

Behind the Veil: Methods

African American Oral History & the Jim Crow South

Duke University – Spring 2009
DOCST 125S / HIST 129S / AAAS 125S

Course Schedule & Location: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:50 to 4:05 PM
CDS Bridges House Room 113

Instructor: Max Krochmal (History Ph.D. candidate, *BTV* Research Associate)
Office Location: Center for Documentary Studies, Bridges 210
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:00AM to 12:00PM, and by appointment.
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Course Description:

*Behind me and the other world there is an ever unasked question:
unasked by some through feelings of delicacy;
by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it.
How does it feel to be a problem?*

*...Leaving then, the white world, I have stepped within the Veil,
raising it that you may view faintly its deeper recesses—
the meaning of religion,
the passion of its human sorrow,
and the struggle of its greater souls.*

—W.E.B. DuBois
The Souls of Black Folks (1903)

Following DuBois, this course steps behind the veil of segregation, moving out of the visible world of the white supremacist South and into the invisible interior life of the region's African Americans. Students of Dixie had long believed that segregation resulted in total oppression by whites and passive submission by blacks. But a massive oral history project, housed here at CDS, prompted scholars to overturn this interpretation and replace it with a complex picture of African American ingenuity, survival, and resistance. This course allows students to see "first-hand" what the South looks like from the perspective of the region's long-repressed, but frequently misunderstood, black population. Behind the veil we see not only oppression but struggle and persistence, not just despair but hard work and strong communities, not just hate but love, hope, and humanity.

This semester we will conduct a group oral history project that will be added to the Behind the Veil collection. Since our course enrollment remains on the small side, we will collectively decide the particular focus of our research. The instructor will help facilitate initial contacts; however, each student will be required to make all necessary arrangements for his or her own interview and to conduct follow up research as needed. Within this group project there will be plenty of room for students to independently explore the area(s) of African American history

that most interests them. The course culminates in a presentation of our research findings to our interview subjects, community partners, and our fellow documentarians at CDS.

Learning Objectives: Through taking this course, students will:

- Gain a comprehensive knowledge of African American history since the Civil War, with a particular focus on the age of Jim Crow (1898-1965)
- Learn the basic methods of oral history research; conduct, analyze, and archive an original interview with an elderly black Southerner; place the specifics of individual interviews into the larger history of the Jim Crow South
- Analyze the intersections of race, class, and gender in African American history; understand how oral history research transforms traditional historiography; learn how history changes when viewed from the perspective of ordinary people

Assignments & Grading:

- Oral History Assignments (30% of final grade): Throughout the semester, you will be required to complete a number of small tasks related to conducting your original oral history interview. You will receive the necessary training for each assignment at least one week prior to the due date. I will also distribute a handout with detailed instructions and a grading rubric. The following are required:
 - Comparative Interview Methods Essay (5 pages), due February **10**
 - Research Prospectus (1 page), due February **17**
 - Audio Recording, due within one week of interview, by March **27**
 - Jottings & Field Notes, due within one week of interview, on or before March **29**
 - Tape Log, due March **31** (Note: this is time consuming, so don't wait until the last minute!)
 - Transcript Excerpt, due April **7** (this is *extremely* time-consuming)
 - Archival Entry, due April **14**
 - Final Project (see below)
- Reading Journal (30%): Expect 75-100 pages of reading for each course meeting. You will also be required to watch two films on reserve at the Lilly Library. For each session, you will be required to turn in a single-page form (available on Blackboard) that asks that you record and annotate several key quotations and to prepare a couple questions for discussion in class. The journal is intended to be useful to you—it's a tool to help you get the most out of the readings and to make a quickly accessible, permanent record of your thoughts related to the texts. The journal must be kept current, and the form must be turned in *hard copy* each day in class. You must also attend class and deliver your paper in person to receive credit. There will be 27 classes on which reading assignments are due; you must complete 18 journal entries over the course of the semester. These will be graded using my "O/S/U scale"—a slightly modified version of pass-fail. Papers will be marked O-Outstanding; S-Satisfactory; or U-Unsatisfactory. The vast majority of assignments will receive the grade "S," which is worth 100% of the possible points. A paper marked "U" must be re-written or is scored as 50%. A paper marked "O" is unusual and exceptional, and it counts for 150% credit. You can complete more than the required 18 journal entries for extra credit.
- Participation (20%): Since this is a small class, it will be especially important that all students come to class prepared (having done the reading and assignments) and participate actively in group discussions. Students are also required to visit me during office hours. Participation grades for many classes are somewhat arbitrary; to minimize this, I will use a quantitative "Rubric for Seminar Discussion" (on Blackboard) to

