Oral History: Storytelling as Resistance
Summer 2022
Session 1
21:512:360
Remote instruction - Asynchronous

Professor Kristyn Scorsone
Office Hours: Drop-in hours on Tuesdays 6pm-8pm via zoom.
-Link will be posted to Canvas.
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Course Description

How can storytelling be a tool of resistance? In this course, we will explore how oral history is a method used by historians to fill in archival gaps and silences that have failed to include the history of marginalized individuals and communities. Oral history projects that capture the stories of marginalized people are an important key to understanding complex issues of oppression, strategies of resistance, and dynamics of power over time. Not only does it allow historians to ask new questions about the past, scholars and activists can also use oral history to study issues and advocate for societal change based on insights learned through oral history interviews.

The Queer Newark Oral History Project (QNOHP) at Rutgers-Newark is a community-driven project that collects and preserves the life stories of LGBTQ people in and of Newark by conducting audio interviews that are recorded and made publicly accessible on the QNOHP website. Using QNOHP as our main model, we will use historical analysis and queer and feminist theory as frameworks to think critically about oral histories and public humanities projects. We will also go over skills for conducting interviews and creating transcripts, how to build projects in partnership with local communities, and how to put oral histories into action as other types of public history projects.

Learning Goals
• Understand historical relationships using oral history
• Be able to conduct an oral history interview and situate the narrator’s experiences within a larger historical or social context.
• Synthesize class readings and oral histories in original academic analyses

Academic Integrity
Rutgers University treats cheating and plagiarism as serious offenses. Cheating is both a moral and an ethical offense. When you cut corners and cheat, you undermine those students who took the time to work on the assignment honestly. As a standard minimum penalty, students who are suspected of cheating or plagiarism are reported to the Office of Academic Integrity. Pending investigation, further penalties can include failure of the course, disciplinary probation, and a formal warning that further cheating will be grounds for expulsion from the University.
All students are required to sign the Rutgers Honor Code Pledge. To receive credit, every assignment must have your signature under the following phrase: “On my honor, I have neither received nor given any unauthorized assistance on this assignment.

Generally speaking, it is a violation of the academic integrity code to:

- Use someone else’s words or ideas without attribution
- Copy content from someone else’s paper, quiz, or exam or purchasing assignments (including but not limited to term papers, essays, and reports) and other written assignments
- Cut and paste from the web without citing
- Using concealed notes or crib sheets during examinations
- Leaving out in-text citations
- Submitting substantial portions of your past work for credit without prior approval.
- Have someone else complete course assignments for you

I strictly follow the University’s rules regarding plagiarism and other academic irregularities. Please consult me if you have any questions about what is and is not appropriate regarding the use of sources or citation. If you are unsure if something needs to be cited - to be safe just cite it, and then you can always ask me about it later.

The university’s policy on academic integrity is available at http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/

The Writing Center
The Writing Center (http://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/writingcenter), located in Room 126 of Conklin Hall, offers writing tutoring and writing workshops to all undergraduate students currently enrolled in classes on the Rutgers-Newark campus. Their tutors work to help students become more independent readers and writers capable of responding well to the demands of writing within the university. Please inform your students that The Writing Center is available to them free of charge and encourage them to take advantage of their services to strengthen their reading, writing, and research skills.

Students with Disabilities
Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation. https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus’s disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS website at https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form. For more information, please visit the Office of Disability Services in the Paul Robeson Campus Center, Suite 219 or contact odsnewark@rutgers.edu.

Violence Protection and Victim Assistance
Rutgers faculty are committed to helping create a safe learning environment for all
students and for the university as a whole. If you have experienced any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking, know that help and support are available. Rutgers has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and more. The University strongly encourages all students to report any such incidents to the University. Please be aware that all Rutgers employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as advocates, counselors, clergy and healthcare providers as listed in Appendix A to Policy 10.3.12) are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the University. This means that if you tell a faculty member about a situation of sexual harassment or sexual violence, or other related misconduct, the faculty member must share that information with the University’s Title IX Coordinator. If you wish to speak with a staff member who is confidential and does not have this reporting responsibility, you may contact the Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance at (973)-353-1918, or at run.vpva@rutgers.edu. Learn more about the office here: http://counseling.newark.rutgers.edu/vpva

Participation:

Readings and assignments will be accessible on Canvas.

