

# Unit Outline

## HT125

<b>Unit Name</b>	Introduction to Oral History		
<b>Unit weighting</b>	Unit credit points: 3		
<b>Pre-requisite or co-requisite</b>			
<b>Delivery mode</b>	Face to face on site	Full time or part time	
<b>Location</b>	<i>Sheridan</i> 18/7 Aberdeen St, Piccadilly Square West, Perth WA 6000		
<b>Student Workload</b>	<i>Timetabled: 36 hours (3 hours per week over 12 teaching weeks)</i>  <i>Personal Study: 132 hours (9 hours per week over 12 teaching weeks + 12 hours per week over 2 non-teaching weeks)</i>  <i>Total workload: 168 hours (12 hours per week over 14 weeks)</i>  <i>Academic writing support available if needed</i>		
<b>Prescribed Textbook(s)</b>	Ritchie, D.A. (2015). <i>Doing oral history</i> (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press.  Robertson, B. M. (2013). <i>Oral history handbook</i> . Oral History Association of Australia.  Course Reader		
<b>Other resource requirements</b>	Access to the Learning Management System Canvas <a href="https://canvas.sheridan.edu.au">canvas.sheridan.edu.au</a>		
<b>Work-integrated learning activity</b>	Not applicable		
<b>Timetabled day and time</b>	Fridays, 9.00 a.m. to 11.50 a.m.	<b>Room</b>	1 (Amber)
<b>Unit Coordinator</b>	Melinda Tognini	<b>Phone</b>	6222-4222
<b>Email</b>	mtognini@sheridan.edu.au		

## Unit Description

“The most distinctive contribution of oral history has been to include within the historical record the experiences and perspectives of groups of people who might otherwise have been ‘hidden from history’” (Perks & Thomson, 2015, p. xiii).

The use of oral testimony dates back to Herodotus and Thucydides in the fifth century BC, although many Indigenous people have used oral traditions to pass on stories, knowledge, and culture for thousands of years. Oral history has not been without its detractors, with questions about its reliability and credibility due to the infallible nature of memory. However, it is also acknowledged that oral history offers a path to uncovering aspects of the past and understanding lived experience that have previously been omitted from the historical record. It provides an opportunity to enrich existing histories and enable diverse voices to be heard.

This unit is designed to be a hands-on introduction to oral history, grounded in solid scholarly research. You will discover the complex and, at times, controversial past of oral history. You will consider the ethical and legal issues related to interviewing another individual. You will prepare, record, and transcribe an oral history interview with a subject of your choice, as well as locating and evaluating the credibility of a wide range of relevant resources to verify this information, and to place your subject within a broader social and historical context. You will then synthesise the various elements of your research into a more cohesive whole in the form of a written biography.

NB. There will be at least one excursion to the State Library of Western Australia or the City of Vincent Library during the semester.

## HT125 Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

- A. Identify the core theoretical concepts within in the field of Oral History and their practical applications in preparation for a personal oral history project.
- B. Record and transcribe oral history interviews in a way that clearly, accurately, and respectfully reflects a subject’s oral testimony.
- C. Evaluate sources for accuracy, credibility, and relevance to assist in verifying a person’s oral testimony and provide a historical and social context for it.
- D. Synthesise your research by presenting it in a clearly written and referenced format with the aim of sharing it with others.
- E. Revise your research and writing in response to reading other texts and receiving feedback from others to improve your own work.

## Sheridan Graduate Attributes

Sheridan graduates will be ...

1. Lovers of truth
2. Seekers of wisdom
3. Innovative thinkers
4. Effective communicators
5. Independent learners
6. Servant leaders

## Assessment Schedule

Assessment Type	Value	Due Date	Learning Outcomes (LOs) Assessed	Graduate Attributes (GAs) Addressed
1. Reflective reading journal	30%	Weeks 2, 3, 4, 5	A, E	2, 3, 4
2. Recorded interview and transcript	30%	Week 9	B	2, 4, 5
3. Written biography based on an oral history interview	40%	11.59 p.m. Friday Week 15	C, D, E	1, 2, 4, 6

NB: You must submit all assessments to satisfy the unit requirements.