evaluate your participation in class discussions several times during the semester, without your knowledge. I will return the rubric to you the next day in order to provide you with feedback. You may add qualitative “points” to your grade through online postings or by coming to office hours. Please note that this is a huge portion of your grade—and more importantly, it's essential to creating a functioning class where we can all learn together.

- Final Project (20%): Instead of a conventional final examination, students will present the findings of their oral history research at a community meeting featuring our interview subjects as guests of honor. The presentation is tentatively scheduled to take place during our final exam period, 2:00-5:00PM on Monday, April 27, but we may collectively decide to change it. In the final weeks of the class, each student will work toward preparing a formal address—a short conference paper, a detailed PowerPoint, or an audio documentary/photo slideshow—for the program. You will be expected to offer a broad interpretive thesis and defend it using specific details and evidence from your interview and other class readings. You are required to prepare a detailed outline or draft version of your presentation and discuss it with me in office hours by the end of the day on Friday, April 17. We will work to finalize the group presentation during class on April 21. The Final Project will be assessed using a special rubric which I will distribute in class on or before April 7.
- Attendance (Pass/Fail): Consistent attendance is required. There are only 27 meetings. Students may not miss more than four sessions without failing the course. No exceptions! Please be judicious about missing class: the Dean will not provide an exception for short-term illnesses nor support an appeal of this policy.

Books & Readings:

Many of the readings are posted on our course Blackboard site. The rest of the texts may be purchased at the Regulator Bookstore, 720 Ninth Street (ph: 286-2700). They are also available on reserve at Perkins library. Each of the following texts is required:

- William H. Chafe, Raymond Gavins, and Robert Korstad, ed., *Remembering Jim Crow: African Americans Tell About Life in the Segregated South* (New York: New Press, in association with Lyndhurst Books of the Center for Documentary Studies of Duke University, 2001). Paperback only (no CD), List price=\$19.95
- Christina Greene, *Our Separate Ways: Women and the Black Freedom Movement in Durham, North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005). Paperback, \$19.95
- Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South, from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003). Paperback, \$20.00
- Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). Paperback, \$21.95

Audio Equipment: For our interviews, we will be using ONLY documentary-quality digital audio recording equipment owned by the Center for Documentary Studies. You must pay a lab fee of \$85 in order to take this class. CDS Equipment Manager Harlan Campbell will teach us how to use the equipment during class on February 24. After completing training, you will be able to reserve recorders, microphones, and headphones for checkout from the CDS “Cage.” If you are absent on February 24, you MUST attend a make-up training on Saturday, February

28. Failure to attend training will result in failure of the course. Please see me if the fee presents a financial hardship.

Course Schedule: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:50 to 4:05 PM

Readings marked **BB** are available on Blackboard.

Underlined Dates / Topics represent in-class Oral History Methods Workshops.

- January 8 / Welcome & Introductions. American RadioWorks, *Remembering Jim Crow* audio documentary, part 1 (15 minutes; in class). BTV website.

