GSWS 411-4: Special Topics - Oral History: Practicum

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Office hours: TBC
Lecture: Thursdays 13:30 – 17:20; RCB 7100

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 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.

GSWS 411 (D100) is designed to provide students with an opportunity to carry out a comprehensive oral history project. You will work primarily in groups, planning and implementing projects with the benefit of support from their instructor and feedback from their classmates in weekly seminars. You may select one of two options: working on an already established project that is exploring the shifting nature of work and workplace on the New Westminster Waterfront; or creating a project with a community group in the Lower Mainland. Each student group will create potential interview questions, obtain an ethics clearance from the Office of Research Services, arrange meetings with interview subjects, record and transcribe interviews, and interpret the material collected. 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 Audacity software, groups will create CD documentaries or segments for a Memory Walk on the New Westminster waterfront, then design a final presentation of your work and present/perform it for your classmates and invited guests. You will also write a brief reflection paper about your experience on the project.

Format:
One weekly seminar, including class discussions, proposal presentations, and peer review; oral history fieldwork; oral history lab-work.

Course Texts and Courseware:
• Assigned readings on Canvas or the Internet

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

Prerequisite: 45 credit hours, including 6 hours of lower division GSWS credits. Prerequisites may be waived at the discretion of the instructor, should students have appropriate background in other disciplines or community work.