

Living the Cold War | Oral History Interview
Due March 20, 2019

For the oral history project, you are required to conduct an interview with someone who experienced the Cold War in the U.S., the Soviet Union, the Eastern Bloc countries, or other global Cold War sites, such as Cuba. In practical terms, this means someone born *in or before* 1975-80 with conscious memory of Cold War events or culture. This assignment requires you to a) identify a suitable interviewee, b) prepare a set of relevant interview questions, c) conduct an approx. 60-minute recorded interview, and d) prepare a summary and analysis of your interview of 3-5 pages [double-spaced, times new roman 12pt. font].

Step 1: Identifying an Interviewee – due Feb.15

You are required to submit the **name and age** of your interview subject, along with a **short biographical paragraph** explaining why or how this person can offer perspective on the Cold War experience. Please be sure that your interview subject is willing and able to participate before you submit their name. You will also need to verify that your interview subject is comfortable with the interview being recorded for class purposes and check whether they would like the interview to be archived at the UF Samuel Proctor Oral History Project (SPOHP) at UF. Archived interviews will be available to researchers and may be quoted from, published, or broadcast in any medium that SPOHP deems appropriate. You will be provided with a SPOHP consent form for your interviewee to sign at the time of the interview if they wish the recording to be archived.

Step 2: Developing Interview Questions – Feb.18

We will have an in-class workshop with the staff from the SPOHP on Monday, Feb.18. They will be presenting best practices for oral history interviews and will work with you to develop an appropriate set of interview questions. You should generate a list of **8-10 sample, open-ended questions** that you will use to guide your interview. These should be submitted to me either **in class or via email by 11:59pm on Feb.18**. SPOHP staff will also work with you on selecting and making arrangements to use appropriate recording equipment.

As you create your list of sample interview questions, be sure to develop some “open-ended” questions, such as: *What was your community like growing up? Could you describe the process you went through in deciding what field to work in/career to pursue? What have been some of the challenges you faced in coming to the United States?* These kinds of open-ended questions give the narrator space to answer a question at length on their own terms. In contrast, close-ended questions such as *What year were you born? How many people lived in your household growing up? Do you like working here?* lead to one-line responses.

Step 3: Conducting the Interview

A) Schedule the interview: Be sure to arrange an appropriate time and place for your interview. You will need at least an hour, including set-up and introduction.

B) Preparation: Before conducting the interview, you should (if possible) acquire some information about the narrator's background and general life experience. You should also be sure to familiarize yourself with the historical context relevant to your interviewee, e.g. if you are interviewing someone from one of the Soviet satellite countries, you should be informed about the basics of that country's postwar history. This helps you to better understand your interviewee's story and alerts your interviewee that you are interested in their history. For background preparation, you should consult **2-3 external sources**, only 1 of which can be an internet source. Any sources you use or consult should be listed in a separate **bibliography** attached to your 3-5pp. summary and analysis.

C) Conducting the interview: Be sure to select a **quiet, distraction-free setting** that is comfortable for both you and the interviewee – and be sure to test that your recording equipment is working! Bring a notebook so that you can take additional notes and/or formulate additional questions during the interview. See attached sheet for advice on good interviewing techniques.

Step 4: Summarizing/Analyzing the Interview – due March 20

For the final step of the interview project, you are required to prepare a 3-5 page summary of your interview in which you highlight the most salient and/or surprising things that emerged in your conversation and analyze the connection between your interview's content and the broader historical/cultural context of the Cold War. A) What were the main points of your interviewee's story? B) What were the most powerful or relevant moments in your interview? C) Did anything you did *not* expect emerge? What do you think is important for others to know about your conversation? C) How did this interview change, develop, or enhance your understanding of the Cold War period? How does the content of your interview relate to the broader historical and/or cultural context of the Cold War, or to themes, topics, or material we have been discussing this semester?

*You will be asked to share some highlights from your interview with the class (~5 minutes) on **March 20** or **March 22**.