Link to RU-N “Technology LaunchPad”: https://mytech.newark.rutgers.edu/tlp

Contact information for Tech Support: https://mytech.newark.rutgers.edu/techsupport

You will be expected to complete readings and assignments on time and be able to participate in online discussions.

Content Warning:
Some of the material in this course will deal with charged issues of race and sexuality and some material will include course language, scenes of violence, and depictions of sexuality, including sexual abuse. I will try to alert you to anything that might be potentially upsetting in advance, but know that throughout, the course features adult content. If you are concerned about specific triggers, please speak to me early, and I will work with you.

Names and Pronouns:
An important part of creating a respectful learning environment is knowing and using the name you use, which may differ from your legal name, as well as the gendered pronouns you use (for example, I go by they/them). Please feel free to email me to let me know your name and/or the pronouns you use at any time.

Health and Safety:
Effective Monday, April 4, 2022, use of face coverings in offices, conference rooms, research labs, housing, and public spaces in buildings will be optional. Face coverings will still be required in all teaching spaces (classrooms, lecture halls, seminar rooms, etc.), teaching labs, computer labs, buses, libraries, and clinical facilities. Additionally, face
coverings will continue to be required in student-staff and student-faculty meeting spaces. For faculty, staff, and students who have received an exemption from the university’s COVID-19 vaccination requirements, the use of face coverings is still required in all public spaces, including offices, research labs, housing, and conference rooms.

For more info: https://coronavirus.rutgers.edu/health-and-safety/community-safety-practices/

Assignments and Grading:

**Participation:** 15%
- Participation is counted by your participation in online class discussions. Be engaged in the topics and ready to explain what we read/watched/listened to and share your thoughts on class materials. Asking questions also counts as participation! However, you cannot only ask questions.

**Reading Quizzes:** 10%
- Twice during the semester, you will take a short multiple-choice quiz on the class materials via Canvas.

**Discussion Board:** 20%
- Several times throughout the semester, I’ll ask you to respond to a discussion question through Canvas and comment on one other student response. These will be graded as complete or incomplete.
- For the assignment to be complete, you must write an initial response of 100 words or about 5-6 sentences. Your comment in response to other students can be 2-3 sentences.

**Midterm Essay:** 25%
- You will write a 4-5 page midterm paper examining two oral history interviews for their historical context and contemporary relevance. Answer the following questions using evidence from these sources as well as, at minimum, two other class readings to support your claims:
  - (1) How would you place their experiences and/or perspective within a larger historical or social context? Compare/contrast both narrators’ historical experience and their perspectives.
  - (2) In your view, how does their identity (race, class, gender, sexuality) inform their experiences?
  - (3) How do their stories reveal issues of oppression, strategies of resistance, and dynamics of power?

**Final Oral History Project:** 30%
- Using 5 questions that you will decide in advance, you will conduct and record a brief oral history interview with a family member or friend exploring a facet of their identity (race, gender, sexuality, class, ability). Choose one topic to focus your questions on. For example, labor, activism, family, community, etc.
- Using the recording, you will transcribe a brief portion of the interview: one question and answer you found significant.
- Write an analytical essay on the usefulness of oral history as a method as you explore what your narrator’s specific experiences and perspectives tell us about the past. 2-3 pages.

*If the person is not someone who you live with and you do not feel comfortable meeting in person, you may conduct your interview over the phone or via Zoom.*
**All due dates/times on the syllabus are Eastern Standard Time.**

**Grading Scale:**

- 90 - 100    A
- 87 - 89    B+
- 80 - 86    B
- 77 - 79    C+
- 70 - 76    C
- 60 - 69    D
- 59 or less    F

**Late Assignments:**

I expect assignments to be completed on the day/time they are due. If there are circumstances that make it impossible for you to hand in assignments on time, please contact Kristyn Scorsone by email as soon as possible so that we can discuss an arrangement that works for both of us.

**Required Texts:**

There are no required books for this course.

All required readings will be available through Canvas or online. Additional materials, including films or other media, may be required as well and will be available through Canvas or Rutgers Library’s website.

