrating a person's life based on existing historical documents.

There are TWO STAGES of the inquiry project:

This project will be completed in a series of stages, each resulting in a draft that will become part of the final paper.

STAGE ONE DUE AT MID TERM

At the mid term, you will be expected to turn in a **research plan** for this project so that you will be assessed on your progress. (Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory)

Research/ Project plan. Researchers in training will develop a research plan based on the inquiry question and drawn from a body of current the literature. The plan will describe the

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context and design of the study **with appropriate references to the literature**, the types and sources of data to be gathered relative to the inquiry question, how and when the data will be gathered and organized, and how the data will be analyzed.

THE ENTIRE PROJECT SHOULD CONTAIN:

1. Inquiry question and rationale or its importance to the field and description of the setting in which the study is to be conducted and the theoretical framework that guides your work.
2. A statement of the problem under study as well as research questions to guide the study.
3. A brief review of related literature pertinent to the inquiry question. List at least one category and one sub category of literature that might be reviewed.
4. The selection and implementation of the methodological strategy that addresses the inquiry question and is drawn from or related to the literature reviewed.
5. Collect and analyze interview and/or document data. Use quotations from the interview and documents collected. Construct a visual model of what occurred.
6. Analyze and interpret the data. Describe the setting and the person fully. We need to get a sense of the context as well. Pull out three themes from the data.
7. **Reflect on your role as the researcher and assess what you learned as a researcher. Here you may include as an appendix, your finest section of the researcher reflective journal, your best example of field notes and best example of your transcript.**
8. **Discuss any ethical issues should they arise.**
9. **If you had all the time in the world, what would you do next to illuminate the lived experience of your participant?**
10. **Use a minimum of five references from our texts for your final paper.**

The project, due on the final class should be 25-45 pp. In this project, attach your references and appendices after the narrative and do not count toward your minimum number of pages. Appendices should include a consent form and at least 7 pages of your best portions of your transcripts. If documents are also analyzed, please list all documents as an appendix. Another appendix should be sample of your best portion of the researcher reflective journal. A member check form should also be included.

2. **Researcher Panels and reporting on the texts in class (S/U grading)**

Although we will all read all the material together we will form small groups for reports in the form of a panel based on learner interest and selection of the particular method. It is a goal to have three students report in depth in any format, digital or written handout to highlight the following: Refer to our books and or articles read in class and any other material of your choice.

- a. Major idea of the authors
- b. Best techniques suited to completing an inquiry using that method
- c. Rationale for doing the inquiry

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- d. Best examples of the given approach (Oral History, Life History or Biography)
- e. Criticisms of the method or perennial issues

Oral History Panel Members: _____

Life History Panel Members: _____

Biography/Autobiography Panel: _____

Every three weeks we will hold a panel presentation.

Classroom attendance and assignments. You are expected to be present, on time, and prepared for all classes. If you are unable to attend a class, you must make arrangements with a classmate to obtain handouts and information from the class. **You must check Blackboard and/or Canvas regularly. (Whichever platform we will be using at the time. It is possible we may switch to Canvas sometime in Spring 2013)**

All students are expected to participate actively and thoughtfully in all class meetings, including small group discussion and cooperative work. Students will be expected to have completed assigned readings (and demonstrate their knowledge of the readings in small and large group discussion) and prepared materials for classroom work.

Cell phones and pagers are disruptive to classroom discourse and should be turned off during class meetings. Food and beverages are allowed as long as they do not disrupt the class.

All written assignments, except for those completed in class, are to be **word-processed** and handed in on the due date indicated in the class schedule. Written assignments are to conform to APA 6th edition form and be edited and proofread for grammar, punctuation, and other writing conventions.