Slavery, Reconstruction, & the Rise of Jim Crow (pre-1865-1898)

- Jan. 13 / **First Reading Journal Due**. Slavery & Oral History. Readings: Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, pp. 1-43; Linda Shopes, "What is Oral History?" in *Making Sense of Oral History* **BB**; Listen to part 2 of the American RadioWorks documentary online (20 minutes) **BB**.
- Jan. 15 / The Civil War. Hahn, pp. 43-61 and Ch. 3 (78 pages total).
- Jan. 20 / Introduction to Oral History. Guest Speaker: David Cline, Associate Director of Southern Oral History Program, UNC. Readings: Linda Shopes, "How Do Historians Use It? [Oral History]," in *Making Sense of Oral History* **BB**; Donald Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, Ch. 1 (28 pages); Chafe et al, *Remembering Jim Crow* (hereafter *RJC*), "Introduction" and pp. 56-61 (19 pages).
- Jan. 22 / Intro to Oral History, continued, and Remembering Reconstruction. Hahn, Ch. 4 (52 pages); *RJC*, pp. 61-88 (28 pages).
- Jan. 27 / Before and After 1877. Hahn, Ch. 5 and 6 (read about half of each chapter but make sure to understand the main arguments). Also, discussion of OH Project & Essay. Bring 2 concrete ideas to class (include possible initial contacts).
- Jan. 29 / The Last Hurrah. Hahn, Ch. 8 and 9 (skim Ch. 8, read Ch. 9 closely)

The "Nadir" to 1929

- February 3 / Oral History and White Supremacy. Wilmington Race Riot online readings. Guest Speaker.
- Feb. 5 / Behind the Veil of Segregation. Lawrence C. Goodwyn, "Populist Dreams and Negro Rights: East Texas as a Case Study," *American Historical Review* 76, no. 5 (December 1971): 1435-1456 **BB** (22 pages); *RJC*, Ch. 1 (55 pages). Excerpts from D.W. Griffith, *Birth of a Nation* and Oscar Micheaux, *Within Our Gates* (in class).
- Feb. 10 / Preparing for Interviews. Comparative Interview Methods Essay Due! *Behind the Veil* project Interview Questions **BB**; Ritchie, *Doing Oral History* Ch. 3 (26 pages); Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jack, "Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses" in Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai, ed., *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History* (New York: Routledge, 1991) **BB** (16 pages).
- Feb. 12 / Family & Community. *RJC*, Ch. 3 (63 pages); Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, "Diplomatic Women," Ch. 6 in *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996) **BB** (30 pages).
- Feb. 17 / Conducting Interviews and Fieldwork. Research Prospectus Due! Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 1, 17-26, and 39-55 **BB** (28 pages); Diane L. Wolf, "Situating Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork" in *Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), pp. 1-19 **BB** (19 dense pages).

Schedule Your Interview Now!

- Feb. 19 / Education, Consumption, and Politics. *RJC*, Ch. 4 (53 pages); Gilmore, “Women and Ballots,” Ch. 8 in *Gender and Jim Crow* **BB** (22 pages); and Grace Elizabeth Hale, “‘For Colored’ and ‘For White’: Segregating Consumption in the South” in Jane Elizabeth Dailey, Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, and Bryant Simon, ed., *Jumpin’ Jim Crow: Southern Politics from Civil War to Civil Rights* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000) **BB** (21 pages).
- Feb. 24 / Recording Documentary-Quality Audio. Guest Speaker: Harlan Campbell, CDS Equipment Manager. No Readings (but you might want to get ahead for Thursday). *Schedule your interview if you haven't already!*