I will also post brief lectures and other short videos for you to watch throughout the semester. I will let you know in advance when they are available.

*Readings may be subject to change during the semester.*

**Schedule:**

**Week 1: (May 31 - June 5)**

**Unit 1: Welcome/QNOHP Overview**

- Get acquainted/read over syllabus - fill out short questionnaire to get to know you and to let me know any accessibility challenges you may have.
- Look at the Queer Newark Oral History Project website and video on the home page.
- READ: primary and secondary sources document.
Unit 2: LGBTQ+ Oral History

- **READ:** *Bodies of Evidence: The Practice of Queer Oral History* - “Introduction: Close Encounters”

- **ORAL HISTORY:** excerpts from Miss Pucci Revlon, interview #1 with Whitney Strub and Craig Blunt

- **WATCH:** Miss Pucci Revlon panel part 1: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i9_kL1g8e5w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i9_kL1g8e5w)
  Part 2: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ebLu4vYolsY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ebLu4vYolsY)

- **DUE:** Discussion board on Canvas by Sunday 11:59pm.

Week 2: (June 6 - June 12)

Unit 3: Finding Sanctuary

- **READ:** “Unintentional Public Historians: Collective Memory and Identity Production in the American Indian and LGBTQ Liberation Movements” by Lara Kelland in *Radical Roots: Public History and a Tradition of Social Justice Activism*

- **READ:** excerpts from “Blue” - Gary Jardim

- **ORAL HISTORY:** Excerpts from Angie Raine interview #2 with Whitney Strub.

Unit 4: Documenting Resistance


- **ORAL HISTORY:** Excerpts from Janyce Jackson Jones

- **DUE:** Discussion board on Canvas by Sunday 11:59pm.

Week 3: (June 13 - June 19)

Unit 5: Counter-narratives

- **WATCH:** *Out in the Night* (2014) - available on Kanopy through the Rutgers Library website. (runtime: 1 hour 16 min)

- **READ:** Excerpts from *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women, and Queer Radicals* - Saidiya Hartman
• ORAL HISTORY: Excerpts from Patrice Johnson and Venice Brown

Unit 6: Uncovering the Ballroom Scene

• READ: “Mimesis in the Face of Fear - Femme Queens, Butch Queens, & Gender Play in the Houses of Greater Newark” - Karen McCarthy Brown
• Watch: Ballroom culture is about so much more than voguing - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H7xLt2xHZ4Q
• Oral History: excerpts from oral history interviews on Aaron Frazier and Kyseif ”Scooda” DeGraffenreid.
• DUE: Quiz 1 on Canvas by Sunday 11:59pm.

Week 4: (June 20 - June 26)

Unit 7: The Practice of Oral History

• ORAL HISTORY WORKSHOP: I will post a video on oral history techniques and how to practice doing oral history interviews.
• READ: “Sharing Queer Authorities” by Horacio N. Roque Ramírez in Bodies of Evidence
• READ: “What are the Roots of Your Radical Oral History Practice?” - Shane Bernardo, Maria E. Cotera, Fernanda Espinosa, and Amy Starecheski.

Unit 8: Dealing with Trauma and Loss

• Watch QNOHP panel on AIDS activism. YouTube link will be provided.
• DUE: Midterm Essay due by Sunday, June 26, 11:59pm.
• DUE: Decide who you will interview for your final project. Via Canvas, tell me who you plan to interview and submit your 5 interview questions by Sunday, June 26, 11:59pm.

*Consider getting your interview scheduled and completed as soon as I approve your interview plan! Don’t procrastinate, if possible.
Week 5: (June 27 - July 3)

Unit 9: Effects of Urban Development

- READ: “Queering Political Economy in Neoliberal Ironbound Newark” by Yamil Avivi
- ORAL HISTORY: Excerpts from Emma Wilcox, Alicia Heath-Toby, Marina Carriera

Unit 10: Labor and Activism

- “Making Space for LGBTQ History” - chapter 2 from Living Queer History: Remembrance and Belonging in a Southern City, by Gregory Samantha Rosenthal
- ORAL HISTORY: Excerpts from Anita Dickens and Tamara Fleming
- DUE: Discussion board on Canvas by Sunday 11:59pm.
- DUE: Quiz 2 on Canvas by Sunday 11:59pm.

