

**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](mailto: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](http://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, and 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](mailto: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

Weedon, Chris (2003) "Subjects" in Eagleton, Mary *A Concise Companion to Feminist Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell. pp. 111-132.

Reinharz, Shulamit (2002) "The Principle of Feminist Research, a Matter of Debate" in Messer-Davidow, Ellen, *Disciplining Feminism. From Social Activism to Academic Discourse*. Durham: Duke University Press. pp. 423-437.

Denzin, Lincoln (2003) "Introduction. Entering the Field of Qualitative Research" in Denzin, Norman K. and Lincoln, Yvonna S. (eds.) *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. London: Sage. pp. 1-17.

### 3) Main Concepts and Case Study Method

Denzin, Norman K. (2001) *Interpretative Interactionism*. London: Sage. pp. 98-118.

Stake, Robert E. (2003) "Case Studies" in Denzin, Norman K. and Lincoln, Yvonna S. (eds.) *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*. London: Sage. pp. 134-164.

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

### 4) Oral History: Critical Developments

Grele, Ronald J. (1998) "Movement without an Aim: Methodological and Theoretical Problems of Oral History" in Perks, R. and Thomson, A. (eds). *The Oral History Reader*. London: Routledge. pp. 38-53.

Portelli, Alessandro (1998) "What Makes Oral History Different" in Perks, R. and Thomson, A. (eds). *The Oral History Reader*. London: Routledge. pp. 63-75.

Thompson, Alistair (1998) "Fifty Years On: An International Perspective on Oral History" in *The Journal of American History* 85(2) pp. 581-595.

Abrams, Lynn. (2010) "The Peculiarities of Oral History" in *Oral History Theory*, Routledge, pp. 18-33.

### 5) Politics of Oral History: Advocacy and Empowerment

Portelli, Alessandro (1995) "Research as an Experiment in Equality" in *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History*. Albany-New York: Suny Press

Reinharz, Shulamith (1992) *Feminist Methods in Social Research*. Oxford: Oxford UP. pp. 126-144.

Sangster, Joan (1998) "Telling our Stories: Feminist Debates and the Use of Oral History" in Perks, R. and Thomson, A. (eds). *The Oral History Reader*. London: Routledge. pp. 87-100.

Abrams, Lynn. (2010) "Power and Empowerment" in *Oral History Theory*, Routledge, pp. 153-175.

### 6) Intersections of social and personal

Scott, Joan (1992) "Experience" in Butler, Judith and Scott, Joan (eds.) *Feminists Theorize the Political*. New York and London: Routledge. pp. 22-41.

Lomsky-Feder, Edna (2004) "Life Stories, War, and Veterans: On the Social Distribution of Memories" in *Ethos* 32(1) pp. 82-109.

Maynes, Mary Jo, Jennifer L. Pierce, Barbara Laslett. (2008) *Telling Stories: the Use of Personal Narrative in the Social Sciences and History*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, pp. 1-14. and 98-125.

### 7) Legal and Ethical Dilemmas

Borland, Katherine (1998) "'That's not What I Said': Interpretative Conflict in Oral Narrative Research" in Perks, R. and Thomson, A. (eds). *The Oral History Reader*. London: Routledge. pp. 310-321.

K'Meyer, Tracy, E. and Crothers, Glenn, A. (2007) "If I See Some of This in Writing, I'm Going to Shoot You": Reluctant Narrators, Taboo Topics, and the Ethical Dilemmas of the Oral Historian" in *The Oral History Review* 34(1) pp. 71-93.

Bev Gatenby and Maria Humphries. (2000) "Feminist Participatory Action Research: Methodological and Ethical Issues." *Women's Studies International Forum* Vol. 23, No. 1. pp. 89-105.

Shopes, Linda. (2007) "Legal and Ethical Issues in Oral History" in *History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology* eds. Charlton, Thomas L., Myers, Lois E. Alta Mira Press, pp. 125-159.

### Module 3: **DESIGNING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

#### 8) Practicalities

Ritchie, Donald A. (1995) *Doing Oral History: Practical Advice and Reasonable Explanation for Anyone*, New York: Twayne. Chapters: "Conducting Interviews", "Equipment, Processing, and Legal Concerns", Ethics from the Oral History Association

Mazé, Elinor A. (2007) "The Uneasy Page: Transcribing and Editing Oral History" in *History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology* eds. Charlton, Thomas L., Myers, Lois E. Alta Mira Press, pp. 227-261.

### Module 4: **COLLECTING QUALITATIVE DATA**

#### 9) Interviewing: Questions and Questioning

Fontana, Andrea, Frey, James, H. (2003) "Interviewing, The Art of Science" in Denzin, Norman K., Lincoln, Yvonna S. (eds.) *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. London: Sage. pp. 47-78.

Diamond, Lisa M. (2006) "Careful What You Ask For: Reconsidering Feminist Epistemology and Autobiographical Narrative in Research on Sexual Identity Development" in *Signs* 31(2) pp. 471-491.

### Module 5: **ANALYSES OF QUALITATIVE DATA**

#### 10) Oral History and Narrativity

Culbertson, Roberta (1995) "Embodied Memory, Transcendence, and Telling: Recounting Trauma, Re-establishing the Self" in *New Literary History* 26(1) pp. 169-195.

Popkin, J. D. (2005) "Narrative Theory, History and Autobiography" in Popkin, J., D. *History, Historians, and Autobiography*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press. pp. 33-56.

Denzin, Norman (2003) "The Art and Politics of Interpretation" in Denzin, Norman K., Lincoln, Yvonna S. (eds.) *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. London: Sage. pp. 361-374.

Sommer, Doris. (1988) "Not just a Personal Story": Women's Testimonies and the Plural Self, in Brodzki, Bella and Schenck, Celeste (eds.), *Life/lines: Theorizing Women's Autobiography*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, pp. 107-30.

## 11) Narrative analyses

Hodder, Ian (2003) "The Interpretation of Documents and Material Culture" in Denzin, Norman K., Lincoln, Yvonna S. (eds.) *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. London: Sage. pp. 110-129.

Gurium, Jaber F., Holstein, James A. (2003) "Analysing Interpretative Practices" in Denzin, Norman K., Lincoln, Yvonna S. (eds.) *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. London: Sage. pp. 214-248.

Recommended: (in the reading pack)

Riessman, Catherine Kohler (1993) *Narrative Analyses*. London: Sage. pp. 1-79.

Rosenthal, Gabriele (1993) „Reconstruction of Life Stories. Principles of Selection in Generating Stories for Narrative Biographical Interviews" in: Josselsen, Ruthhellen, Lieblich, Amia (eds.) *The Narrative Study of Lives*. Volume I. London: Sage. pp. 59-91.

## 12. Subjectivity and intersubjectivity and summary

Abrams. Lynn. (2010) "Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity" in *Oral History Theory*, Routledge, pp. 54-78.

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.