Qualitative Methods: Interviewing and Oral History

Lecturer: Andrea Peto, Department of Gender Studies (petoa@ceu.edu)
Autumn Term
Total class hours: 22
Credit: 2
Elective
Place: Budapest
Cross listed with the Department of History, Cultural Heritage Program
Guest lecturers: Laszlo Csirmaz, (CEU Computing and Statistical Center), Ivett Molnar, (CEU Library)
Class meets: Wednesday 11.00-12.40
Office hours: Wednesday 13-15 and by appointment

Course Description

This course is designed for those who want to use interviewing as a method collecting empirical material for their thesis. The course also discusses practical and ethical dimensions of research and writing. Given that oral history is a technique and a way of constructing histories the course tries to offer an overview of different ways of how to construct and document the information, how to analyze it in a wider methodological context. It is fun to listen to other people’s stories but it is also challenging as far as ethics and methodology are concerned.

The course consists of two parts: lectures are followed by seminars where participants will have the chance to practice planning, making, analyzing and documenting interviews. Special sessions will introduce the students to available on-line interview data bases and qualitative software programs analyzing texts. The readings are available at the course website (moodle) and all assignments should be uploaded or posted there. If you have problems with the moodle (you uploaded the wrong file etc.) contact Gabor Acs, acsg@ceu.edu directly.

Learning outcomes:

- Identifying the possibilities and limits of using interviews in research,
- Ability to apply qualitative data analysis/narrative analysis in research paper,
- Developing oral skills of presenting information, critical analysis and interviewing; creating compelling, original arguments that integrate theoretical perspectives and research findings and that advance reasonable conclusions,
• Using digital methods in doing, collecting, editing and archiving interviews,
• Gaining confidence in critical writing and oral analysis;
• Apply oral history to processes of social change,
• Apply the legal exigencies and some of the ethical concerns of doing oral history,
• Expand listening techniques,
• Discuss oral history as an interpretive act.

History Department learning outcomes:
1. Demonstrate knowledge and theory of the practice of public history
2. Demonstrate knowledge of interdisciplinary methods and theories

Aim:
The course aims to enrich students’ ability to collect and analyze interview data by using different methods - biographical method, method of oral history, qualitative research software programs – in order to form an interdisciplinary approach to the social problematic through text, conversation, visual materials and body language. The course uses interviews from the Visual History Archive (VHA) and from other digital archives.

Course requirement:
Enrolled students are required to regularly attend classes and to participate in the class discussions, which are based on the readings and podcast lecture for that particular week, write two reflection papers for the class, to do one interview of max. 5 minutes with the necessary paperwork, keep field notes, and to write a research paper based on that interview. Each of the requirements must be satisfied for a passing grade. Students missing a class are requested to notify the instructor via email before the class. Late assignments will not be accepted unless under exceptional circumstances, and doctors notes or other verification may be required.

On all written work, include your name, the course name or number, and a title (although not a title page). Please use 12pt font, black ink, and double space the text.

A Proposal (10%)
Write a brief proposal describing your interview project. In the first phase you will identify an interview subject (individual or group); get informed about your subject; define your interviewing priorities, emphasis, ethics and agenda. The effort to find out your interview subject should start at the very beginning of the semester. Your proposal should not be longer than 1000 words, describing your general interest, why did you
choose this topic, your question generating the study, and a brief description of the interviewing method to be used. Answer to the following questions: what is your approach – and general plan – for your research project and how do you address issues of essentialism and intersectionality? How will you approach interviewees and explain the project to them? What will you ask about in the interviews? What are the final products of the project? Why did you choose these final products? What will you give back to narrators? How will you address the legal issues? How will you employ sex/gender as analytical categories? Be sure that you have a research question and a brief description of what you expect from your research! In addition, submit the interview plan (max. 500 words) for your study on a separate sheet: what do you plan to know and how? This is a plan we will discuss and develop further during the class and consultations. Do not hesitate to contact me during office hours if you are still trying to figure out what to do.

**Deadline for submitting the proposal is 3 October noon CET.**

**B Reflection paper (20%)**

Write reflection papers (2) about readings for that class of your choice. Ideally it is connected to your interview project but this is not a requirement. The length of your contribution should be 300-500 words, which means you can only develop one main point or argument in each reflection paper, supported by evidence and/or examples from the readings/podcasts. The paper should be uploaded by Sunday 06.00 am CET before that class. The class discussion will be structured around those issues mentioned in the reflection papers. As a preparation for the class students are requested to read the reflection papers of the others and make informed comments which count in the participation grade.

**C Interview project (20%)**

Record an interview (no longer than 5 (five) minutes) with your computer or phone and post it on the moodle. Copy the link in the forum on the course site. The interview will be screened/played during the class when you are asked to give a short intro and to respond to the questions by other students. For recording and posting it on youtube see the following guideline: http://support.google.com/youtube/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=57409

You should be submitting supporting documents (transcript, agreements, etc.) to the moodle. You are encouraged to turn your interview(s) into a podcast. (Practical help how to do that is expected from CEU Podcast Librarian.)
Deadline for submitting the link to the interview, transcript, legal forms is 13 November noon CET.

D Field notes (10%)
The field notes are max. 400 word entries each recording your experiences, concerns and ideas about the interview project during the term. There is no formal criterion use it the way you think it is the most useful for your work. I will follow the postings and respond in a way that is only available to the individual students. You are expected to post min. 2 times. You can use this assignment as an other form of meaningful scholarly and professional communication with the instructor.

The field notes will be evaluated together with the final paper but ability to demonstrate continuous and critical work during the course is a major requirement.

