In her book *Latina Lives in Milwaukee*, Theresa Delgadillo describes oral histories as “vehicles for documenting the experiences of those whose lives are overlooked in history” (Delgadillo 2015, 20). This advanced course uses Delgadillo’s insights (as well as those of other oral historians) as the point of departure for introducing students to the importance of oral histories to explore the histories and contemporary experiences of Latina/o communities in Northeast Ohio. By focusing on theories, practices, and ethics involved in oral history, as well as reading extensively texts that use personal narrative in a variety of ways, this course will equip students with the necessary tools to understand the distinctive role that personal narratives play in capturing the complexity of Latina/o life and to participate in such endeavors in an ethical way. Course readings draw from history, anthropology, sociology, Latina/o and Chicana/o Studies; we will also explore web-based oral history projects and videos that employ various strategies to tell personal and collective stories. These texts serve the critical role of preparing each of you to engage in the practice of oral history in the following ways: undergoing Human Subjects Protection Training; constructing an oral history interview protocol; conducting two oral history interviews; transcribing oral interviews; developing an oral history narrative, and ultimately contributing to the development of the course’s oral history website that will serve as a resource to the broader Latina/o community in Northeast Ohio.

**Course Goals:**

- to provide students with the intellectual foundation for understanding the history of Latina/o communities in Northeast Ohio and, specifically, Lorain, Ohio
- to equip students with skills to locate these histories within broader historical and political economic contexts
- to raise awareness the ethics involved in oral history and ethnographic work
- to foster community engagement and collaboration between Oberlin College Students and Latina/o community members and organizations in Northeast Ohio
- to explore the role of oral history and narrative approaches in Latina/o Studies
- to familiarize students with WordPress and other methods of disseminating stories
- to invite students to reflect on the challenges, rewards and insights of oral history
- to enhance students’ ability to collaborate in developing new knowledge
Required Readings

All textbooks can be purchased at the college bookstore and many are on Reserve at Mudd. Articles are available on Blackboard.

I. COURSE POLICIES

Classroom Learning Community
This is intentionally a very small class. And the success of this course depends on our collective efforts to read, think carefully about texts and conversations, and commitment to come prepared to share our thoughts with each day we meet. Your attendance, timely arrival, and informed participation in class are absolutely required and constitute 20% of your final grade.

While I don’t anticipate any of the issues to be personally difficult or controversial for people to discuss, I cannot always anticipate moments in which this might be the case. I encourage you to come and talk with me if such situations arise.

Attendance Policies
If you anticipate missing class, please inform me by email of your absence prior to class. Two unexcused absences will reduce your participation grade by 1/3 (from an A to an A-, for example).

I absolutely require students to arrive to seminar on time. This is essential for fostering a respectful learning environment. If you are arrive to class once class has begun, you will be considered absent.

Classroom Etiquette
Once you arrive to seminar, please turn off all cell phones. Texting is not permitted. Laptops will be very useful for this class, not only for some who might like to use them for course readings, but we will also use them as we record and transcribe interviews as well as for the final oral history projects we will contribute to the course website. Students found to be using their laptops to checking email, surf the web, or engage in social networking will be asked not to bring their laptops to class in the future.

Community Engagement
Central to this class is your engagement with the broader communities in which you currently live. Some students may bring a range of experiences with Latina/o and other communities in Northeast Ohio to this class; for others this is the first opportunity to move beyond the Oberlin
College community. I ask that we not only be aware of and sensitive to these different experiences, but that we are also thoughtful about what our relationships and engagement mean to others. One of the primary objectives of this course is to learn to listen and learn from others, and this process often entails sharing one’s own stories and experiences. This requires a level of humility and respect for the different histories, experiences, worldviews, political positions and religious beliefs that may differ from your own. We will spend time throughout the semester discussing how to navigate these differences, but I also encourage you to talk with me during office hours if you wish to discuss these questions further.

**Course Deadlines**
This class is organized around multiple assignments that are building blocks to subsequent course requirements. Therefore, all assignments must be completed on time. Late assignments will be penalized by 1/3 grade for each day they are late. Please come and talk with me if you struggle meeting deadlines and when you anticipate having difficulty meeting a course deadline.