### 1. Reflective Reading Journal

The purpose of the reading journal is to facilitate your engagement with the readings while also reflecting on ways you might apply what you learn to your own oral history project.

Across the semester, you will complete four (4) reflective journal entries, each worth 7.5%. Your journal entries may be presented in written, audio or video form. Written journal entries should be approximately 450 words each. Audio or video formats should be approximately three (3) minutes, which is equivalent to 450 words.

Include in-text citations when referring to material in your readings.

You will also prepare two tutorial questions, which will form the basis of classroom discussions in the relevant week.

The two tutorial questions will need to be submitted to the relevant discussion post on Canvas by 5.00 pm the night before class on the relevant week. The journal will need to be submitted by email (Word format preferred) after each tutorial. It will be returned the following week during class.

#### Journal #1 (Week 2): Strengths and Criticisms of oral history

- Summarise the changes in attitude towards oral history over time.
- What are the benefits or value of oral history?
- What criticisms have been levelled at oral history, and what are the potential pitfalls?
- What steps might you personally take to mitigate these pitfalls when conducting your own oral history?
- Why are you personally interested in conducting an oral history?
- How might oral history contribute to an understanding of your own family history?
- List three possible interviewees and given reasons for your choice.
- Create at least two questions for tutorial discussion, based on the readings.

Assessment Type	Reflective Reading Journal 1				
Criteria/Grade	High Distinction (80–100%)	Distinction (70–79%)	Credit (60–69%)	Pass (50–59%)	Fail (0–50%)
Identifies the benefits and value of oral history. (30%)	Superior grasp of material presented in assigned readings.	Effective grasp of material presented in assigned readings.	Sound grasp of material presented in assigned readings.	Some knowledge of material presented in assigned readings.	Little awareness of material presented in assigned readings.
Identifies the criticisms and potential pitfalls of oral history (30%)	Superior grasp of material presented in assigned readings.	Effective grasp of material presented in assigned readings.	Sound grasp of material presented in assigned readings.	Some knowledge of material presented in assigned readings.	Little awareness of material presented in assigned readings.
Personal Reflection on readings (30%)	Demonstrates pronounced ability to reflect on material's relevance and application to own project.	Demonstrates ability to reflect on material's relevance and application to own project.	Demonstrates a concerted attempt to reflect on material's relevance and application to own project.	Perfunctory engagement with the material's relevance and application to own project.	Does not reflect on material's relevance and application to own project.
Question for Tutorial Discussion (10%)	Thought-provoking & high relevant.	Highly relevant.	Relevant.	Moderately relevant.	Irrelevant or trivial.

### Journal #2 (Week 3): Ethical and Legal Considerations

- What ethical issues do you need to consider when conducting an oral history interview?
- What legal issues might there be when conducting an oral history interview?
- Which of these are most relevant to your own context and interviewee? Why?
- Create at least two questions for tutorial discussion, based on the readings.

Assessment Type	Reflective Reading Journal 3				
Criteria/Grade	High Distinction (80–100%)	Distinction (70–79%)	Credit (60–69%)	Pass (50–59%)	Fail (0–50%)
Identifies the ethical issues in oral history. (30%)	Superior grasp of material presented in assigned readings.	Effective grasp of material presented in assigned readings.	Sound grasp of material presented in assigned readings.	Some knowledge of material presented in assigned readings.	Little awareness of material presented in assigned readings.
Identifies the legal considerations in oral history. (30%)	Superior grasp of material presented in assigned readings.	Effective grasp of material presented in assigned readings.	Sound grasp of material presented in assigned readings.	Some knowledge of material presented in assigned readings.	Little awareness of material presented in assigned readings.

<b>Personal Reflection on readings (30%)</b>	Demonstrates pronounced ability to reflect on material's relevance and application to own project.	Demonstrates ability to reflect on material's relevance and application to own project.	Demonstrates a concerted attempt to reflect on material's relevance and application to own project.	Perfunctory engagement with the material's relevance and application to own project.	Does not reflect on material's relevance and application to own project.
<b>Question for Tutorial Discussion (10%)</b>	Thought-provoking & high relevant.	Highly relevant.	Relevant.	Moderately relevant.	Irrelevant or trivial.

