

AMH 3593: Oral History

University of Florida

Spring 2026 | Section 6JW1 (24831) | 3 credit hours

Keene-Flint, Room 113
Monday, Wednesday, & Friday
1:55-2:45 pm

Instructor: Dr. Jamin Wells

Office: 245 Pugh Hall

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Office Hours

Tuesdays: 11-12 pm

Wednesdays: 3-4 pm

*email to schedule a meeting outside hours

Catalog Description

Introduces the theory and practice of oral history. Examines key issues in historical memory, interviewing, and community-based fieldwork; also examines scholarly debates on oral history as a dialogic mode of knowledge production. Lean digital humanities production methods to bring historical knowledge to broader audiences.

Prerequisite: 3 credits of history.

Course Description and Objectives

This hands-on, place-based, immersive course introduces you to the theory and practice of oral history. It offers a unique experience to tell a story that's never been told—to make history. The class includes field experiences, oral history interviews, in-class workshops, and historical research into various healing traditions in the greater Gainesville area. By the end of semester, you will have completed and processed an oral history interview that will be added to the

Samuel Proctor Oral History (SPOHP) Archives and curated a “mini-exhibit” based on your interview.

IMPORTANT: *to successfully complete this course, you must conduct an oral history outside of our scheduled course meeting times. We will work collaboratively to find a time that works with your schedule, but the responsibility to complete the interview is ultimately yours.*

Required Materials

- Douglas A. Boyd, *Oral History: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2025).
- Loose-leaf paper for class and exam booklet for in-class exam.
- Additional readings, listed in the schedule below, will be electronically posted on our course Canvas page
- On noted days, you will need a laptop and headphones for in-class workshops
- No materials/supplies fees are assessed for this course.

Student Learning Objectives

- Articulate oral history's purpose, its general principles, and its best practices
- Plan, conduct, and execute an oral history following to OHA best practices
- Create an interpretative product based on oral histories

Important Dates

Assignment	Weight	Important Due Dates
Class Assignments & Exam	25%	2/6, 2/8, and Listening Workshops (1/16, 1/23, 1/30, 2/13, 2/20, 4/3, 4/10)
Oral History Project Materials	40%	2/25, 3/9, 4/18
Mini-Exhibit	15%	4/13, 4/20
Final Reflective Essay	10%	4/27
Engagement and Growth	10%	2/22, 4/27

Grading Scale

A	93-100	C+	77-79
A-	90-92	C	73-76
B+	87-89	C-	70-72
B	83-86	D	60-69
B-	80-82	F	0-59

**standard rounding rules apply: final grade calculations ending in .5, .6, .7, .8, or .9 round to the next whole number.*

How does Dr. Wells grade?

I use detailed rubrics for all major assignments to ensure transparency and fairness. We'll review rubrics in class before you submit, so you understand them as you complete the assignment. These rubrics will outline the assignment-specific criteria I will use to evaluate your work—including clarity, thoughtfulness, use of evidence, and engagement with course concepts.

My grading philosophy values critical thinking, reflective practice, and growth. I reward work that demonstrates effort, curiosity, and meaningful connection to course themes. I encourage you to take intellectual risks—to push yourself.

If you believe an error has been made in your grade, please reach out within one week of receiving the grade. We'll set up a time to review the assignment together and discuss any concerns.

This table below outlines how I interpret letter grades across all coursework. Use it as a guide for assessing overall grades/rubrics.

A	Exceptional. Outstanding work, that significantly exceeds expectations for a 3000-level History course. Demonstrates deep engagement, originality, and polished execution.
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A-	Excellent. Very strong work with minor areas for improvement in clarity, formatting, or depth. Shows clear understanding and thoughtful engagement for a 3000-level History course.
B+	Very Good. Better than competent for a 3000-level History course. Some aspects are particularly strong, but there is room for improvement in multiple area.
B	Good. Complete and competent for a 3000-level History course. Meets all assignment requirements with reasonable clarity and effort. Strengths may offset weaknesses.
B-	Adequate. Good effort but falls short of expectations for a 3000-level History course. May lack depth, originality, or thoroughness. Recommend meeting with instructor.
C+	Below Expectations. Meets basic requirements but lacks clarity, depth, or engagement for a 3000-level History course. Recommend meeting with instructor.
C	Marginal Pass. Barely meets assignment criteria. Writing or analysis may be unclear or underdeveloped. Strongly recommend meeting with instructor.
C-	Incomplete Pass. Does not fully meet basic requirements. Significant issues with clarity, completeness, or relevance. Strongly recommend meeting with instructor.
D	Poor. Significantly below expectations. Major deficiencies in content, structure, or effort. Strongly recommend meeting with instructor.
F	Failing. Work is incomplete, irrelevant, or violates course policies (e.g. plagiarism or AI). Strongly recommend meeting with instructor.