**P/NP**
If you are taking this course P/NP, you must fulfill all course obligations and complete all assignments in order to receive credit for the course.

**Academic Incompletes**
Assignments will not be accepted past the end of reading period without an approved incomplete from the Dean of studies. Extensions of final projects need an approved incomplete from the Dean of Studies. These are College-wide policies and there are no exceptions.

**Honor Code**
The policies described in the Oberlin College Honor Code and Honor System apply to this class. Written work must include proper citations and must be the product of your own work. You are also required to include the following statement on all written assignments: "I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment."

If you have any questions about how to properly cite sources or about the Honor Code, please feel free to approach me. For more information on the Honor Code, see http://www.oberlin.edu/students/student_pages/honor_code2.html

**Students Needing Special Assistance**
Please speak with me if you need disability-related accommodations in this course. Student Academic Services is also an important resource for students needing academic assistance. Please contact Jane Boomer, Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities, Peters G27, extension 58467 for assistance developing a plan to address your academic needs

**Student Athletes**
If you are a student athlete and member of an Oberlin College sports team and your athletic schedule will cause you to miss a class, please come and speak with me.
II. Course Assignments
This course requires a range of different assignments designed to introduce you to oral history methodologies and reflect on the process of conducting and writing up oral history narratives. Some writing will be analytical focused on course readings; others will take the form of personal reflections about the oral history project; and you will also be asked to develop a formal oral history that will be shared publically on the course website. The URL to the class website is: http://languages.oberlin.edu/blogs/gperez/

Personal Blogs (20%)
As part of the course, you will develop and maintain a blog that will be linked to the class website. This blog serves two important functions: It is the place for writing in your digital journal and for developing your semester-long oral history project. The digital journal will be visible to others and will document your intellectual and personal journey throughout the course of the semester. As Professor Summers Sandoval Jr. has noted to his class, the success of this oral history course, “hinges on the willingness of others to open themselves up to you and share sometimes intimate and always personal aspects of their lives” (https://oralhistorias.wordpress.com/assignments/). One of the ways we honor others’ willingness to share in their lives is through reciprocity and sharing your personal thoughts, reflections and analyses along the way. Your blog is one way to do so and will consist of two distinct forms of writing.

• Reading Responses: Beginning in Week 2, you will be asked to respond to readings from the week. These responses are typically due on Friday night by midnight (there are some exceptions that I note on the syllabus) and are meant to provide an opportunity to reflect on the week’s reading as well as our discussions. For some responses, you will be provided a specific prompt; for the other weeks, you should engage with the important information or questions the readings raise. You are not being asked to summarize any of the texts. Rather you should analyze important themes, questions and issues emerging from the week’s readings. You should feel free to connect your responses to conversations we have during class, but you need to do so by being specific about the assigned texts. One way to do this is to make specific reference to passages, arguments, issues authors make, although you are not required to refer to all the readings in any given week. Be aware of your audience. In other words, be attentive to developing writing voice and tone that you believe will engage readers beyond the Oberlin College community. You will be asked to post a total of 5 reading responses (approximately 500 words each) as indicated on the syllabus.

• Reflection Essays: Beginning Week 1 you will be provided with specific prompts that will invite you to reflect on your process of being involved in an oral history project. Like your reading responses, these posts are available to a broader public and allow you to share some of the interpersonal, ethical, and emotional dimensions of your work. These should be clearly written and accessible and reflect your voice. You will be asked to post a total of 5 reflection essays (300-500) words as indicated on the syllabus.

Oral History Project (60%)
The culminating assignment for this class is an oral history that will be featured on the class website. Early in the semester, you will be asked to identity someone who is willing to participate in the project, and you will be asked to complete a number of short assignments as
you develop your oral history project on your personal blog. As you work on this project, you should use the password protected privacy settings so only I and others in the class can access it until it is completed at the end of the semester.

