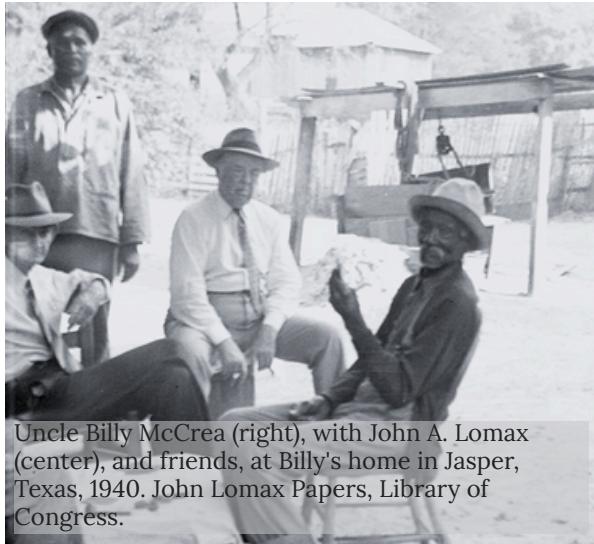


CRUCIAL TOPICS: ORAL HISTORY

Dr. *Philis M. Barragán Goetz*



Uncle Billy McCrea (right), with John A. Lomax (center), and friends, at Billy's home in Jasper, Texas, 1940. John Lomax Papers, Library of Congress.



Studs Terkel in 1992, taking a bus home after working on his show at WFMT radio in Chicago. Chris Walker/The Chicago Tribune.



Dr. Philis Barragán Goetz interviewing Beatriz Barrera González as part of the Voces Oral History Fellowship, Hebbronville, Texas, May 26, 2024.

CONTACT INFO

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CAB 313-D

210-784-2259

OFFICE HOURS

In person: T & Th 12:30-1:30 PM

[On Zoom](#): W 1:30-2:30 PM

and by appointment

COURSE READINGS

- *Doing Oral History*, Don Ritchie
- *The Oral History Reader*, edited by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson
- Other readings available on Blackboard or via TAMUSA library databases

LEARNING OUTCOMES

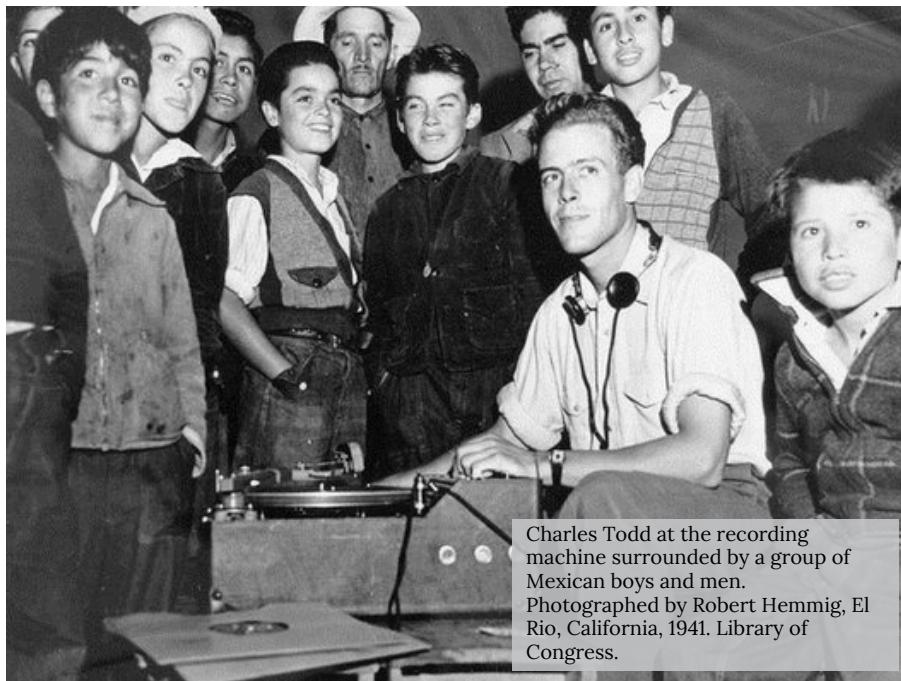
- Exercise critical thinking skills in assessing the impact of oral history to the historian's craft.
- Communicate in writing and in class discussion an understanding of oral history theory and methodology.
- Conduct two oral history interviews, as well as in-class activities, using proper interview methods.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

As students of history, we are accustomed to studying the past by reading secondary sources and scouring digital databases and archival repositories for relevant primary sources. This class introduces students to a different approach to research, one that grants us access to the past, while at the same time enables us to preserve community histories: oral history. Oral history requires patience, quick thinking, extensive research, and above all, the ability to listen critically and with sensitivity.