Assignments

Class Assignments & Exam (25%)

Throughout the semester, you will complete a variety of class assignments, most notably a mid-term exam and in-class writing activities during our Listening Workshops. Administered during

the fourth week of class, this exam is designed to assess your understanding of key concepts, debates, and considerations in the field of oral history. A study guide will be provided in advance, and we will have an in-class review session. This exam is worth 50% of the “class assignment and exam” grading category.

We will have six listening workshops this semester where we will listen and discuss an oral history interview as a class. You will complete a short in-class writing assignment as part of these sessions. The lowest grade will be dropped. These assignments are worth 40% of the “class assignment and exam” grading category.

Additional coursework, including a practice interview, will be worth 10% of the “in-class assignment and exam” grading category.

Oral History Project Materials (40%)

The heart of this course is the preparation, completion, and processing of an oral history interview that you will conduct outside of scheduled course time. Along the way you will submit a variety of materials (both physical and digital), which will eventually be deposited in the SPOHP Digital Archives. Detailed instructions will be posted on Canvas, and we will spend significant amount of course time to supporting this work.

Mini-Exhibit (15%)

In small groups, you will create an Instagram “mini-exhibit” based on your oral histories. This capstone project is an opportunity to share your work with the wider world. Detailed instructions will be posted on Canvas, and we will devote significant in-class time to workshopping this exhibit, which will have an opening on the last day of classes in the Pugh Hall Ocora.

Final Reflective Essay (10%)

Reflective practice is a cornerstone methodology in Oral History, enabling practitioners to critically examine their work, consider multiple perspectives, and continuously improve. For this final assignment, you will engage with this essential professional practice by drafting a ~1,000-word essay that substantively reflects on your learning this semester. Not simply a summary of course content, strong essays will offer a thoughtful examination of how your understanding of Oral History has evolved and deepened through our readings, discussions, and

assignments. Detailed directions, including a rubric, will be provided in class and posted on Canvas.

Engagement and Growth (10%)

Effective Oral History practice requires ongoing self-reflection, a growth mindset, and collaborative engagement with a variety of stakeholders, from professional colleagues to disparate communities. This assignment introduces you to the reflective practice and continuous improvement mentalities that characterize the best oral history work while fostering your development as a thoughtful, engaged participant in our learning community. You will complete two self-assessments — one mid-semester and another at the end of the course — that critically examine your participation, engagement, and professional development in the class. These self-assessments are designed to foster conversations about growth and improvement. Your grade will be based on these two self-reflections combined with evaluation of your participation/completion of in-class activities. Detailed directions and rubric are posted on Canvas.

Schedule

**The instructor reserves the right to modify readings, assignments, or due dates when necessary for legitimate pedagogical reasons. Students will receive at least one week's advance notice of any changes through Canvas announcements/in-class notifications.*

Week 1: Welcome & Introduction to Oral History

January 12 – Welcome & Course Overview

January 14 – Introduction to Oral History

Read: Douglas A. Boyd, *Oral History: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2025), Preface and Chapter 1.

January 16 – Listening to the Past Workshop 1

Read: Albert S. Broussard, “Race and Oral History,” in Donald A. Ritchie, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History* (Oxford, 2011).

Additional 5930 Readings: Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2016), Chapter 1; Shelly Trower, *Sound Writing: Voices, Authors, and Readers of Oral History*, Introduction (Oxford, 2023).

Week 2 – What is Oral History?

January 19 – No Class for Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday

January 21 – History of Oral History

Read: Boyd, *Oral History*, Chapter 2.