### Journal #3 (Week 4): Recording Interviews

- After completing the readings about various equipment possibilities for recording your interview, evaluate which options will potentially work best for you. Consider aspects such quality, useability, and cost, whether or not you are able to meet in person with your interviewee.
- Are there recording options that may be appropriate but are not included in the readings? (i.e., what other options can you find if you undertake further research into recording equipment?)
- What are the pros and cons of your choice in recording equipment?
- What recording options would you decide not to use? Why?
- Create at least two questions for tutorial discussion, based on the readings.

Assessment Type	Reflective Reading Journal 4				
	High Distinction (80–100%)	Distinction (70–79%)	Credit (60–69%)	Pass (50–59%)	Fail (0–50%)
<b>Identifies the various recording options available to oral historians. (60%)</b>	Superior grasp of material presented in assigned readings.	Effective grasp of material presented in assigned readings.	Sound grasp of material presented in assigned readings.	Some knowledge of material presented in assigned readings.	Little awareness of material presented in assigned readings.
<b>Personal Reflection on readings. (30%)</b>	Demonstrates pronounced ability to reflect on material's relevance and application to own project.	Demonstrates ability to reflect on material's relevance and application to own project.	Demonstrates a concerted attempt to reflect on material's relevance and application to own project.	Perfunctory engagement with the material's relevance and application to own project.	Does not reflect on material's relevance and application to own project.
<b>Question for Tutorial Discussion (10%)</b>	Thought-provoking & high relevant.	Highly relevant.	Relevant.	Moderately relevant.	Irrelevant or trivial.

### Journal #4 (Week 5): Preparing an Oral History Interview

- What are the components of an effective interview question?
- What are the main skills required during an interview?
- Choose one interviewee from your shortlist in the previous journal entry. What background information do you already know about this potential interviewee? *How* do you know this?
- Where else might you find background information about your interviewee?
- Prepare a list of ten questions you might ask them.
- Create at least two questions for tutorial discussion, based on the readings.

Following the week 3 class, edit your list of ten questions. What changes did you make in response to the discussion in class? In other words, what did you learn in class that might contribute to more effective interview questions? Include both your original list and your edited/reordered list.

Assessment Type	Reflective Reading Journal 2				
Criteria/Grade	High Distinction (80–100%)	Distinction (70–79%)	Credit (60–69%)	Pass (50–59%)	Fail (0–50%)
Identifies the elements of effective interview questions. (60%)	Superior grasp of material presented in assigned readings.	Effective grasp of material presented in assigned readings.	Sound grasp of material presented in assigned readings.	Some knowledge of material presented in assigned readings.	Little awareness of material presented in assigned readings.
Personal Reflection on readings (30%)	Demonstrates pronounced ability to reflect on material's relevance and application to own project.	Demonstrates ability to reflect on material's relevance and application to own project.	Demonstrates a concerted attempt to reflect on material's relevance and application to own project.	Perfunctory engagement with the material's relevance and application to own project.	Does not reflect on material's relevance and application to own project.
Question for Tutorial Discussion (10%)	Thought-provoking & high relevant.	Highly relevant.	Relevant.	Moderately relevant.	Irrelevant or trivial.

### 2. Recorded Interview and Transcript

Drawing on the skills you have learned in relation to preparing, recording, and transcribing an interview, you will submit a five-minute excerpt from an oral history interview you have recorded, together with an accurate transcript.

The five-minute excerpt may be taken from anywhere in the interview, so choose a section that best demonstrates your interviewing, recording, and transcribing skills.

You will also submit a personal evaluation of your interview and transcript.

