Draft as of 9/1/2011

Qualitative methods in social science research. Oral History
Lecturer: Andrea Peto, Department of Gender Studies (petoand@t-online.hu)

2011-2012
Winter Term
Credit: 2
Cross listed with the Department of History
Guest speaker: Ursula Mindler, Andrassy University, Budapest

E-learning course moodle at e-learning.ceu.hu

Course Description

This interdisciplinary course will familiarise students with some of the main methods of qualitative social science research and equip them with the skills they will need to formulate research questions, carry out the research and analyse their data. The course finishes with a discussion of the 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 the information and how to analyse it in a wider methodological context. The course consists of two parts: lectures are followed by seminars where participants will have the chance to practice making interviews. The course moodle consists of interviews and transcripts.

Aim.
The course aims to enrich students’ ability to collect and analyse qualitative data by using different methods - biographical method and the method of oral history – in order to form an interdisciplinary approach to the social problematic through text, conversation, visual materials and body language. A special training will be held about how to use the Visual History Archive (VHA) in the CEU Library.

Course requirement:
Enrolled students are required to regularly attend classes and to participate in the class discussions, which are based on the readings for that particular week (20%) and write 3 small papers (a total of 80%) for the class. Each of the requirements must be satisfied for a passing grade.

Qualitative Research Paper (80%) consists of four parts:

a. Proposal (20%)
Write a brief proposal describing your study with interviews. (If you are not using interviews in your work write a brief paper about the VHA.) Your proposal should not be longer than one or two pages double spaced, describing your general interest, why did you choose this topic, your question generating the study, a brief description of the qualitative methods to be used and the sample to be selected. 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 for your study on a separate sheet: what do you plan to know and how? Answer to the question: what is your approach – and general plan – for
your research project and how do you address issues of essentialism and intersectionality? How do you employ sex/gender as an analytical category?

b. Annotated Bibliography (20%)
Conduct a fairly comprehensive literature review in the chosen topic of interest. Choose ONE article or book and try to focus on the methodologies as well as on the theoretical background and content. Compare the methodology used in this ONE selected article or book with the method you want to use for your work! How different or similar will be your methodological approach? How and why might you apply – or not apply – interviews? This assignment should be min. 1000 words

c. Paper: you can choose from two options (40%)
1. Methodological paper
Submit in min. 8 pages (double spaced) a paper which deals with methodological problems of your MA thesis. The advantage is that you start summarising your thoughts early enough and you will get a feedback before you start the fieldwork.
2. Interview analysis
You will be provided a list of suggested interviews from the Visual History Archive available at the CEU Library. (If you problem accessing the site contact Katalin Tikos tikosk@ceu.hu) Analyse the excerpts using the theoretical and methodological problems we covered in the class. Write a paper of min. 8 pages. (Double spaced)

All papers should be uploaded to the moodle.

Learning outcomes:
Ability to identify the process and steps of qualitative research design
Identifying the possibilities and limits of using oral history in historical 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.

Reading Schedule (class schedule will be provided in the first class)

Module 1: INTRODUCTION, THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

1) Introduction: theoretical overview

2) Qualitative Research Methods

3) Main Concepts and Case Study Method


Module 2: **ORAL HISTORY AS A METHOD**

4) Oral History: Critical Developments


5) Politics of Oral History: Advocacy and Empowerment


6) Intersections of social and personal


7) Legal and Ethical Dilemmas

Module 3: DESIGNING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

8) Practicalities


Module 4: COLLECTING QUALITATIVE DATA

9) Interviewing: Questions and Questioning


Module 5: ANALYSES OF QUALITATIVE DATA

10) Oral History and Narrativity


11) Narrative analyses


Recommended: (in the reading pack)

12. Subjectivity and intersubjectivity and summary

Recommended reading for the VHA paper is the special issue of Poetics Today, 27 (2) 2006, before final selection of a topic please contact me for further readings.