January 23 - Listening to the Past Workshop 2

Read: Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jack, “Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses,” in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds., *The Oral History Reader*, 3rd ed. (Routledge, 2016).

Additional 5930 Readings: Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, Chapter 2; Introduction; Trower, *Sound Writing*, Part I.

Week 3 – Oral History Theory and Praxis

January 26 – Oral History as a Field of Study

Read: [OHA Principles and Best Practices](#) (2018)

January 28 – The Oral History Interview

Read: Boyd, *Oral History*, Chapter 3.

January 30 – Listening to the Past Workshop 3

Read: Fred Allison, “Remembering a Vietnam War Firefight: Changing Perspectives Over Time,” in Perks and Thomson, eds., *Oral History Reader*.

Additional 5930 Readings: Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, Chapters 3 & 4.

Week 4: Interviews & Check-In

February 2 – The Interview, part 2

Read: Valerie Yow, “Interviewing Techniques and Strategies,” in Perks and Thomson, eds., *Oral History Reader*.

February 4 – Exam Review

Read: [OHA Principles and Best Practices](#) (2018)

February 6 – In-Class Exam

Required to bring an exam book to class for exam

Additional 5930 Readings: Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, Chapter 5.

DUE 2/8: Practice Interview Exercise

Week 5: Oral History Projects

February 9 – Oral History Projects

Read: Boyd, *Oral History*, Chapter 4.

February 11 – Healers in History, Healers in Gainesville

Read: James C. Whorton, *Nature Cures: The History of Alternative Medicine in America* (Oxford, 2004), 219-296.

Explore: Duquesne University, “[Complementary and Alternative Medicine](#)” Library Guide (2025).

February 13 - Listening to the Past Workshop 3

Read: Michelle Winslow and Graham Smith, “Ethical Challenges in the Oral History of Medicine,” in Ritchie, ed., *Oxford Handbook of Oral History*.

Additional 5930 Readings: Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, Chapter 6.

Week 6: Interview Guides

February 16 – Interview Guides

Read: Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 3rd ed. (Oxford 2015), excerpts; SPOHP Interview Guide Packet (PDF).

February 18 – Interview Guide Workshop

Please bring laptop/tablet to class

DUE 2/19 – Interview Guides

February 20 - Listening to the Past Workshop 4

Read: Lenore Layman, “Reticence in Oral History Interviews,” in Perks and Thomson, eds., *Oral History Reader*.

Additional 5930 Readings: Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, Chapter 7.

DUE 2/22: Mid-Semester Engagement and Growth Self-Evaluation

Week 7: Interview Week 1

February 23 – (Group A): Oral History Technology Workshop with Deborah Hendrix in Pugh Hall 210; **(Group B):** Interview Prep

Read (Group A): OHA, “[Oral History Best Practices](#)”

Group B: Please bring laptop/tablet to class

February 25 – Ethics, Oral History, and the Law

Read: John A. Neuenschwander, “Legal Ramifications of Oral History,” in Ritchie, ed., *Oxford Handbook of Oral History*; [OHA Statement on Ethics](#); SPOHP Release Packet (PDF)

DUE: 2/25 – Revised Interview Guide (Group A)

February 27 – In-Class Interview Prep (Group A)

Please bring laptop/tablet to class

February 28: Group A Interview Day.

DUE (Group A): Upload all interview materials to assigned drive by 3/1

Additional 5930 Readings: Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, Chapter 8.

Week 8: Interview Week 2

March 2 - (Group B): Oral History Technology Workshop with Deborah Hendrix in Pugh Hall 210; **(Group A):** Interview Debrief

Read (Group B): OHA, “[Oral History Best Practices](#)”

Group A: Please bring laptop/tablet to class

March 4 - After the Interview

Read: Boyd, *Oral History*, Chapter 5.

DUE 3/4 – Revised Interview Guide (Group B)

March 6 –Interview Prep (Group B)

Please bring laptop/tablet to class

Additional 5930 Readings: Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, Chapter 9.

March 7: Group B Interview Day

DUE (Group B): Upload all interview materials to assigned drive by 3/8

DUE March 9: Interview reflection

Week 9: Transcription

March 9 – The Art and Science of Transcription

Read: Elinor A. Maze, “The Uneasy Page: Transcribing and Editing Oral History,” in Thomas Charleton et al., eds, *Handbook of Oral History* (2006); SPOHP Style Guide, 1-21 (PDF).