Interview Grade Scale

B-	B-/B	B/B-	B	B/B+	B+/B	B+	B+/A-	A-/B+	A-	A-/A	A/A-	A
83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	92	94	95	96	98

Oral History Assessment Rubric

Criteria	The A Interview	The B Interview	The C Interview	The D Interview
Summary	The interview summary is well written, very thorough, and accurately portrays the story of the oral history subject. Selections are well chosen to reveal the most powerful and/or relevant moments in the oral history.	The interview summary is mostly well written, thorough, and accurately portrays the story of the oral history subject. Selections are mostly well chosen to reveal the most powerful and/or relevant moments in the oral history.	The interview summary has lapses in the writing, covers some of the information from the interview, and only partially portrays the story of the oral history subject. The reader has insight into at least one powerful or relevant moment in the oral history.	The interview summary covers very little information from the interview, fails to accurately portray the subject, and possesses major lapses in the writing. The reader has little to no insight into anything powerful or relevant in the interview.
Analysis	Analysis reflects a sophisticated linkage of the interview content to the broader historical/cultural context of Cold War experience. Demonstrates strong knowledge of this context.	Analysis linking the interview content to the broader historical/cultural context of Cold War experience is solid, with some minor lapses or missed opportunities.	Analysis linking the interview content to the broader historical/cultural context of Cold War experience is partial, with several lapses or missed opportunities.	Little to no analysis linking the interview content to the broader historical/cultural context of Cold War experience.
Question Design	Questions follow the guidelines and are thorough, appropriate, and well-ordered. They demonstrate high comprehension of relevant historical/cultural issues and of the interview subject.	Questions mostly follow the guidelines and are mostly thorough, appropriate, and well-ordered. They demonstrate comprehension of relevant historical/cultural issues and of the interview subject.	Questions partially follow the guidelines and are somewhat thorough, appropriate, and well-ordered. They demonstrate only limited comprehension of relevant historical/cultural issues and of the interview subject.	Questions are poorly constructed, poorly ordered, and do not cover a number of important areas.
Recording	The audio file is well done and clear throughout.	The audio file is mostly well done and clear, with some weak places.	The audio file is poorly done, with several weak places.	The audio file is poorly done and of little value.
Bio & Release Form	Bio accurately and thoroughly describes the interview subject and his/her perspective on Cold War experience. Completed release form is submitted with interview.	Bio mostly describes the interview subject and his/her perspective on Cold War experience accurately and thoroughly. Completed release form is submitted with interview.	Bio demonstrates little knowledge of the interview subject and his/her perspective on Cold War experience. Completed release form is submitted with interview.	Bio demonstrates very weak knowledge of the interview subject and his/her perspective on Cold War experience. Completed release form is not submitted with interview.
Resources & Documentation	Use of external sources is documented in a properly formatted bibliography.	More limited use of external sources, documented in a properly formatted bibliography.	Limited to no use of external sources, improperly formatted bibliography.	No course materials or outside resources were used in the narrative. No bibliography.

Grading Rubric

This grading rubric is meant to provide you with a sense of how your interviews are evaluated. It is also meant to help you with the interview and writing process. Strong oral history interviews should demonstrate sophisticated knowledge of the interview subject, the relevant historical and cultural context, and cogent analysis of the linkages between the two. Crafting a good oral history interview combines interpersonal skills with strong analytical writing.

How best to articulate the most important points that emerged in your interview? What evidence most strongly supports your interpretation of the interview's relevance to the broader historical and cultural contexts? These are questions to keep in mind as you write up your summary and analysis of your interview.

Samuel Proctor Oral History Program
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Addendum to Deed of Gift

Updated April 2013

Project Code: _____
Interviewee: _____
Interviewer: _____
Date: _____

Please write 2-3 sentences describing the content of this interview.

Please select 3-5 keywords about the themes of this interview.