Days of Hope, 1929-1948

- Feb. 26 / Work. *RJC*, Ch. 5 (63 pages). Greta de Jong “‘With the Aid of God and the F.S.A.’: The Louisiana Farmers’ Union and the African American Freedom Struggle in the New Deal Era” in Payne and Green, eds., *Time Longer Than Rope* **BB** (46 pages).
- Feb. 28 (Saturday) / Audio Training Make-Up Session for students absent Feb. 24.
- March 3 / Logging and Transcribing. Ritchie, Ch. 4 (25 pages); Southern Oral History Program, “Transcriber’s Guidelines,” in *Oral History: A Practical Guide*, 4th Ed. Online **BB**; Linda Shopes, “Interpreting Oral History,” in *Making Sense of Oral History* **BB**; *RJC*, Ch. 6 (37 pages).
- March 5 / Politics. Patricia Sullivan, “Challenge to the Solid South: The Politics of New Deal Reform, 1933-1938,” Ch. 2 in *Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996) **BB** (29 pages); Robin D.G. Kelley, “Congested Terrain: Resistance on Public Transportation,” Ch. 3 in *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press, 1994) **BB** (22 pages).
- March 10 / Spring Break: No Class; Be Safe and Have Fun!
- March 12 / Spring Break: No Class (Party Hardy!)
- March 17 / C.I.O.! Michael Honey, “The Power of Remembering: Black Factory Workers and Organizing in the Jim Crow Era” in Payne and Green, eds., *Time Longer Than Rope* **BB** (34 pages); Robert Rodgers Korstad, “Those Who Were Not Afraid,” Ch. 1 in *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003) **BB**.
- March 19 / The Postwar Crisis. Patricia Sullivan, “Epilogue: 1948,” in *Days of Hope* **BB** (28 pages); Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein, “Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement” *Journal of American History* 75, no. 3 (Dec. 1988) **BB** (26 pages).

The Fall of Jim Crow? 1948-Present

- March 24 / Rethinking THE Civil Rights Movement. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,” *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (March 2005): 1233-1263 **BB** (31 pages); Christina Greene, *Our Separate Ways*, “Introduction,” Ch. 1, and Ch 2. (62 pages).
- March 26 / **NO CLASS**. Catch up on Greene if needed.
- March 27 (Friday), 11:59PM / **Last Day to turn in Audio Recording**
- March 29 (Sunday), 11:59PM / **Last Day to turn in Jottings & Field Notes!**
- March 31 / **Tape Log Due!** Organizing Traditions. Charles M. Payne, “Introduction” and “Give Light and the People Will Find a Way,” Ch. 3, in *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley:

University of California Press, 2007 [1995]) **BB** (43 pages); Max Krochmal, “Rethinking ‘Civil Rights’: Industrial Workers and Economic Justice in the ‘Classical Phase’ of the Birmingham Freedom Struggle, 1945-1965” manuscript for *Journal of Southern History* **BB** (30 pages).

- April 2 / The Sit-In Movement. Greene, Ch. 3 (42 pages); William H. Chafe, “The Sit-Ins Begin,” Ch. 3 in *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980) **BB** (31 pages).
- April 7 / **Transcript Excerpt Due!** The Ambiguities of Success, 1963-1965. John Dittmer, “That Summer” and “The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and the Atlantic City Challenge,” Ch. 10-11 in *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994) **BB** (61 pages).
- April 9 / Analysis and Writing. Ritchie, Ch. 8 (24 pages); Katharine Borland, “‘That’s Not What I Said’: Interpretive Conflict in Oral Narrative Research,” in Gluck and Patai, *Women’s Words* **BB** (14 pages); Wolf, “Situating Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork,” pp. 32-38 (7 dense pages) **BB**.
- April 14 / **Archival Entry Due!** War on Poverty and Black Power. Greene, Ch. 4 and 6 (71 pages); Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar, “Introduction” in *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004) **BB** (9 pages).
- April 16 / Post-1960s. Greene, Ch. 7 and “Conclusion” (54 pages); Payne, “The Rough Draft of History,” Ch. 14 in *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom* **BB** (17 pages).
- April 17 (Friday), 5:00pm / **Last Day to Meet with Instructor to Discuss Draft Final Presentation**
- April 21 / Final Presentation Discussion
- April 23-26 / Reading Period (No Class) / Meet with instructor to finalize presentations.
- Monday, April 27, 2:00PM-5:00PM (tentative) / Final Exam Period: Presentations & Dinner, location TBA