Assessment Type	Recorded Interview and Transcript				
Criteria /Grade	High Distinction (80-100%)	Distinction (70-79%)	Credit (60-69%)	Pass (50-59%)	Fail (0-49%)

<b>Interviewing skills (25%)</b>	Consistently asks open-ended, non-leading questions in a logical order. Listens carefully to answers, responds creatively and appropriately.	Generally asks open-ended, non-leading questions in a logical order. Listens to answers, responds appropriately.	Mostly asks open-ended, non-leading questions, and usually asks them in a logical order. Listens most of the time to answers, responds appropriately most of the time.	Some open-ended, non-leading questions. Attempts to ask them in a logical order. Listens some of the time to answers, responds appropriately some of the time.	Too many closed or leading questions. Questions lack a logical order. Does not listen well to answers, often does not respond appropriately.
<b>Recording skills (15%)</b>	Recording is consistently clear and in an accessible format. Effective and insightful explanation of choice of recording equipment.	Recording is generally clear and in an accessible format. Effective explanation of choice of recording equipment.	Recording is mostly clear and is in an accessible format. Sustained attempt to explain choice of recording equipment.	Recording is unclear at times, but still decipherable, and in an accessible format. Some attempt to explain choice of recording equipment.	Insufficient clarity in interview recording and/or not in an accessible format. Does not attempt to explain choice of recording equipment.
<b>Transcription skills (40%)</b>	Highly accurate transcription. Consistently uses correct formatting, punctuation, and spelling.	Transcription is generally accurate. Usually uses correct formatting, punctuation, and spelling.	Transcription is generally accurate. Mostly uses correct formatting, punctuation, and spelling.	Some inaccuracies in transcription. Some errors in layout, formatting, punctuation, and spelling, but still passable.	Many inaccuracies in transcription. Too many errors in formatting, punctuation, and spelling to pass
<b>Personal Reflection on interview and transcript (20%)</b>	Demonstrates pronounced ability to reflect on own interviewing, recording and transcribing skills.	Demonstrates ability to reflect on interviewing, recording and transcribing skills.	Demonstrates a concerted attempt to reflect on interviewing, recording and transcribing skills.	Perfunctory attempt to reflect on own interviewing, recording and transcribing skills.	Does not reflect on interviewing, recording and transcribing skills.

### 3. Written biography based on an Interview

Research and write a non-fiction biography based on an oral history you have conducted during the semester. You will be required to demonstrate your ability to locate, assess, and integrate a wide range of primary and secondary sources into your final written submission. You will also need to include references and a bibliography. Approximate length: 1,500 words.

You must include a cover page with name, student number, title(s) of writing, and word length. This assignment must be typed. The submission deadline is Friday 11.59 p.m. at the end of exam week. You must submit two copies of your work – one as a Canvas submission via Turnitin, and one as an email attachment (Word document) to your lecturer.

You will also need to provide two comments on the way you have assimilated critiques into your writing. Comments on assimilation of critique need to follow this format:

- Describe specific critique (use surnames to refer to readers who have provided critique; e.g. Abercrombie questioned the relevance of outlining ... ).
- Explain your response for this critique (agree, partially agree, or disagree).
- Give reasons for your response.

- If relevant, show what changes you have made in response to the critique (use a before and after format).

Furthermore, you will need to include a paragraph about the ethical and legal issues you have considered in the process of conducting the interview and writing the biography.

In week 12, you will submit a draft of your written biography to the relevant discussion board on Canvas in preparation for a peer feedback session.