Activists/activism	Family history	Military service
Alachua County	Florida	Poverty
African-American history	Food	Religion
Agriculture	Gainesville	Rural life
Career	Gender/Identity	Sexuality
Civil Rights Movement	Health & Medicine	State government
Conservative politics	Immigration	Sports
Economics	International	Technology
Education	Labor	University of Florida
Environment	Latino/a history	Urban life
Farmwork	Law/legal	War
Federal government	Liberal politics	
Feminism	Media	

Or, include your own:

Signed _____



UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

Recorder Number

SAMUEL PROCTOR ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
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_____ (Project #)

DEED OF GIFT Samuel Proctor Oral History Program University of Florida



I _____ (Interviewee/Interviewer) herein permanently give, convey, and assign my oral history interview to the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program (hereafter SPOHP), which is currently in possession of my interview. In so doing, I understand that my interview (or oral memoir) will be made available to researchers and may be quoted from, published, or broadcast in any medium that the SPOHP shall deem appropriate.

In making this gift I fully understand that I am conveying all legal title and literary property rights which I have or may be deemed to have in my interview as well as all my rights, title, and interest in any copyright which may be secured under the laws now or late in force and effect in the United States of America. My conveyance of copyright encompasses the exclusive rights of: reproduction, distribution, preparation, and derivative works, public performance, public display as well as all renewals and extensions.

Interviewee

Date

Interviewer (s)

Date

SPOHP Director, Prof. Paul Ortíz

Date

Interviewee: Address, City, State, Zip Code

Interviewee: Email and Telephone

SPOHP INTERVIEW BEST PRACTICES

“Question-asking in oral history interviews is an art, individualized and even intuitive.”

- Charles Morrissey

ITEMS TO BRING TO EVERY INTERVIEW:

1. Marantz recorder	For archival-quality audio
2. Deed of Gift	SPOHP's release form, <u>must be signed</u>
3. Extension cord	Simple two-prong is ideal
4. Camera/iPhone	Take photos—with permission!
5. Interview guide	Questions/talking points
6. Note pad or paper	For follow-up questions
7. Pen	For taking notes, getting signatures, etc.

The standard SPOHP interview introduction:

“This is __[**your name here**]__, it's __[**Month, day, year**]__, and I'm sitting here with __[**interviewee, plus anyone else present**]__ in __[**general location—not specific address**]__. Thank you for joining me today.”

- May I ask you to please state your **full name**? (Don't forget maiden names!)
- **When and where** were you **born**?



Create a safe space for the narrator(s) to share and reflect.

Be calm and patient—become comfortable with the interviewing process, the equipment, and yourself.

A good interview is a **guided conversation** that emphasizes the narrator's voice. In that conversation, **simple, open-ended questions** are best. Better answers emerge from **meaningful dialogue** than one 'brilliant' question; oral history interviews are often **indirect and expansive**.

The interview guide is only that—a guide, to refer to during a lull in conversation. **Avoid interrupting** the narrator, and **try not to cut off tangents or rambles**. Instead, as people are speaking, **take notes to ask follow-up questions later**. And as the interviewer, remember that the interview is **not about you**.

STRENGTHS OF ORAL HISTORY:

Asking why particular decisions were made

Evaluating existing sources' information

Evoking what the experience was like

The meaning of the stories to the narrator

Remember the archive: the interview is a gift, and you need to respect that gift.

“You don't change the community, the community changes you.”

-LDAP founder Génesis Lara

GOOD KINDS OF FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS:

Sourcing/situating • How did the narrator learn about/encounter this information?

Detail questions • Probe generalities for specific details, examples, or stories

Following/Fleshing out • More info about people, themes, places that come up

Experiential description • Firsthand description of what an activity or process was like

Exploring laden terms • Words like “adventure” or “racism” are complex and can be unpacked

Two-sentence sensitivity • e.g. “I have heard/other people have said [X]. What has been your experience?”

AVOID / MINIMIZE QUESTIONS THAT ARE:

Leading • Strongly implies a correct or preferred answer
“Isn't a local restaurant the best kind?”

Double-barreled • Two questions embedded in one
“Did you do most of your drinking at bars?”