E Final paper: interview analysis (30%)
Based on the readings of the class write a min. 2000 word-long scholarly essay on the interview you made discussing theoretical and methodological issues and submit it to the moodle. Ideally the paper will be using one of the softwares introduced in this course but that is not a requirement. Here is a transcribing free software: https://www.nch.com.au/scribe/ and useful tips http://storytelling.concordia.ca/toolbox/digital-toolbox and you will get more ideas how to use digital tools in doing oral history in one of the methods lectures.

Deadline for submitting the final paper is 13 December noon CET.

F Class participation (10%)
It includes critical reflection on the readings, the assigned podcasts as well as interviews and reflection papers uploaded by the participants. Active participation and meaningful and helpful comments on the interview project of others will count here.

Plagiarism:
Make sure you avoid plagiarism or even the vague possibility of plagiarism. Note that copying from the internet or even taking ideas from internet sources without proper citation is also a form of plagiarism, not only copying from paper-based texts. Paraphrase other people’s arguments whenever possible and add proper citations from the original text. Quote only if absolutely necessary. Students who plagiarize will get a warning first, and if another incident of plagiarism occurs then they will fail the course. The course moodle automatically checks the uploaded assignments with a plagiarism software.
A note on learning disabilities:

You will have to read a lot and complete written work in this course. If you have a documented learning disability and need extra time or help to do these types of tasks, please let us know in advance and we’ll find a way to accommodate your needs.

Missing a class
If you cannot attend a class because of an illness or another acceptable reason, you are expected to inform me in advance (through email) and provide documentation. If you miss more than two individual units for whatever reason extensive make-up work will be required.

A note on e-etiquette:
You are encouraged to use your electronic devices (including phones, laptops, ipads, tablets, etc.) during the class for educational purpose only. Instructor is responding to emails during work hours 9-17 unless they choose to differ. If you do not receive a response for your email in 48 working hours resend the message as CEU email system is often unreliable.

My commitment is to create a climate of mutual respect where students feel comfortable sharing information, asking questions, and trying out new skills. I ask that you make a similar commitment. Please give classmates and instructor your full attention, treat others and their opinions with courtesy and respect.

Evaluation

1. Grading Scale
   
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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-66</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>&lt; 60</td>
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2. Evaluation criterion: (letters corresponding to assignments)

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<td>Structure a conceptual framework, shows clarity in structure, balanced proportions ABCDE</td>
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<td>Meaningful connections to readings, it demonstrates a depth of critical understanding by using relevant and accurate ABCDE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation (clarity, connections) it is effective in conveying ideas to the audience. CF</td>
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<tr>
<td>Innovative/creative character and it goes beyond what</td>
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was presented in class or in the assigned readings/materials ABCDEF

| Collegiality paying attention, quoting the work of your colleagues, not monopolizing attention ABCDEF |
| Technicalities (footnotes, spelling, etc.) appropriate and easily understood visual aids, which are explained at appropriate moments in the presentation ABCDEF |
| Critical engagement with the concept of gender ABCDEF |
| Time/Space management ABCDEF |
| Continuous engagement with the class material and the tasks DF |
| Pointed response to questions BDF |
| Critical and meaningful questions asked with reference to readings and/or the contribution by others ABCDEF |
| Skills in posing questions, avoidance of errors such as interrupting the interviewee or failing to pursue potentially productive new avenues of inquiry, audio quality of the recording, interviewer’s professionalism in conducting the interview, accuracy, professional presentation, and comprehensiveness of the documentation. Properly signed consent form is a precondition for evaluating the project. EC |

**Preparation for each class:**

1) Read the readings
2) Listen to the relevant podcast from https://podcasts.ceu.edu/series/oral-history-class, make a list of concepts, questions, ideas
3) Write a reflection paper keeping in mind your own interview project and consider posting or adding points to your field note
4) Read the reflection paper of your colleagues
5) Make a list of your questions and issues you hope to discuss during the next class or during office hours
6) Look forward to the class

**Reading Schedule:**

**Week 1**
18 September
Introduction, discussion of the assignments.
Introduction to oral history databases by Ivett Molnár.

**Week 2**
**25 September**
Oral History: Critical Developments
Podcast: Episode 1 Oral History Developments


Introduction to qualitative research softwares by Laszlo Csirmaz.

**Week 3**
**2 October**
Politics of Oral History: Advocacy and Empowerment
Podcast: Episode 2 Politics of Oral History


**Deadline for submitting the proposal is 3 October noon CET.**

**Week 4**
**9 October**
Intersections of social and personal
Podcast: Episode 3 Connecting the Social and the Personal

**Week 5**
**16 October**
Practicalities
Podcast: Episode 5 Practicalities


You might find these webpage useful:
http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/oral/question1.html
http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/2012/06/designing-an-oral-history-project/
https://www.oralhistory.org/about/principles-and-practices-revised-2009/

**23 October is a national holiday.**

**Week 6**
**30 October**
Legal and Ethical Dilemmas
Episode 4 Ethical and Legal Dimension

Week 7  
13 November  
Interviewing: Questions and Questioning  
Podcast: Episode 6 Questions & Questioning  


Week 8  
20 November  
Oral History and Narrativity  
Podcast: Episode 7 Narrativity  


Deadline for submitting the link to the interview, transcript, legal forms is 20 November noon CET.

Week 9
4 December
Interpreting Memories
Podcast: Episode 8 Interpretation


**MUC Date and time will be announced later which might modify the reading schedule.**

Week 10
Interview screening and discussion (Your informed comments will count in the participation grade.)

Week 11
Interview screening and discussion continues

Week 12
Interview screening and discussion continues, summary

**Deadline for submitting the final paper is 15 December noon CET.**