

Oral History

Department: Counseling and Leisure Skills

Priority: Elective

Overall purpose of class:

To provide a supportive opportunity for sharing life stories.

Number of classes held per week:

One per week

Optimum class time:

Mornings are preferred because this class requires considerable effort that would be difficult to expend if students are fatigued.

Instructor requirements:

One skilled counselor

Number of students:

This class should be kept to a minimum number so that all stories can be shared in the 16 total hours available each semester.

Student ability range and limitations:

All students in this class have good expressive language skills.

Space and Equipment requirements:

- Room that will accommodate 15-16 people.
- A minimum of 10 very comfortable chairs and space for 5 wheelchairs
- A high quality voice activated tape recorder is an effective way to capture stories that can later be transcribed if desired.

Student Needs to be met from the perspective of the instructor:

Students who are eager to share their lives are given an opportunity to do so. A fair number of students are working on biographies for their families and several over the years have actually been writing for publication. If writing has been curtailed because of the disability, this class is helpful in keeping the muse alive.

Students are seeking meaning in their lives and in the effects of their disability also benefit from this class.

Typical Student Goals that lead to placement in the class:

Students who are verbal and eager to share and students who express an interest in exploring their life history often request this class.

Methods:

Each class session begins with a topic to be explored. Students take turns sharing that part of their lives and personal experience relate to the topic.

Past topics have included:

- **Your hometown**
- **Notable years in your life**
- **World War II**
- **Art and Music that influenced who you are**
- **Sports that influenced who you are and what you care about**
- **Your working life**
- **Pets**
- **Origin of your name(s)**
- **Were you ever in the newspaper?**
- **Life Lessons**
- **School**
- **Family ties**
- **Leisure activities then and now**