Course Description:

As a conversation about the past, oral history has existed as long as people have shared and interpreted their individual and group memories through the spoken word. Within the academy, oral history has increasingly been embraced since the 1960s as a means of gaining insight into the experiences of individuals and groups who have been marginalized from dominant narratives because of gender, race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, (dis)ability, and religion. In recent decades, it has also engendered interest in the ‘shape’ of narrative forms and the linkages between history, memory, and identity. This course will encourage students to think about various theoretical debates, ethical issues, and methodological challenges that revolve around the field of oral history.

The course will also provide students with an opportunity to carry out a comprehensive oral history project. You will work in small groups, planning and implementing projects with the benefit of support from your instructor and feedback from your classmates in weekly seminars. Each student group will create potential interview questions, learn how to obtain an ethics clearance in accordance with SFU’s Office of Research Ethics, arrange meetings with interview subjects, record and transcribe interviews, and interpret the collected material. Discussions of theories and approaches will continue throughout the semester, but they will be grounded in your own practical experiences as you report informally on your progress and discuss the challenges you have encountered. You will also learn creative ways of interpreting and presenting your interview materials through guided access to the Qualitative History Research Laboratory in the History Department. Using open-access, audio editing software, groups will create audio documentaries, podcasts, or memory walks, and then design a final presentation of your work and present it to your classmates and invited guests. You will also write a brief reflection paper about your experience on the project.

Required Texts:

Evaluation:
- Seminar participation – Individual 15%
- The Big Project – Stage 1 – Group (proposal, ethics process, interview questions) 20%
- Interviews and transcription - Individual 20%
- The Big Project – Stage 2 - Group (creative implementation and presentation) 30%
- Reflection Paper - Individual 15%