

Sharon Traweek

297 A/B: two quarters [Winter/Spring], 2008

Seminar on Oral Histories: Collecting, Interpreting, Archiving

Winter quarter: explore multiple oral history methods and interpretive strategies from anthropology, education, history, and sociology. We will design solitary and collaborative research projects about individuals, communities, and their activities. We will discuss legal and ethical regulations and debates in various countries.

Spring quarter: conduct and interpret oral histories. We will explore how oral histories can be used for research/ teaching/ public access; archiving strategies. Learn how to design project archives and how deposit oral histories in existing archives.

As a class we will visit various oral history archives in person and virtually; we also will have some visitors talk about their oral history projects.

We will explore the design of digital archives for oral histories and the design of oral history web portals for the presentation/circulation of oral histories and related data we have gathered.

I plan to link this class with some colleagues in other countries and their students. This might take the form of having a weblink for related classes being conducted concurrently; we could have some shared databases. Students could collaborate on projects IF they wish.

All students will be free to pick projects from their own interests.

Science, technology, and medicine are interpreted broadly to include multiple ways of understanding and probing the phenomenal world, including social worlds, wellness, and illness. This spectrum ranges from the biomedical, mathematical, physical, and social technosciences to so-called indigenous knowledge systems, from basic research to policy and pedagogy to education.

My graduate seminars always include students from various fields. My spring 2007 graduate seminar included students from Education, English, Engineering, Information Studies, History [Japan/public health, Latin American agricultural science, and US physics pedagogy]. We work on similar methods and interpretive strategies; then we use the various students' different projects as case studies applying the methods/ interpretation we have explored. I think this has the benefit of showing the students different approaches to using the same methods and interpretive strategies. In my seminars some students also have developed some collaborative projects.

I have used oral histories to study knowledge making /decision making in the context of rapidly changing political economies in Europe, Japan, and the US in a variety of settings since the 1970s: universities, national research institutes, private sector, and distributed communities. I study how knowledge making and knowledge makers have changed in universities and in the fields of anthropology, history and physics since the 1950s in various countries. My focus has been on transnational collaborations in large scale research projects in physics where the members come from increasingly diverse class, ethnic, gender, organizational, intellectual, and national backgrounds/styles/cultures and the funding comes from multiple sources: universities,

companies, governments, and various inter/transnational organizations.

The last five years I have been one of the leaders of an international collaboration to collect oral histories at multiple national research institutes in Japan. We plan to expand the project to the US. We are especially interested in the intersection of intellectual, migration, and gender issues for an increasingly global communities of knowledge makers who migrate among universities, industry, and government sectors and multiple countries throughout their careers.