



### **Oral History Interview Project: 50 points**

So often we think of history as events in the past contained in heavy, sometimes hard to read textbooks when in fact history is the most interesting of stories. Each day you are experiencing history and at some time in the future someone is going to ask you “Tell me what it was like to see the first African American President elected?” “Where were you when the Twin Towers were attacked and how did you feel? The most interesting history can be learned by just talking with family and friends.

Your major project for this quarter will be an oral history interview. You will have a great deal of flexibility with this project so that you can pursue an area of history that especially interests you. You will have a rubric and guidelines to point you in the right direction.

Before starting the interview you must do some preparation. We will do some prep in class as we look at the time periods from 1945 to the present and highlight turning points in history. Once you have some general knowledge of key events, you may select an event or a time period to focus on. You may be interested in space travel, the Kennedy Era, the turn to conservatism with the election of Ronald Reagan, the new and expanding role of women, the impact of rock and roll, or how social media has changed our country...so select a time period or topic that interests you.

Your next step is to do some research. What do you know about the time period or event...what do you need to research in order to develop quality, open ended questions...what background reading or viewing do you need to accomplish to prepare for the interview?

Third, you need to select an appropriate person. You need to find someone who will be able to help you understand the event or time period you selected. Try to think creatively about the person you will ask to help with the project. Do you have a family friend or neighbor...someone you may work with...someone who owns a local business that would be willing to talk with you...maybe a relative beyond your immediate family that would give you the time and insight into your event.

At this point, you need to complete the preliminary interview sheet so that your topic can be approved.

Your next step is to develop a list of open ended questions that you will use for the interview. Open ended questions allow the person to more fully explain the event and their impressions of the time period. If you have any concerns about developing questions, you can tune in Oprah and listen to how

she words her questions. Your questions will act as the starting point for your interview but you will soon find out that interviews can take some dramatic shifts and you must be prepared to quickly think of follow-up questions.

You then must decide what format you will use for the interview. In this day of new and improved technology you have several options: voice recording; video or word processing the interview or movie maker. Mr. Dumais and Mr. Fontaine are aware of this project and will be happy to help you with. No one should spend any money on getting fancy equipment. Use what you have on hand. Keep in mind many phones and digital cameras have the ability to record voice and pictures.

Now you are ready for the interview. You may select the format that works best for you and your interviewee. You will need to turn in or play your interview so it can be evaluated using the rubric.

Once you have completed the interview, you must write a thank you note...put it in an addressed envelope with a stamp...but do not seal. I will read the note and check it off the rubric and mail it. A thank you note should be hand written on plain paper or note paper not loose leaf. You must sign the note. Make sure the envelope is correctly addressed with the name, street, town, state and zip code. Your return address should be in the upper left hand corner.

Knowing you have numerous demands at this time of year, I am giving you a range of due dates. You may turn in your final project anytime between May 6-10.

For additional information on doing an oral history interview you may want to check out:

[http://dohistory.org/on\\_your\\_own/toolkit/oralHistory.html](http://dohistory.org/on_your_own/toolkit/oralHistory.html)

Good luck...enjoy...have fun...and see me if you have any questions or concerns