For each calendar day an assignment is late, credit or the grade will be reduced by 5%. Please note that absence from class is not an excuse for late work. If you do not come to class on a day when work is due, make arrangements to hand in your work.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

It is helpful to have a **digital voice recorder for interviews**. Although a mini cassette works, most transcribers prefer the digital voice recorder with the thumb drive insert such as the Olympus, 1100 or higher. Or any MP3 player or IPOD, IPAD, or iPhone with appropriate attachments and/or apps. The cost of a digital recorder is anywhere from \$50. up to \$150. Many students buy their equipment at any major discount store. Many transcription services prefer digital technology for ease and immediacy of use. In fact digital transcriptions cost a bit less than taped interviews.

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It is optional, but a digital **camera or a combo digital camera and video recorder** are also quite helpful. The most user friendly and affordable is the FLIP, 120 Minute Ultra Camcorder with built in USB. This records up to 120 minutes of an interview. (For those who decide to do video interviews) The cost is around \$ 130. This type of unit also plugs into the TV monitor so you can see your interview or observation at any time in class or at home. Note – 10 megapixels or above is highly recommended. Currently there are many competitors to choose from and watch the Sunday ads for bargains.

Optional foot pedal system for those doing their own transcripts. Olympus makes a device for about \$120. You need to weigh that against the going rate for transcriptions in the open market. Currently a one-hour interview transcribed from a digital voice recorder is around \$110. If you use a mini cassette recorder the cost is higher. Many students have used the pedal method and can transcribe an hour interview in three hours or less.

Professional Transcription Services:

Check transcription rates at the top transcription center in the USA which is in Los Angeles at:

www.productiontranscripts.com

Local transcription services are also available. These will be announced in class.

*Some students recommend on line services include:

www.castingwords.com

Note that at least 6 students have recently used this service and rate it as excellent.

Market rates for 1 hour taped transcripts are about \$100./ tape- \$125/tape.

Copy Editors:

There are many local copy editors. You may need a copy editor for your dissertation proposal and for the final dissertation copy. Please budget for this important step in your completion of the dissertation. Copy editors may charge by the page or the entire job. Recently doctoral graduates have paid anywhere from \$450-700 for a 300 page dissertation for copy editing. These are the market rates. Budget for the dissertation.

Computer Assisted Software for managing data:

The latest and very intuitive software is from the University of Wisconsin at Madison at www.transana.org. This offers software to help analyze digital video and digital taped recordings for a one time small fee. (Currently \$65.) Note that competitors charge much more.

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Microsoft Word has the capability of sorting words and phrases from transcripts. Software is available and upgraded regularly . If you decide to invest in software, be sure and read all the information to see what fits the scope of your study.

Software is a tool for managing data especially on large projects. You still have to analyze the data using your grey matter!

Evaluation

Attendance and Participation:	15%
Technology session in LIB 209	10%
Inquiry Question, Rationale, Context, Theoretical Frame	25%
Interview and transcript With three themes and model	25%
Final written project, presentation	25%

Grades will be calculated as follows:

95-100%= A
 90-94%= A-
 89-87%= B+
 86-82%= B

Required Reading: All are available as e-books from our library

1. **Janesick, V.J. (2010) *Oral history for the qualitative researcher: Choreographing the story*. New York: Guilford Press.**
2. **Cole, A. & J. G. Knowles. (2001) *Lives in Context*. Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.**
3. **Van Manen, M. (1990) *Researching Lived Experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.**

Highly Recommended:

4. **Eakin, J. P. (2008) *Living Autobiographically: How we create identity in narrative*. Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press.**

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5. Maynes, M.J., J.L. Pierce, & B. Laslett. (2008) *Telling Stories: The use of personal narratives in the social science and history*. Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press.
6. Birkerts, S. (2008) *The art of time in memoir*. Minneapolis, MN: Greywolf Press.
7. Any book by Studs Terkel.

Various relevant articles posted on BLACKBOARD or go directly to the article at these points:

1. <http://ohr.oxfordjournals.org/content/37/2/215.abstract>
Oral History Review
2. <http://www.oralhistory.org.uk/journals/index.php>
Oral History Society Journal
3. Sign up for free subscription to The Qualitative Report at:
<http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/>
4. For transcriptions go to the Express Scribe site at:
<http://www.nch.com.au/scribe/index.html>

TIMELINE: Read the first three books with these deadlines:

By January 21st, Janesick OHFTQR, Parts 1-4

By February 11th, Cole & Knowles, LIC, pp.1-150.