Assessment type	Written Biography				
	High Distinction (80–100%)	Distinction (70–79%)	Credit (60–69%)	Pass (50–59%)	Fail (0–49%)
<b>Locate accurate, credible and relevant sources. (10%)</b>	Identify and engage with a wide range of accurate, credible and relevant sources from more than one repository.	Identify and engage with a range of accurate, credible and relevant sources from more than one repository	Identifies several accurate and relevant sources from more than one repository.	Identifies a limited number of accurate and/or relevant sources.	Identifies few or no sources.
<b>Ability to describe and synthesise information. (50%)</b>	Demonstrates pronounced ability to describe and synthesise information in an accurate and compelling manner, with close attention to order of presentation and contextualisation.	Demonstrates superior ability to describe and synthesise information in an accurate and interesting manner. Pays attention to order of presentation and contextualisation.	Sustained attempt to describe and synthesise information in an accurate and interesting manner. Pays some attention to order of presentation.	Some attempt to describe facts in an accurate and interesting manner. Demonstrates some consciousness of the importance of order of presentation.	Writing contains factual errors. Descriptions are insipid. Little or no regard for order of presentation.
<b>Composition (10%)</b>	Consistently uses correct grammar with rare misspellings.	Few grammatical or spelling errors are noted in paper.	Some grammatical or spelling errors evidenced in the paper.	Many errors in spelling and grammar evidenced in paper.	Poor spelling and grammar characterise the work.
<b>Assimilation of critique (10%)</b>	Profound engagement with critique. Writing is transformed and improved.	Effective engagement with critique. Writing is significantly improved.	Sustained attempt to respond to critique. Writing is improved.	Some attempt to make thoughtful changes to writing in response to critique. Writing is somewhat improved.	Little or no evidence of thoughtful changes to writing in response to critique.
<b>Consideration of ethical, legal and accuracy issues. (10%)</b>	Shows outstanding evidence of consideration of ethical, legal and accuracy issues.	Shows strong evidence of consideration of ethical, legal and accuracy issues.	Shows good evidence of consideration of ethical, legal and accuracy issues.	Shows sufficient evidence of consideration of ethical, legal and accuracy issues.	Insufficient evidence that ethical, legal and accuracy issues have been considered.
<b>Referencing (10%)</b>	Almost always references material and conforms to specified referencing format.	Usually references sources used but has made occasional formatting errors.	Most sources are referenced but there are some errors in formatting.	Includes some references but some errors in formatting.	Includes few or no references and/or many errors in formatting.

## Learning Resources

### Prescribed Textbook(s)

Ritchie, D.A. (2015). *Doing oral history* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press.

Robertson, B.M. (2013). *The oral history handbook* (4th ed.). Oral History Association SA/NT.

*Course Reader* (contains extracts from the following books and journal articles):

Byrski, L. (2015). *In love and war: Nursing heroes*. Fremantle Press.

Chappell, T. (2004). *The Persian blanket: The life of Janina Milek*. Fremantle Press.

Curthoys, A., & McGrath, A. (2009). *How to write history that people want to read*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press.

Grenville, K. (2008). *Searching for the secret river*. Text Publishing.

Koffman, L. (2019). *Imperfect: How our bodies shape the people we become*. Affirm Press.

Layman, L. (2010). Ethical imperatives in oral history practice. In C. Clement (Ed.), *Studies in Western Australian history: Ethics and the practice of history*, 26, 130–150.

Layman, L. (2011). *Powering Perth: A history of the East Perth Power Station*. Black Swan Press.

Perks, R., & Thomson, A. (eds.) (2016). *The oral history reader* (3rd ed.). Routledge.

Peters, N. (2001). *Milk and honey—but no gold*. University of Western Australia Press.

Sayer, R. (2015). *More to the story: Conversations with refugees*. Margaret River Press.

Thomson, A. (2007). Four paradigm transformations in oral history. *The Oral History Review*, 34(1), 49–70.

Thomson, A. (2013). *Anzac memories: Living with the legend*. (2nd Ed.). Monash University Publishing [large print].

Tognini, M. (2015) *Many hearts, one voice: The story of the War Widows' Guild in Western Australia*. Fremantle Press.

### Recommended Supplementary Reading

*Guide to recording oral histories*. (n.d.). Australian War Memorial.

[https://www.awm.gov.au/sites/default/files/guide\\_to\\_recording\\_oral\\_histories\\_by\\_awm\\_0\\_0.pdf](https://www.awm.gov.au/sites/default/files/guide_to_recording_oral_histories_by_awm_0_0.pdf)

Nunn, P. (2018). *The edge of memory: Ancient stories, oral tradition and the post-glacial world*.

Perks, R., & Thomson, A. (eds.) (2016). *The oral history reader* (3rd ed.). Routledge.