- **Project Proposal (5%)**: By the end of week 4 you will be asked to submit a brief project proposal that will provide context and information about the person you will interview this semester. *You should complete your first interview before Spring Break.*

- **Human Subjects Training (5%)**: In Week 6 you will be asked to complete your Human Subjects Training for the course through CITI. I will provide you with more details as we near this date. [https://www.citiprogram.org/](https://www.citiprogram.org/)

- **Oral History Interview Transcripts (10%)**: You will conduct at least two hour-long interviews with your oral history partner, and you will also transcribe these interviews and use them as the basis for developing your oral history narrative that will be part of the course website.

- **First Draft (10%)**: The first draft of your oral history will be due during Week 13. You will work collaboratively with others in the class that week to revise and edit this first draft as you work toward the final product.

- **Final Oral History (20%)**: Your final project is an oral history of 5000-7000 words. This essay will be featured on the class website at the end of the semester.

- **Web Design (10%)**: For the last 2-3 weeks of class we will focus on revising your essays and working on including them on the course website which will also contain the audio file and images you would like to include with the oral history essay. At the end of the semester you will be asked to present your work to the class and to your oral history partners and others from the community you would like to include.

**SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS**

- Participation and attendance: 20%
- Personal Blog: 20%
- Oral History Project: 60%

**CLASS SCHEDULE**

**Part I:**

**Why Latina/o Oral History?**

**Week 1:** *Introduction: Why Latina/o Oral History*

February 1: Introduction to course and to readings for Wednesday

February 3: *Puerto Ricans, Mexicans and the Making of Latina/o Lorain*

- Rivera, “La Colonia” (BB)
- Mitchell and Pollack, “Making ‘The International City’ Home” (BB)

February 5: Conversation with Tim Carrion, President of Coalition for Hispanic/Latino Issues and Progress

**Reflection Essay #1, Midnight Friday February 5:** What drew you to this course in Latina/o oral history? What do you hope to gain? What are some of your concerns/fears?
Week 2: Definitions and Best Practices
February 8: *What is Oral History I*
- “Principles and Best Practices for Oral History”
- Delgadillo, “Introduction” (BB)
- Delgadillo, “It Wasn’t Bad to Live Without A Car” (BB)

February 10: *What is Oral History II*
- Noriega and Barnett, “Introduction”
- Roque Ramirez and Boyd, “Introduction: Close Encounters” (BB)

February 12: *Community Histories and Community Engagement*
- Rose, “It Wasn’t a Sweet Life”
- Mirabal, “Not in their Plans”
  *Reading Response #1, Midnight, Friday February 12*

Week 3: Latinas/os in the Midwest
February 15: Vega, *Latino Heartland*, Preface, Introduction and Chapter 1
February 17: Vega, *Latino Heartland*, chapters 2 and 4
February 19: Vega, *Latino Heartland*, chapters 5 and Conclusion
  *Reading Response #2, Midnight, Friday February 19*

Week 4: Reflections on the Practice of Collecting Stories
February 22: *Reflections of Oral Historians*
- “Capturing the Reflective Voice,” interview with Karen Mary Davalos
- “Recording a Queer Community,” interview with Horacio N. Roque Ramírez
- Gluck, “From California to Kufr Nameh”

February 24: *Conversation with Dr. Adrian Bautista*, Associate Dean of Residential Life
- Bautista, “Vatos Sagrados” (BB)

February 26: *Sharing Authority*
- Roque-Ramirez, “Sharing Queer Authorities” (BB)
  *Reading Response #3, in class, Friday February 26: As you have seen (and will continue to observe throughout the course), there are a variety of ways to structure a narrative using oral and life history. Reflect on Roque-Ramirez’s narrative structure (two distinct transcriptions and a commentary) as well as his discussion of sharing queer authority. What does he mean by queer authorities? What is your assessment of his approach to conducting and presenting oral history narratives? And how does this reflect his commitment to sharing authority?*

*Project Proposal Due Midnight February 26*

Week 5: Oral History in Practice
February 29: *The Mechanics of Interviewing*
- Ritchie, “Conducting Interviews” (BB)
March 2: *Learning to Listen*
- Norkunas, “The Vulnerable Listener” *(BB)*
- Wong, “Listen and Learn” *(BB)*

March 4: We will spend class time interviewing each other and providing feedback

*Reflection Essay #2 (prior to your first interview):* What are your expectations for your first interview? What do you hope to gain? What concerns do you have about the process?