By March 4th, Van Manen, RLE, Chapters 1,2,4,5 and any other relevant sections of your choice.

OPTIONAL: Any student who wishes to read and report on the contents of any of the three recommended texts will receive extra credit of 10 %.

January 7, 14, 21, 28:

Overview of course, assignments and Oral History, Life History, & Biography. Theoretical Frame of phenomenology and heuristic Inquiry.

Designing the project and interview and discussion of the readings on narrative writing and story telling, importance of documenting a Life, and the self and narrative.
Read and Discuss Janesick OH text. Begin Lives in Context.

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LIB Session January 14th in LIB 309

IN CLASS ACTIVITY:

Narrative exercises each week.

February 4,11, 18, 25:

Ethics and the IRB; Fieldwork considerations, Interviews, documents and the researcher Journal.

IN CLASS ACTIVITY:

**Discussion of readings and fieldwork issues
Transcriptions, integrating technology; project updates ; Complete Lives in context, go on to reading Researching Lived Experience.
Creating poetry from interview data;
Researcher reflective journal practice.**

March 4, 18:

Analyzing and Interpreting a life; Content and Discourse analysis, Computer assisted software For thematic analysis, critical approaches for social justice. Historical techniques for biographical research.

Research roundtables on the various projects; all work due on March 18 when we assess our progress. For those who read Living Autobiographically, small group and large group discussion.

IN CLASS ACTIVITY:

**Reflective journal entries; Narrative tropes.
Creating visual models.**

ASSIGNMENTS:

- 1) Due at mid term: Project Plan (S/U grading) and best example of 5 pages from your reflective journal. DUE February 4, 2013.**
- 2) Final Project due on final class night. Attach 7 pages of your best section of your transcripts as an appendix, and your best example of your researcher reflective journal as appendices.
Graded. Due at the final class. The final evening will be devoted to research roundtables reporting on your oral history, life history or biography work in progress.**

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Writing Rubric

Exceeds the standard

Meets the Standards

**Is below Standard
Rewrite**

1. _____

The title, problem statement, purpose statement, theoretical frame for the inquiry captures the meaning of the inquiry clearly, is supported with evidence, and flows in a narrative style which captures the voice of the researcher. An introduction to the piece adequately captures meaning, content, and the data

2. _____

The related literature extends the inquiry process and captures key writers, critiques of those writers, and the researcher's critiques of both. Literature contains primary sources, and is recent (within a 10 year period). APA style is consistent and thorough. The related literature is linked to the purpose of the study and the questions which guide the study

3. _____

Description of appropriate methods includes a time line, selection of participants, ethical concerns, IRB statement, role of the researcher, rationale for choice of methods linked to purpose statement and related literature; Clear explanation and description of each strategy. Clear rationale for selection of participants, consent form, outside reader verification form, and any accompanying documents are present.

4. _____

Researcher voice, fluency, coherence and cohesiveness are present and clear.

5. _____

Report is submitted, typed, double spaced, APA style, Appropriate support data such as figures, graphs, illustrations, photos, etc. (researcher's choice of at least one)

PLAGIARISM

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Copying someone else's work is a very serious offense and can bring about a student's removal from the program and the university. You plagiarize when, **intentionally or not**, you use someone else's words or ideas without giving them credit. Quotation marks should be used whenever you are using the exact words of another author. Square brackets and ellipses should be used to indicate any words that are deleted from the original material. Summarizing a passage from another source or rearranging the order of a sentence or sentences is paraphrasing. Every time you paraphrase the work of another author, you should give credit to the author by citing. If you are using someone else's ideas, you must give them credit as early as possible in your text. In this course, if you are found guilty of plagiarism, you may receive an F (Failure) in this course and be dropped from the program. You will receive the grade of FF on your transcript permanently.