### Academic Journals

You may find relevant articles in the following journals:

- *Oral History* (online) <https://www.jstor.org/journal/oralhistory>
- *The Oral History Review* <https://www.oralhistory.org/publications/oral-history-review/>

### Websites

City of Vincent Library Local History Centre

<https://library.vincent.wa.gov.au/local-history-centre/oral-histories.aspx>

National Library of Australia Oral History and Folklore Collection

[www.nla.gov.au/what-we-collect/oral-history-and-folklore324](http://www.nla.gov.au/what-we-collect/oral-history-and-folklore324)

Oral History Association of Australia

[www.oralhistoryaustralia.org.au](http://www.oralhistoryaustralia.org.au)

Oral History NSW

<https://www.oralhistorynsw.org.au/resources>

Oral History WA

<https://oralhistorywa.org.au/>

Oral History Society (UK)

<https://www.ohs.org.uk/>

In particular, see their page on 'Oral history and family history': <https://www.ohs.org.uk/for-family-historians/>

State Library of Western Australia

[http://slwa.wa.gov.au/find/wa\\_collections/oral\\_history](http://slwa.wa.gov.au/find/wa_collections/oral_history)

NB: there is a long list of relevant international websites listed on pp. 323–334 of Ritchie, D.A. (2015). *Doing oral history* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press.

## Weekly Schedule of Topics

### HT125 Introduction to Oral History

#### Prescribed text(s):

Ritchie, D.A. (2015). *Doing oral history* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press.

Robertson, B. M. (2013). *Oral history handbook*. Oral History Association of Australia.

#### Course Reader

WEEK	TOPICS	PRESCRIBED READINGS	ASSESSMENTS
1	Orientation and Introductions Course outline Oral history: an overview Why oral history? Examples of Oral History Projects Research logs		
2	An overview and timeline of oral history through the centuries. The reliability of memory and oral history Oral history and oral traditions Individual vs collective memory	Ritchie, pp. 1–34, 110–115, 125–128  Curthoys, A. & McGrath, A., 2009, pp. 91–92 Thomson, A. (2007)  <u>Supplementary</u> Thomson, A. (2013)	Journal Entry 1
3	Ethical and legal considerations Permission Information Forms Consent forms	Ritchie, pp. 62–72, 103–108, 252–258, 273–279 Robertson, pp. 13–20; p. 96  Layman, L. (2010).	Journal Entry 2
4	Excursion to the City of Vincent Library, Local History Centre. Recording an interview. Technology Making notes during and immediately after an interview	Ritchie, pp. 45–51, 104–110, 137–161 (Ch. 5)  Robertson, pp. 29–62 (Ch. 4)	Journal Entry 3
5	Preparing an oral history Researching Background information Creating effective questions	Ritchie, pp. 73–103 (Ch. 3)  Robertson, pp. 5–13; pp. 21–28 (Ch. 3); pp. 63–72 (Ch. 5)  <u>Supplementary</u>	Journal Entry 4

	Using prompts such as photographs, objects and music  Practice oral history	Curthoys, A. & McGrath, A., 2009, pp. 93–96 Terkel, S. & Parker, T 2016, pp. 147–152	
6	Transcribing interviews	Ritchie, pp. 51–62 Robertson, pp. 73–84 (Ch. 6)	
7	Mid-semester Study Week		
8	Verifying information and utilising external sources.  Contextual information.  Referencing.	Peters, N., 2001, pp. 30–33 Kofman, L., 2019, pp. 90–111 Tognini, M., 2015, pp. 56–65	
9	Transforming an interview into a written biography.  Examples of written biographies. Reading as a writer.	Grenville, K., 2008, pp. 10–25 Byrski, L., 2015, pp. 38–43	Transcriptions Due.
10	Synthesising information. Incorporating direct and indirect quotes from interviewees, including contextual history.  Avoiding plagiarism.  Writing Workshop: characterisation, setting, dialogue and quoting from primary sources	Ritchie, D., 2015, pp. 129–136 Robertson, pp. 85–92  Shopes. L., 2016, pp. 470–489 Curthoys, A., & McGrath., 2009, pp. 190–204  Sayer, R., 2015, pp. 119–137	
11	Writing workshop: narrative structure, beginnings, middles and endings, themes	Chappell, T., 2004, pp. 13–23 Layman, L., 2015, pages TBC Nelson, 2015, pp. 10–37	
12	Feedback session		Draft of written biography to be submitted for peer feedback.
13	More examples of written biographies.  Reflections on ethical considerations and responses to feedback.  Final questions and assistance with editing written biographies.		
14	Exam Study Week		
15	Exam week		Written Biography due