March 11 – Audit-Edit Listening Session

Please bring a laptop with headphones to class

March 13 – Audit-Edit Workshop

Please bring a laptop with headphones to class

Additional 5930 Readings: Francis Good, “Voice, Ear, and Text: Words, Meaning, and Transcription,” in Perks and Thomson, eds., *Oral History Reader*.

Spring Break: March 26 – March 20

Week 10: AI and Oral History

March 23 - AI and Oral History

Watch: “[A Brief Introduction to Artificial Intelligence for Oral Historians](#),” OHA Webinar, July 1, 2024.

March 25 – Abstracting and Keywords Workshop

Read: SPOHP Abstract-Keyword Packet (PDF) & SPOHP Style Guide, 22.

Please bring a laptop with headphones to class

March 27 – Abstracting and Keywords Workshop

Please bring a laptop with headphones to class

DUE 3/29: Audit-Edit Assignment

Week 11: Analyzing Oral History

March 30 – Interpreting Oral Histories

Read: Katherine Borland, “That’s Not What I said’: Interpretative Conflict in Oral History Narrative Research,” in Perks and Thomson, eds., *Oral History Reader*.

April 1 – Reinterpreting Oral Histories

Read: Joanna Bornat, “Remembering and Reworking Emotions: The Reanalysis of Emotion in an Interview,” in Perks and Thomson, eds., *Oral History Reader*.

April 3 - Listening to the Past Workshop 5

Read: Valarie Yow, “‘Do I Like Them too Much?’: Effects of the Oral History Interview on the Interviewer and Vice-Versa,” *Oral History Review* 24, no. 1 (Summer 1997) 55-79.

DUE April 5: Peer-Review Audit Edit

Week 12: Oral History and Public History

April 6 – Oral History and Public History

Read: Graham Smith, “Toward A Public Oral History,” in Ritchie, ed., *Oxford Handbook of Oral History*.

April 8 – Instagram “Mini-Exhibit” Brainstorming

Read:

Please bring a laptop with headphones to class

April 10 - Listening to the Past Workshop 6

Week 13: Project Days

April 13 – Project Workshop

DUE: Group Proposal

Please bring a laptop with headphones to class

April 15 - Project Workshop

Please bring a laptop with headphones to class

April 17 - Project Workshop

Please bring a laptop with headphones to class

DUE: Draft Carousel Post

Due April 18: Final Transcription

Week 20: Exhibit Launch

April 20 – Project Workshop

Please bring a laptop with headphones to class

DUE: Final Carousel Post and Peer & Self Evaluations

April 22 – Exhibit Launch Event in Pugh Hall Ocora

DUE: 4/27: Final Reflective Essay & End-of-semester Engagement and Growth self-assessment

The Fine Print

This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those policies and for resources for students, please see [this link](#). (The direct link is <https://go.ufl.edu/syllabuspolicies>.)

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory for this course. That said, life happens. After two unexcused absences (as defined by [UF attendance policy](#)), your overall grade will be deducted 2 points per additional unexcused absence. You must submit appropriate documentation of excused absence(s) to the instructor via email within seven days of your return to class or the absence(s) will count as an unexcused absence. I highly encourage you to attend office hours to review materials missed during an absence.

In-Class Technology Policy

With the exception of identified in-class workshops, we have a no-computer policy. Also, please silence your phones. The research is clear; computers and cell phones are distractions that detract from the learning experience of you and your classmates. Thank you adhering to this policy.

Late Assignments

Late assignments will be accepted for up to seven days after the posted due date. The overall final grade for late submissions will be deducted 5% per day for up to a 25% deduction. Out of fairness to your classmates, I strictly follow this protocol.

Course AI Policy

UF is a global leader in artificial intelligence, and students, faculty, and staff have access to a powerful suite of AI tools—including [NaviGator Chat](#)—to support learning and research. That said, AI is a rapidly evolving technology, and as a society and academic discipline, we are still learning how to ethically and responsibly integrate it into our work.

