

# **Community and Change in the South Carolina Lowcountry: A Documentary Approach**

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Stratford High School  
Mondays 4-6:45pm**

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Office Hours: TTh 9:15am-12pm. Also by appointment

**The course:** Community and Change in the South Carolina Lowcountry takes a documentary approach to understanding the area's recent past, drawing heavily upon oral history interviews, primary source documents, films, and guest speakers to inform our writing and discussions of the people, events, and trends that have shaped the Charleston region, the South, and the nation. Our documentary emphasis allows us to sharpen our skills as historians—our discovery, creation, handling, and interpretation of documents, as well as our production and presentation of historical material.

**Course goals:** Course readings will touch upon the many ways in which global trade, tourism, World War II, the civil rights movement, and struggles over land use and public education have shaped the modern Lowcountry. We will continually situate these events and trends in their national and global contexts.

As we read, research, and write we should continually ask two questions: What are the major lines of inquiry among historians of the Lowcountry? And where do future historians need to focus their attention?

Lastly, the class includes a strong “workshop” component that allows us to collaboratively hone our skills as oral historians, editors of historical documents, researchers, and writers. I stress the collaborative elements of the class recognizing that the historical profession is built around conversations: historiographic conversations; classroom discussions; your dialogue with your evidence; editorial suggestions from mentors; and book recommendations from colleagues. All of this is communal work. Yet graduate study in history often overemphasizes individual achievement and rewards counterproductive competition. With that contradiction in mind, the set up of this class should provide opportunities for us to become better critics and supporters of one another.

**Assignments and grading:** Short paper (10%); 2 book reviews (20%); final project (60%); participation (10%).

**Public history assessment (Sept. 14):** 2-3pp. Visit a local museum exhibit, historical tour, art gallery, or performance that centers on some aspect of local history. Draw upon Yuhl's and Coclanis's insights to evaluate it. Describe the event or exhibition. How is historical evidence used? What kinds of arguments does it make? Whose values does it reflect? Whose values remain unrepresented? Who is the primary audience? Does the commemoration have any larger political significance? Please get my approval for your topic before starting this assignment.

**Book reviews:** You will write two (2-3pp.) book reviews based on the assigned readings. The reviews should include a summary of the article or book's main argument; the types of sources used by the author; and your evaluation of the writer's use of the sources.

Use the following link for tips on how to write academic book reviews or familiarize yourself with the reviews in the *Journal of American History*.

[www.linguistics.ucsb.edu/faculty/bucholtz/sociocultural/bookreviewtips.html](http://www.linguistics.ucsb.edu/faculty/bucholtz/sociocultural/bookreviewtips.html)

**Final project (November 30):** You may choose to either edit a series of historical documents or conduct an oral history project as described below. Regardless of which option you choose, you will be trained in both documentary editing and oral history interviewing. You will also make a short presentation to the class at the end of the semester.

**Annotating documents:** You will also be responsible for transcribing and annotating an historical document or set of documents related to a course theme. This assignment will require you to identify a suitable document(s); transcribe the document(s); draft explanatory headnotes that provide context for the document's creation and footnotes to identify people, places, events, and ideas that would be unknown to the general reader.

**Oral history project:** Conduct at least two oral history interviews related to any course theme. The project will include a project proposal, interview indices; field notes; partial transcript; and a brief analytical paper.

**Participation:** Each class will include some combination of discussion, short films, site visits, or guest speakers. The success of the course really hinges on your careful reading of the assigned books and your preparation for the class discussions. I cannot stress this enough.

Additionally, each of you will lead at least one class discussion. This will include you providing a 10 minute summary of the assigned book, outlining the arguments and discussing the book's methodology. You should then pose some questions to give shape to our discussion. A caution: criticisms are good, but be sure to give the author's argument its due before launching into our criticisms.

**Required Books:** Yuhl. *A Golden Haze of Memory*. UNC Press (2005)  
Ritchie. *Doing Oral History*. Oxford Univ. Press (2003)  
Ball. *The Sweet Hell Inside*. William Morrow (2001)  
Shaw/Rosengarten. *All God's Dangers*. Univ. of Chicago (2000)  
Perks and Thomson. *Oral History Reader*. Routledge (2006)

All of these titles are available at the Citadel bookstore, but consider purchasing a used copy online ([www.powells.com](http://www.powells.com) or [www.half.com](http://www.half.com)), or you might find a few of these titles at Blue Bicycle Bookstore at 420 King St.

Additional readings will be provided to you via email in PDF format.

### Course Schedule

- Week 1 (Aug 24): Syllabus review  
Introductions  
Film: *Stranger with a Camera*
- Week 2 (Aug 31): Reading: *A Golden Haze of Memory*  
Oral history interview exercises
- Week 3 (Sept 7): No Class. Labor Day.
- Week 4 (Sept. 14): Readings: *Doing Oral History*, pp. 19-46, *Oral History Reader*, pp. 1-8 and 25-41, and Coclanis, *Shadow of a Dream* (PDF)  
Discussion of assignment: Charleston public history critique
- Week 5 (Sept. 21): Readings: *Doing Oral History*, pp. 84-109 and *Oral History Reader*, pp. 115-118, 123-128 and 198-208  
Visit to South Carolina Historical Society (100 Meeting St.)
- Week 6 (Sept. 28): *Oral History Reader*, pp. 212-216, 310-330.  
Visit to North Charleston City Hall for meeting of the Lowcountry Oral History Alliance
- Week 7 (Oct. 5): Readings: *Editing Historical Documents*, *Peninsula of Lies* and *Hometowns* (PDFs)  
  
Listen to podcast: "Dawn"  
  
[http://www.thisamericanlife.org/Radio\\_Episode.aspx?sched=633](http://www.thisamericanlife.org/Radio_Episode.aspx?sched=633)
- Week 8 (Oct. 12): Reading: *Upheaval in the Quiet Zone* and *Toward the Meeting of the Waters* (PDFs)  
Film: *I am Somebody*

Proposals for final projects due.

- Week 9 (Oct. 19): Readings: *The Sweet Hell Inside* and *Editing Historical Documents* (PDF)
- Week 10 (Oct. 26): Readings: *Confronting the Global Waterfront* (PDF), *Doing Oral History*, pp. 110-133.
- Week 11 (Nov. 2): Readings: *Doing Oral History*, pp. 252-259 and *Oral History Reader*, pp. 333-338, 393-303 and 425-432
- Week 12 (Nov. 9): Reading: *All God's Dangers*  
Project updates
- Week 13 (Nov. 16): Film: *Bin Yah: There's No Place Like Home*  
Reading: *Other Souths* (PDF)  
Discussion: Towards an historiography of the Lowcountry
- Week 14 (Nov. 23): No Class
- Week 15 (Nov. 30): Class presentations
- Week 16 (Dec. 7): Class presentations