Week 6:
(July 5 - July 10)

Unit 11: Public History Projects

- READ: Chapter 12 of Interpreting LGBT History at Museums and Historic Sites by Sue Ferentinos
- Take a look at a couple of QNOHP-related public history projects online. Links will be provided.
- DUE: Discussion Board on Canvas due by Wednesday, July 7th 11:59pm.

Unit 12: Final Oral History Projects

- DUE: Final Oral History Project and Essay no later than Thursday, July 8th 11:59pm.

Accommodation and Support Statement:

Rutgers University Newark (RU-N) is committed to the creation of an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students and the University as a whole. RU-N has identified the following resources to further the mission of access and support:

- For Individuals with Disabilities: The Office of Disability Services (ODS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter
barriers due to disability. Once a student has completed the ODS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and reasonable accommodations are determined to be necessary and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be provided. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at ods.rutgers.edu. Contact ODS at (973)353-5375 or via email at ods@newark.rutgers.edu.

- For Individuals who are Pregnant: The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance is available to assist with any concerns or potential accommodations related to pregnancy. Students may contact the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance at (973) 353-1906 or via email at TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu.

- For Absence Verification: The Office of the Dean of Students can provide assistance for absences related to religious observance, emergency or unavoidable conflict (e.g., illness, personal or family emergency, etc.). Students should refer to University Policy 10.2.7 for information about expectations and responsibilities. The Office of the Dean of Students can be contacted by calling (973) 353-5063 or emailing deanofstudents@newark.rutgers.edu.

- For Individuals with temporary conditions/injuries: The Office of the Dean of Students can assist students who are experiencing a temporary condition or injury (e.g., broken or sprained limbs, concussions, or recovery from surgery). Students experiencing a temporary condition or injury should submit a request using the following link: https://temporaryconditions.rutgers.edu.

- For English as a Second Language (ESL): The Program in American Language Studies (PALS) can support students experiencing difficulty in courses due to English as a Second Language (ESL) and can be reached by emailing PALS@newark.rutgers.edu to discuss potential supports.

- For Gender or Sex-Based Discrimination or Harassment: The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance can assist students who are experiencing any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking. Students can report an incident to the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance by calling (973) 353-1906 or emailing TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu. Incidents may also be reported by using the following link: tinyurl.com/RUNReportingForm. For more information, students should refer to the University’s Student Policy Prohibiting Sexual Harassment, Sexual Violence, Relationship Violence, Stalking and Related Misconduct located at http://compliance.rutgers.edu/title-ix/about-title-ix/title-ix-policies/.

For support related to interpersonal violence: The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance can provide any student with confidential support. The office is a confidential resource and does not have an obligation to report information to the University’s Title IX Coordinator. Students can contact the office by calling (973) 353-1918 or emailing run.vpva@rutgers.edu. There is also a confidential text-based line available to students; students can text (973) 339-0734 for support. run.vpva@rutgers.edu. There is also a confidential text-based line available to students; students can text (973) 339-0734 for support.

- For Crisis and Concerns: The Campus Awareness Response and Education (CARE)
Team works with students in crisis to develop a support plan to address personal situations that might impact their academic performance. Students, faculty and staff may contact the CARE Team by using the following link: tinyurl.com/RUNCARE or emailing careteam@rutgers.edu.

• For Stress, Worry, or Concerns about Well-being: The Counseling Center has confidential therapists available to support students. Students should reach out to the Counseling Center to schedule an appointment: counseling@newark.rutgers.edu or (973) 353-5805.
• For emergencies, call 911 or contact Rutgers University Police Department (RUPD) by calling (973) 353-5111.

Learning Resources:

• Rutgers Learning Center (tutoring services) Room 140, Bradley Hall (973) 353-5608 https://sasn.rutgers.edu/student-support/tutoring-academic-support/learning-center
Writing Center (tutoring and writing workshops), Room 126, Conklin Hall (973) 353-5847 nwc@rutgers.edu https://sasn.rutgers.edu/student-support/tutoring-academic-support/writing-center