Frontloading • A cluster of questions asked all at once
“Can you tell me about your parents, your school, your neighborhood, and what chores you had?”

Prescriptive / value-laden • Dependent on laden terms
“Was there an earth-shattering moment that made you aware of segregation?”

Flatly confirmational • Information already in archives
“So, do you remember the old Macy's downtown?”

IV. Utilizing Good Interviewing Techniques:

The success of the interview depends to a great degree on the amount of trust and understanding the interviewer is able to create with the narrator. Courtesy and empathy are a part of this process. As you start to do oral history interviews, you will begin to understand the importance of doing background research. You will also begin to pick up on other "intangible" gestures and personality traits that make for a good interview.

A) When you arrive to begin the interview, set up your equipment as soon as possible. Your narrator's time should not be taken lightly. As you are setting up, give another general overview of the types of things you are interested in as well as some questions you might ask. At this point, discuss the interview release/deed of gift form and the various restrictions the narrator might want to put on the interview (more on this below).

B) If the person begins talking about their life history before you are able to start the recording, so much the better; this means that you have already "broken the ice," so to speak. If this is the case, you might be able to start the interview by saying "Mrs. ___, you were telling about the reasons your family left Florida for North Carolina. Can you tell me about this again now that the recorder is running?"

C) Start the interview by asking an open-ended question that the narrator will be able to answer easily, at length. An open-ended question could be: "Could you tell me about what your community was like when you were growing up?"

- 1. Do not interrupt the narrator during this first part of their testimony, even if relevant information to your interests is being passed over. Make notes of questions that arise out of the narrator's narrative.**
- 2. Demonstrate a strong interest in what the narrator is saying. Obtain respectful eye contact. Convey interest by facial expressions and the kinds of gestures you normally use when you are interested in what somebody is telling you.**
- 3. Be alert for topics that should be expanded upon later, or hints given by the narrator of a desire to be asked to discuss in depth points merely alluded to.**
- 4. Listen carefully and pay attention that your subsequent questions do not deal with information already adequately covered by the narrator.**
- 5. Be mentally structuring new questions that should be covered. Make notes on your scratch pad so that you will not miss valuable information.**

6. If the narrator pauses, do not ask a new question until you are certain that s/he is not simply reflecting.
- D) As the interview proceeds, follow the same general pattern of asking open-ended questions. Be intensely involved in the interview, but avoid offering your peculiar value judgments. The more you offer your own opinions, the more chances you run in offending the narrator and shutting down the interview entirely. You are trying to find out what this person thinks. You already know your own opinions!

1. After the narrator has overcome initial shyness, you may want to ask questions that clarify specific points they made earlier. This is where the "close-ended" questions become more effective. Try to place the interview within an historical context by seeking information regarding "who, what, when, where, how" – that is, dates, places, and examples to build on the narrator's statements.

For example: "Mrs. Hernandez, you said earlier that 'times were so rough when we were in Michoacan.' When were you in Michoacan, Mrs. Hernandez, and when you said 'we had rough times' were you referring only to your family or did you mean that everyone in the state was having a rough time?"

2. If the narrator first suggests it, encourage them to bring out a family photo album or heirloom that helps them to remember more clearly.
3. Always keep the issue of confidentiality in mind. If the person relates information that could potentially harm their job or immigration status, it is your duty to warn them that in oral history, there is no such thing as "lawyer-client privilege" and that interviews can be subpoenaed by courts. It is appropriate to erase parts of a recording that contains sensitive information before turning it over to a library or archive.
4. If there is an apparent contradiction in the narrator's narrative, do not hesitate to point out the contradictions by approaching them simply as something that needs clarification.
5. If you have questions that you feel are of a sensitive nature, wait until you have established trust with the narrator before you ask them. Remind the narrator that any part of their testimony may be deemed "confidential" if they wish.
6. If the narrator, when asked about a certain event, requests that you turn off the recorder: do so.
7. Always thank the person(s) you are interviewing for their time and efforts. Being interviewed is mentally and spiritually demanding. Narrators may become deeply moved as they recount