Recent research suggests that relying too heavily on AI tools can significantly hinder academic growth, especially in areas like critical thinking, writing, and historical interpretation. It also hallucinates and frankly gets a lot wrong. At the same time, AI literacy is increasingly vital in the workplace, and understanding how to use these tools thoughtfully is part of your professional development.

In this course, we will cautiously explore AI as a tool for learning and oral history practice. You are welcome to use AI tools to support your work—but you must always disclose how you used them. This includes:

- Generating outlines or brainstorming ideas
- Summarizing sources
- Checking grammar or formatting
- Any other use that influences your submitted work

Undisclosed use of AI tools will be treated as intentional plagiarism. If you’re unsure whether a particular use is appropriate, please ask before submitting your work.

We’ll discuss AI use in class and reflect on its implications for historical research, interpretation, and public engagement.

Course Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism — whether intentional or unintentional — is a serious academic offense and will be treated accordingly. All instances of plagiarism will be reported via the [Student Honor Code Process](#). If found guilty via that process, I will recommend a failing grade for the course.

Avoiding Unintentional Plagiarism

In History, citation is not just a technical requirement; it’s a disciplinary value. We cite sources to show how we built our arguments, to allow others to trace our thinking, and to contribute to an ongoing scholarly conversation. Citation demonstrates your research, your depth of engagement, and your respect for the work of others.

In this course, you must cite everything that informs your thinking, whether it’s a direct quote, a paraphrased idea, or a conceptual influence. This includes:

- All quotations from primary and secondary sources, which must be enclosed in quotation marks and followed by a citation.

- All ideas that are not your own, even if paraphrased.
- Any source not assigned in the course, including books, lectures, conversations, or comments from classmates—these must be cited in a footnote or endnote.

All written work must follow Chicago-style citation using footnotes, unless otherwise specified. For more on Chicago Style [see Perdue OWL](#).

If someone helps you with your paper—by reviewing it for clarity or grammar, or by discussing ideas—please include a brief acknowledgment in a footnote stating who helped and how. This is also the best way to acknowledge your use of AI. It is perfectly acceptable to seek help, as long as your helper does not write the paper or provide its arguments.

Rest assured, we'll spend time talking about this in class and I will provide a useful handout to guide your decision making/understanding related to plagiarism *and* a refresher on the Chicago citation style (it's the best, of course).

Important Information and Updates

Faculty members must sometimes update course elements such as schedules or assignment details in response to student needs, compelling pedagogical reasons, and/or external events (e.g., severe weather or public health emergencies). If updates become necessary as the course progresses, students will be notified of any changes through Canvas announcements and/or email as soon as possible

Course Note

History is hard work. It's hard to talk about, think about, write about. It's filled with violence and pain, hope and healing. It's emotional. It's terrifyingly complex. It matters.

At times this semester, we will be discussing historical events that may be disturbing, even traumatizing, to some students. If you are aware of particular course material that may be traumatizing to you, I'd be happy to discuss any concerns you may have with it before it comes up in class. Likewise, if you ever wish to discuss your personal reactions to such material with the class or me afterward, I welcome such discussion as an appropriate part of our coursework.

If you ever feel the need to step outside during one of these discussions, either for a short time or the rest of the class session, you may do so without academic penalty. You will, however, be responsible for any material/assignments you miss. If you do leave the room for a significant

amount of time, please make arrangements to get notes from another student and/or see me individually to discuss the situation and get you caught up to speed.

UF offers an array of free resources to help you learn, thrive, and flourish. You can find [UE Student Success resources here](#) and [UF Campus Health and Wellness resources here](#).

Course Disclaimer: Students are encouraged to employ critical thinking and to rely on data and verifiable sources to interrogate all assigned readings and subject matter in this course as a way of determining whether they agree with their classmates and/or their instructor. No lesson is intended to espouse, promote, advance, inculcate, or compel a particular feeling, perception, viewpoint, or belief. Course content has been carefully structured to explore various viewpoints, core concepts, and perspectives in the discipline of Public History. Student perspectives, claims, conclusions, and viewpoints will not be a factor in any assessment. Students should feel encouraged, welcome, and free to respectively agree, criticize, or disagree with any discussion, reading, or other course material without penalty or benefit.