Students will learn about the history, theory, and method of oral history, as well as about ethics and best practices. We will discuss the different ways historians use it in their research and publications. We will also collaborate with the Voces Oral History Center at the University of Texas at Austin by creating transcriptions for oral history interviews that have already been done. Finally, students will conduct two of their own oral history interviews for the permanent collection at Texas A&M University-San Antonio.

ASSIGNMENTS



Charles Todd at the recording machine surrounded by a group of Mexican boys and men.
Photographed by Robert Hemmig, El Rio, California, 1941. Library of Congress.

TRANSCRIPT FOR VOCES: 15%. We will be partnering with the Voces Oral History Center at the University of Texas at Austin to create an accurate transcript for an oral history interview that is part of their archival collection. Students will be assigned an oral history interview, and, using Otter ai, you will produce a transcript that will become part of the Voces Oral History Collection at the Benson Latin American Library.

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS: Two interviews at 20% each, for a total of 40%. Students will conduct two oral history interviews this semester. The first interview will be with a classmate, and the second interview will be with a family member that is 1-2 generations older than you.

PROJECT PROPOSAL & REFLECTION: 20%. In place of a final exam, students will need to write a proposal for an oral history project that they envision. After going through our course material, what oral history project can you imagine creating to help your community preserve its past, and to help future researchers access its history? After choosing a topic, you will need to draw from our course material to write the proposal, which should include research on the topic, a list of potential interviewees, potential sources of funding, interview questions, and a potential archival repository whose collections coincide with your proposed project.

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION: 10%.

Attendance is mandatory. You will receive a 100 for each day you are in class on time. If you are more than 15 minutes late, you will receive a 50, and if you are absent, you will receive a zero for that day. If you are more than 30 minutes late, you will be marked absent. If you have a documented excused absence, you will not receive a grade for that day.

LISTENING EXERCISES: 15%. Part of being an effective oral historian is learning to listen critically and intently. During the first half of the semester, students will do listening exercises for which they will answer a series of questions after listening to an oral history interview.



Blackfoot chief Mountain Chief listens to a song and interprets it to Frances Densmore.
Smithsonian Institution Archives.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

PARTICIPATION AND COURTESY: Discussion is an important part of this course, and we will not always agree. All points of view are welcome, as long as they are informed (meaning, you have done the required reading for class) and are not deliberately discriminatory. As we engage in the material and in conversation with each other, we must remember to do so respectfully.

ATTENDANCE: Attendance in this class is imperative. Changes to the syllabus, advice, and feedback will be given in class and via blackboard announcements. Additionally, attendance is 10% of your grade. See information on the previous page. Cell phones should be on silent during class. Laptops and tablets should only be used to take notes. And please, put the headphones and earbuds away.

LATE AND MAKE UP WORK: Make-ups will be given only in the case of documented medical or family emergencies. They must be completed before the last day of classes. For each day an assignment is late, its grade drops 5 points. I will not accept late work after 6 days. If you need to request an extension, you must contact me before the the due date to make your request.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT: Students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio are expected to adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Academic dishonesty for which a student is subject to penalty includes cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, multiple submissions, misrepresentation of academic records, facilitating academic dishonesty, unfair advantage, violating known safety requirements and ethical misconduct. This includes holding other students to the same standards and reporting any incidents of alleged violation of the honesty policy to the instructor or, if necessary, to the appropriate academic department head. Students guilty of academic misconduct will receive a zero on the assignment and will be reported to Academic Affairs.



Studs Terkel talks on his Chicago radio show in the late 1970s. Bettmann Archive/Getty Images.

GRADING SCALE

- 90-100 A
- 80-89 B
- 70-79 C
- 60-69 D
- Below 60 F

The Elephant in Our Classroom

TL;DR The use of AI is not allowed. It constitutes academic dishonesty. You will get a zero.

AI is everywhere these days, so let's confront the elephant in our classroom—the elephant in every classroom. Here's what happens every time you use AI: the software draws from the published work of others—without their consent, without citing them or compensating them—and produces a seemingly polished piece of writing. But this piece of writing is full of made up evidence and falsified citations. The skills required of a student of history include reading critically, assessing a scholar's use of evidence, making connections between primary and secondary sources, understanding categories of analysis, and constructing your own arguments that require you to use all these skills. AI plagiarizes from people who have waded through these intellectual trenches. It does not itself have these skills. And every time you use AI to write or to construct analysis, you are losing the ability to do this yourself.

Writing and critical thinking are not easy skills to develop. They can make you uncomfortable and uneasy. They are time consuming and inconvenient. But in exchange for the discomfort and time spent, you gain access to another form of self expression—you get to develop your voice as a writer, as a thinker, and as a human being living in our modern world. With our backs against the wall, we're forced to answer the question: how much are we willing to pay for convenience? If you've read this far, you know that I believe the costs are too high. Students are not authorized to use any AI software in this course, and I will not use it either. It is dishonest and a form of plagiarism. You will not receive any credit for work that uses AI.