Miscellaneous

Students with Disability Accommodations Statement:

“Students in need of academic accommodations for a disability may consult with the office of Services for Students with Disabilities to arrange appropriate accommodations. Students are required to give reasonable notice (typically 5 working days) prior to requesting an accommodation.”

USF Policy on Religious Observances: All students have a right to expect that the University will reasonably accommodate their religious observances, practices and beliefs. Students are expected to notify the instructor in writing by the second class if

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they intend to be absent for a class or announced examination, in accordance with this policy.

WHAT EVERY DISSERTATION PROPOSAL SHOULD CONTAIN

Here is a sample checklist of items for each chapter that you may use as a guide. Of course, depending on your purpose and questions, not all items are appropriate. This is to be a guide, not a slavish recipe, for you as you clarify your research agenda.

CHAPTER ONE: The problem, purpose, theory that guides the study (8-10 pages depending on purpose, content etc. of the designed study)

- Introduction (make this brief-one page is ideal)
- State the need for the study and the problem to be addressed
- THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY- Be precise and accurate
- Questions which guide the study if a qualitative study
- If your study is quantitative use objectives or hypotheses
- Description of the theory which guides your study
- Importance of the study
- Definition of terms if needed
- Outline of the remainder of the dissertation

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE (25- 40 pages depending on categories of the review)

- Organization of the chapter
- **Immediately identify the bodies of literature your are reviewing and create a visual diagram of these categories**
- Acquaint the reader with the state of the art and explain why you selected this particular set of categories of literature to review
- Identify books, monographs, reports, articles which pinpoint exactly what you want to say relative to your purpose statement, and the theory which guides your study
- Seriously critique your literature **looking for gaps, contradictions and criticism** of the writing you have selected
- Relate your literature directly to your purpose statement and your study emphasizing how this literature led you to the study
- REMEMBER A LITERATURE REVIEW IS NOT A SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE - IT IS A REVIEW

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY (20-40 pages depending on methods used)

- Overview
- Description of the methodology and the rationale for choosing this method
- Description of the research design

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- **Description of the pilot study**
 - Description of how you selected the participants of the study
 - Exact description of how you plan to collect data, under what conditions and the length of time involved
 - Any supplemental charts or tables which help the reader to understand your method
 - Always relate your method back to your purpose, questions, and literature
 - Identify any limitations to your method in this particular study and for your purposes only
 - Description of how you will analyze your data **and a timeline for the proposed study**
 - Summary
-

As you can see this is a good way to prepare your **dissertation proposal**. Realize that it may change throughout the process of data collection and analysis and you simply rewrite as needed. Prior to the proposal meeting, all members of your committee should have your proposal for at least 2 weeks. After successful passage you may begin data collection. After data is collected you prepare Chapter four.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

In this chapter you present your data and make sense of them for your reader.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter ties the dissertation together and defends your thesis about the research. Briefly summarize the chapters and come to your conclusions. Now you may make recommendations of a practical nature for your major audience. In a sense, you are describing how the reader may implement your findings. Be sure to **INTERPRET YOUR MAJOR AND MINOR FINDINGS** in the study. Be sure to state what you learned as a researcher. Include visual models of what you found.

If you do a qualitative study, you must respond to your **EXPLORATORY QUESTIONS** in this chapter and **DEVELOP A MODEL OF WHAT OCCURRED**. Your model may be visually represented by diagrams, tables, etc. or verbally. You need to show the reader that your model is **GROUNDING IN YOUR DATA**

Appendices

Copy of your consent form

Copy of your peer/outside reader form

Copy of any letters you sent out to participants

Sample of your best section of a transcript

Sample of your best example of a field note

Sample of your best researcher reflective journal entry

A page which lists the costs associated with your dissertation

Any other pertinent information related to the study

About the Author paragraph