

Writing 20, Sections 20, 86  
Prof. Gretchen A. Case  
Fall 2009

## Major Essay 1: Beginning with Oral History

**Topic:** This semester, we will explore many uses for oral history interviews. For this essay, you will use oral history interviews as a starting point for your research. Oral history interviews provide unique, personal views on issues and events, but no interview can fully explore a subject and some questions are always left unanswered. However, these interviews are often useful precisely because they provide new information or raise questions that no one had ever thought to ask. You will consider a selection of interviews collected in the Duke University Medical Center (DUMC) Archives and search for questions you didn't know you wanted to answer...but that you now want to answer in a brilliant essay!

You will begin by browsing through the transcripts of oral history interviews posted as part of the "Women in Duke Medicine" exhibit at:

[http://digitaldukemed.mc.duke.edu/med\\_women/index.php](http://digitaldukemed.mc.duke.edu/med_women/index.php)

An efficient way to browse these interviews is to begin with the transcript abstracts, which give you a brief description of the subjects covered in each interview. Click on "Women" or "Background Interviews," then click on a portrait of one of the persons interviewed for this project. On the left side of the screen for each interviewee, you will see a menu of choices, including the transcript abstract and the complete transcript. You can also listen to audio clips and look at photographs of many of the interviewees. Another approach to these interviews is to use the "Search Interviews" feature, which will allow you to perform keyword and subject-specific searches. Once you've selected a few interesting possibilities, you can read those transcripts to help you develop your ideas.

Although these interviews focus on the history of women at DUMC and associated institutions, your essay may be on the topic of your choice. You do not have to write about women, nor about Duke; you may write about current issues and events as well as historical ones. You should use one (or more) of these interviews as inspiration for a **research question**, and remember that it is only one source among many that you will consult. **Rather than conducting research on a person or a subject, research a question. What question do you want to answer? What does the interview leave unexplored?**

Example: In her interview, Dr. Marianne Breslin discusses her training in psychoanalysis and her expertise in psychosomatic conditions. Some questions that I might choose to explore: Is psychoanalytic training a part of medical education today? What defines an illness as psychosomatic? When and how was the term *psychosomatic* coined? Keep the scope of this essay in mind as you develop your research question.

**Writing Goals:** Conducting original research and using several sources to support your assertions. Acknowledging your role in creating and defending an argument in writing. In Harris' terms, you will be *coming to terms* and *forwarding*, possibly *countering*, and definitely *taking an approach*. This assignment also offers practice at *revising* in each draft stage.

**Elements to Include:**

1. Your argument must articulate clearly how your sources relate to each other and why they should be discussed together. If you can't see a relationship between your sources, you will have trouble developing an interesting argument.
2. You must clearly identify which "Women in Duke Medicine" interview(s) you selected as a beginning point for this essay, and discuss its/their role in the development of your argument. You may include this identification/discussion section in the body of your essay or you may create an informational footnote or addendum to the essay. Remember to include oral history interviews in your Works Cited.
3. Use at least two peer-reviewed, scholarly sources that are not included in our course readings. (You absolutely may use our course readings as additional sources.) The total number of sources you employ is up to your discretion, but you will probably want to use more than two.

**\*Note:** Wikipedia and other encyclopedias are not considered generally to be scholarly sources. Likewise, unless you are exploring the etymology of a word, dictionaries and dictionary definitions do not serve academic arguments well. You must consult your instructor before using these types of sources in your research.

**The Fine Print:** Total length should be 3-5 pages. Your first draft will not be graded, but will be reviewed by your instructor. **First draft is due on Blackboard by midnight on Wednesday, September 30.** Your second draft will not be graded, but will be reviewed by your peer editors. **Second draft is due on Blackboard by midnight on Wednesday, October 14.** You will submit your final version to your instructor for a grade. **Final version is due on Blackboard at midnight on Wednesday, October 28.** Your grade on the final version will equal 30% of your overall grade for the course.

**Reminders:**

\*As always, check your syllabus (available on our class Blackboard site) under "General Requirements for Written Assignments" for details pertaining to formatting standards, grammar and spelling expectations, and guidelines for citation and documentation of sources.

\*Sign up for a session with our Undergraduate Writing Tutor through the Writing Studio website.

\*Have some possible research questions in mind for our library session on Sept. 25.