IF YOU DON'T GET THIS
REFERENCE, WATCH
TERMINATOR 2 IMMEDIATELY.

SARAH CONNOR WATCHING YOU USE AI FOR EVERYTHING



UNIVERSITY POLICIES & RESOURCES

STUDENT MISCONDUCT: Appropriate conduct is essential to the effective functioning of the University. University policy defines unacceptable conduct, both academic and non-academic misconduct, and penalties for such behavior in The Student Handbook and The Student Code of Conduct.

SIX-DROP RULE: Students are subject to the requirements of Senate Bill (SB) 1231 passed by the Texas Legislature in 2007. SB 1231 limits students to a maximum of six (6) non-punitive course drops (i.e., courses a student chooses to drop) during their undergraduate careers. A non-punitive drop does not affect the student's GPA. However, course drops that exceed the maximum allowed by SB 1231 will be treated as "F" grades and will impact the student's GPA.

EMAIL POLICY AND COURSE COMMUNICATIONS: All correspondence between professors and students must occur via University email accounts. You must have your Jaguar email account ready and working. If it is not working, contact the help desk at helpdesk@tamusa.edu or at 210-784-HELP (4357). If you don't hear back within 48 hours, contact them again. They have many requests during the first part of the semester, so you may need to follow up with them.

FINANCIAL AID AND VERIFICATION OF ATTENDANCE: According to the following federal regulation, 34 CFR 668.21: U.S. Department of Education (DoE) Title IV regulation, a student can only receive Title IV funds based on Title IV eligibility criteria which include class attendance. If Title IV funds are disbursed to ineligible students (including students who fail to begin attendance), the institution must return these funds to the U.S. DoE within 30 days of becoming aware that the student will not or has not begun attendance. Faculty will provide the Office of Financial Aid with an electronic notification if a student has not attended by the published Census Date (the first week of class). Any student receiving federal financial aid who does not attend prior to the published Census Date (the first week of class) will have their aid terminated and returned to the DoE. Please note that any student who stops attending at any time during the semester may also need to return a portion of their federal aid.

COUNSELING SERVICES: As a college student, there may be times when personal stressors interfere with your academic performance and negatively impact your daily functioning. If you are experiencing emotional difficulties or mental health concerns, support is available to you through the Student Counseling Center (SCC). To schedule an appointment, visit our website, call 210-784-1331 or visit Madla 120 between the hours of 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM.

All mental health services provided by the SCC are free and confidential (as the law allows). The Student Counseling Center provides brief individual and group therapy, crisis intervention, consultation, case management, and prevention services. Crisis support is available 24/7/365 by calling the SCC at 210-784-1331 or through the TELUS student support App.

The TELUS Student Support App provides a variety of mental health resources to including 24/7/365 support for in the moment distress, crisis support, an anonymous peer-to-peer support network, mental health screenings, podcasts, and articles to improve your mental wellbeing.

THE ACADEMIC LEARNING CENTER: All currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio can utilize the Academic Learning Center for subject-area tutoring. The Academic Learning Center provides free course-based tutoring to all currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. Students wishing to work with a tutor can make appointments through the Brainfuse online tutoring platform. Brainfuse can be accessed in the Tools section of Blackboard. You can contact the Academic Learning Center by emailing tutoring@tamusa.edu, calling (210) 784-1307, or visiting the Central Academic Building, room 202. Online tutoring is also available for after hours and weekend assistance.

STUDENT ACADEMIC SUCCESS CENTER: takes a developmental approach to help students complete their academic goals from orientation through graduation. The Center offers academic and skills workshops, one-on-one appointments, and online resources to help retention efforts at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. The goal of the Center is to help students discover, self-reflect, and become independent learners. Student Academic Success is located in Modular C. Their services are currently offered virtually or by phone. To contact the Center, please call 210-784-1307 or email at Student.Success@tamusa.edu.

THE JAGUAR WRITING CENTER provides writing support to graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges as well as faculty and staff. Writing tutors work with students to develop reading skills, prepare oral presentations, and plan, draft, and revise their written assignments. Our language tutors support students enrolled in Spanish courses and students composing in Spanish for any assignment. Our digital studio tutors support students working on digital projects such as eportfolios, class presentations, or other digital multimedia projects. The Writing Center offers face-to-face, synchronous online, and asynchronous digital appointments. Students can schedule appointments with the Writing Center in JagWire under the Student Services tab. Click on "Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center" to make your appointment. Students wanting to work in realtime with a tutor can schedule an "Online Appointment." Students wishing to receive asynchronous, written feedback from a tutor can schedule an "eTutoring" appointment. More information about what services we offer, how to make an appointment, and how to access your appointment can be found on our website. The Writing Center can also be reached by emailing writingcenter@tamusa.edu.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES: Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to providing all students with reasonable access to learning opportunities and accommodations in accordance with The Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, Disability Support Services is located in the Central Academic Building, Suite 210. You can also contact us via phone at (210) 784-1335, visit us at the website or email us at dss@tamusa.edu. Disabilities may include, but are not limited to, attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their academic accommodations with Disability Support Services and their instructors as soon as possible.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES: Texas A&M University-San Antonio recognizes the wide variety of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or course work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES & RESOURCES