**Week 6: Ethics in Oral History**
March 7: *Institutional Review Boards*

March 9: *Boston College and Oral History of the Troubles*
- Moloney, “Introduction” *(BB)*

March 11: *Oral History Post 9/11*

**Week 7: Oral History and Visual Media**
March 14: Ishizuka and Nakamura, “*See What I’m Saying?*”
March 16: Film Screening: *Stages*

*Please come to class at 1pm to see this film (1 hour, 22 minutes)*

March 18: Discussion of *Stages*

*Reflection Essay #3 (Reflection after your first interview experience):* What was your experience after your first interview? Were there any surprises? Did it meet your expectations? Did any new questions emerge after your interview? What insights did you gain about how you will approach your second conversation?

*Please submit Reflection Essays #2 and #3 before Spring Break.*

***************SPRING BREAK**************
Week 9: Locating Personal Narratives in Broader Contexts
March 28: Black, *When a Heart Turns Rock Solid*,
March 30: Black, *When a Heart Turns Rock Solid*

**Reading Response #4, Midnight March 30:** Tim Black provides an historical and political economic context for the life and oral histories he draws on for his book. What do you see as the strengths and limitations of telling the stories of the Rivera brothers in this way?

April 1: *Bring first transcription to class as well as a summary of the interview.* You will spend the class looking for themes and strengths and weaknesses in your first interview.

Weeks 10: Writing Latina/o History I
April 4: Garcia, *The Latino Generation*, pp. 1-118
April 6: Garcia, *The Latino Generation*, pp. 119-201

**Reading Response #5, Midnight April 6:** Like many oral histories, Garcia’s book uses personal biographies with little context to explore various experiences of belonging among Latina/o youth. What do you see as the strengths and limitations of this approach? What insights do you gain? What questions remain after reading each oral history? Please refer to specific examples in at least one of the oral histories assigned.

April 8: *Web-Based Models for Oral History Projects*
View selected oral narratives from the following websites and come ready to discuss them:
- Oral Narratives of Latin@/s in Ohio
  [https://cfs.osu.edu/archives/collections/ONLO](https://cfs.osu.edu/archives/collections/ONLO)
- Cuentos: The Latina/Latino Oral History Project
  [http://cuentos.pomona.edu/](http://cuentos.pomona.edu/)
- Review Migrant Oral History Project, Drake University
  [https://migrantoralhistories.wordpress.drake.edu/](https://migrantoralhistories.wordpress.drake.edu/)
- Latinos in Rural America Project, Kenyon College

**Complete second interview by the end of Week 10.**

Week 11: Writing Latina/o History II
April 11: Bring in your working drafts of your oral history project to workshop
April 13: *Conversation with Professor Pablo Mitchell*, Associate Dean and Professor of History and Comparative American Studies
April 15: Bring in your working drafts of your oral history project to workshop

**Reflection Essay #4 (due in class):** As you develop your oral history narrative, what are some of your hopes and/or concerns? How have the conversations with speakers and the readings informed how you will approach your oral history narrative?
Week 12: Peer Review
April 18: *First Draft of Oral History due in class*
April 20: Peer editing
April 22: Peer editing

Week 13: Digital Oral History
April 25: Work on website
April 27: Work on website
April 29: Work on website

Week 14: Affective Dimensions of Engaged Research
May 2: Discussion of Public Presentations
May 4: Besteman, “On Ethnographic Love”
May 6: Final reflections of semester

**Reflection Essay #5 (due in class):** For this final reflection, please discuss the emotional, intellectual and ethical issues you faced working with oral histories this semester. In academic work, we often fail to provide space to consider the affective dimensions of our labors, and this final essay is one place to explore these questions. You should include your thoughts about the choices you made about how to represent stories reflect on your intellectual journey. This personal reflection should be approximately 750-1000 words.

**FINAL PROJECT DUE WEDNESDAY MAY 11, 11am.**