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS: JagE Alert is Texas A&M University-San Antonio's mass notification system. In the event of an emergency, such as inclement weather, students, staff and faculty, who are registered, will have the option to receive a text message, email with instructions and updates. To register or update your information visit: <https://tamusa.bbcportal.com/>. More information about Emergency Operations Plan and the Emergency Action Plan can be found here. Download the SafeZone App (<https://safezoneapp.com/>) for emergencies or call (210) 784-1911. Non-Emergency (210) 784-1900.

MEETING BASIC NEEDS: Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to submit a CARE report for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable them to direct you to available resources. A food pantry is available on campus; click here for hours and contact information.

MILITARY AFFAIRS: Veterans and active-duty military personnel are welcomed and encouraged to visit the Office of Military Affairs for any question involving federal or state VA Education Benefits. Visit the Patriots' Casa building, room 202, or to contact the Office of Military Affairs with any questions at military.va@tamusa.edu or (210)784-1397.

STATEMENT OF HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION: Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to the fundamental principles of academic freedom, equal opportunity, and human dignity. To fulfill its multiple missions as an institution of higher learning, A&M-San Antonio encourages a climate that values and nurtures collegiality and the uniqueness of the individual on our campus and within our state, nation, and world. All decisions and actions involving students and employees are to be based on applicable law and individual merit. Texas A&M University-San Antonio, in accordance with applicable federal and state law, prohibits discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or pregnancy/parenting status. Individuals who believe they have experienced harassment or discrimination prohibited by this statement are encouraged to contact the University's Civil Rights Officer at 210-784-2061 or titleix@tamusa.edu.

Texas A&M University-San Antonio faculty are committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students and for the university as a whole. If you have experienced any form of sex discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic or dating violence, or stalking based on sex, know that help and support are available. A&M-San Antonio's Title IX Coordinator can support those impacted by such conduct in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and more. The university strongly encourages all students to report any such incidents to the Title IX Coordinator. Please be aware that all A&M-San Antonio employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as counselors and trained victim advocates) are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the university. This means that if you tell a faculty member about a situation of sexual harassment, sexual violence, or other related sex-based misconduct, the faculty member must share that information with the university's Title IX Coordinator (titleix@tamusa.edu, 210-784-2061, CAB 439K). If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting requirement, you can contact the Student Counseling Center at (210) 784-1331 or visit them in Madla 120.

STUDENTS' RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES: The purpose of the following statement is to enumerate the essential provisions for the student freedom and responsibility to learn at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. All students are required to follow all policies and regulations as set forth by The Texas A&M University System. This includes the A&M-San Antonio Student Code of Conduct.

Students' Rights:

- A student shall have the right to participate in a free exchange of ideas, and there shall be no university rule or procedure that in any way abridges the rights of freedom of speech, expression, petition and peaceful assembly as set forth in the U.S. Constitution.
- Each student shall have the right to participate in all areas and activities of the university, free from any form of discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, genetic information or veteran status in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.
- A student has the right to personal privacy except as otherwise provided by law, and this will be observed by students and University authorities alike.
- Each student subject to disciplinary action arising from violations of university student rules shall be assured a fundamentally fair process.

Students' Responsibilities:

- A student has the responsibility to respect the rights and property of others, including other students, the faculty, and administration.
- A student has the responsibility to be fully acquainted with the published University Student Rules found in the Student Handbook, Student Code of Conduct, on our website, and University Catalog, and to comply with them, as well as with federal, state, and local laws.
- A student has the responsibility to recognize that student actions reflect upon the individuals involved and upon the entire University community.
- A student has the responsibility to recognize the University's obligation to provide a safe environment for learning.
- A student has the responsibility to check their university email for any updates or official university notifications.

We expect that students will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful, and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, or disability. Conduct that infringes on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

Students are expected to exhibit a high level of honesty and integrity in their pursuit of higher education. Students engaging in an act that violates the standards of academic integrity will find themselves facing academic and/or disciplinary sanctions. Academic misconduct is any act, or attempt, which gives an unfair advantage to the student. Additionally, any behavior specifically prohibited by a faculty member in the course syllabus or class discussion may be considered as academic misconduct. For more information on academic misconduct policies and procedures please review the Student Code of Conduct or visit the resources available in the OSRR website.