

At Work in America: Oral and Written Histories

Prof. Holly Painter

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Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday, 1:15-2:30pm and by appointment

Course description:

The focus of this course is the jobs people do and how interviews, oral histories, and written histories can uncover, preserve, and present these workers' stories. You will learn and practice field research skills and gain an understanding of large economic forces that shape work in the U.S, as well as how workers' identities and demographic characteristics (e.g., sex, race, age, language) interact with these forces. With this foundation, you will interview workers in the community and present each oral history in a different way in three major assignments: a lightly edited transcription; a magazine-style article that synthesizes field research with database research; and a creative piece. You will work with your classmates to develop and revise your interviews and writing, and each assignment will be guided by readings that both model what you will produce and provide further history and context for the larger theme of how jobs are changing in the U.S.

Learning objectives:

Students will understand:

- how automation, technology, outsourcing, immigration, and shifts in laws and tastes have changed the composition and nature of American jobs
- how national and international economic forces impact individual workers
- how workers' identities and demographic characteristics impact their experiences of work
- the role of oral history and other forms of field research within the wider pantheon of scholarly research
- how 20th and 21st century American poetry, visual art, photography, and radio/podcasts have depicted work and workers

Students will be able to:

- organize, prepare for, and conduct in-person interviews with community members within a safe, ethical, and responsible framework
- exercise interpersonal skills that support respectful, meaningful, and effective interactions with workers from diverse backgrounds
- demonstrate an awareness of socioeconomic, cultural, and racial diversity in their written work, class participation, and field research
- synthesize their own field research with library and government database research, building on information literacy skills gained in first-year FWIL courses

Required texts & materials:

1. *Field Notes* (Luis Vivanco)
2. *Working* (Studs Terkel)
3. *What Work Is* (Philip Levine)

You should expect to read about 50 pages each week and do homework between most class periods. In addition to the above texts, which you should buy, rent, or borrow, I will post Blackboard links to other readings. You are responsible for reading and bringing these with you to class. However, you don't need to print them if you have them on your laptop or other mobile device. You just need to have them accessible for discussions. You will also listen to some podcasts and view art and photography. These links are on Blackboard.

Finally, you will need MS Office, free here: go.uvm.edu/getoffice.

Office hours & contacting me:

My office hours are 1:15-2:30pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays in Old Mill, room 322. If you can't make these times, email me and we'll find a time that works.

My email is hpainter@uvm.edu. There's a lot of information in this syllabus, in the course schedule, and on Blackboard. *Before you email me, check whether the answer to your question is in these materials. If not, email a classmate and wait for a reply.* If you've done those two things and still have a question, then you can email me. I'll reply within 48 hours.

Grades:**Grading Scale:**

A	= 93-100 pts	C+	= 77-79.99 pts	D-	= 60-62.99 pts
A -	= 90-92.99 pts	C	= 73-76.99 pts	F	= 0-59.99 pts
B+	= 87-89.99 pts	C-	= 70-72.99 pts	XF	= Failure due to
B	= 83-86.99 pts	D+	= 67-69.99 pts		academic dishonesty
B-	= 80-82.99 pts	D	= 63-66.99 pts		

Note: There is no extra credit. Please do not contact me asking for extra credit. The time you have available for this class is best spent doing the assigned coursework.

Grading breakdown:

Transcribed Interview	20 pts	Attendance & Participation	15 pts
Character Study	25 pts	Homework	15 pts
Creative Representation of Work/Workers	25 pts		

Project 1: Transcribed Interview (due October 16)

After gaining a firm theoretical foundation in safe, ethical, and responsible interview techniques (working with Luis Vivanco's *Field Notes*) and practicing with each other, you will each interview someone in the community in person about their job. You will record, transcribe, and lightly edit these interviews. You will also provide a brief introduction giving context for the interview and a short reflection paper discussing your interview experience. *Working* (Studs Terkel), *The Atlantic's* "Inside Jobs" series, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics' "Interview with a..." series will offer models for the end-product for this assignment.

Project 2: Character Study (due November 6)

You will interview a different person in the community who has a job that has experienced a lot of change in the number of people doing it (growth or decline). Then, using Corey Kilgannon's work-related "Character Studies" series in the *NYTimes* and "The Jobs Americans Do" feature in *The New York Times Magazine* as models, you will write an engaging magazine-style article that combines your interview material with research about the job. This will include library database research, as well as sources like the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. You will also turn in a short reflection paper on your interview experience.

Project 3: Creative Representation of Work & Workers (due December 6)

As a class, we will examine how work and workers are depicted in poetry, photography, visual art, and comics. You will choose either poetry, photography, or comics to depict your third interviewee. You will also provide a brief introduction giving context for the interview and a short reflection paper discussing your interview experience and explaining the choices you made in creating your piece.

Attendance & Participation

I expect you to attend class and participate fully in discussion and in-class activities. Each week, you will earn up to one point for attendance and participation (.5pts per class, with a free point for the week of Thanksgiving).

If you're absent, it's your responsibility to find out from your classmates what you missed, complete any *Field Notes* activities we did in class, and check Blackboard for any materials distributed in class. It's not necessary to tell me you'll be out, but if you'd like to talk about what you missed, come to office hours.

If you miss class *for any reason*, you can earn attendance/participation credit for that day by emailing me a 500-word response to the assigned reading/exercise by 11:59pm the following day. This option is available for up to three absences over the course of the semester.

Homework

I expect you to prepare for class by completing all of your reading and homework. You will submit some homework via Blackboard, and you will do some in your *Field Notes* book. See Blackboard for a further breakdown of homework points.

Plagiarism & academic integrity:

The consequences for plagiarism are worse than the consequences of turning in something that is imperfect or unfinished but your own work. *Specifically, if you plagiarize, you will get a zero for the assignment.* This includes the three big projects, homework, and in-class activities. In addition, I will turn over suspected violations of the Code of Ethics to the Center for Student Conduct. If you are not sure what plagiarism is or how to avoid it, come speak to me in office hours, make an appointment with a Writing Center tutor, or consult a writing guide like Purdue OWL: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/02/>. See UVM's code at uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/acadintegrity.pdf.

General problems you might face this semester*:

Sometimes you get sick. Or awful things happen. This is so very, very common. You are not alone, and the university has support for you.

I have a nasty cold

Get better, get some sleep. Skip class and rest. See the attendance & participation section on page 3. It's pretty accommodating. Your classmates can catch you up, and if you're worried, you can always come to office hours and talk to me about what you missed.

Oh no, it's actually pneumonia (aka I am REALLY SICK or REALLY HURT)

Please reach out to student services at your college. They will help you! A very common thing that happens is that you document your medical emergency with the Dean's Office, and they contact all your professors for you. Then, your professors can make accommodations to help you. You can reach out to me before or after you get in touch with the Dean's Office, and I'm happy to work through hypotheticals.

I'm experiencing a serious family emergency

Same as above. Reach out to student services through your college. They're here to help you.

My mental health is not so good

Please consider reaching out to CAPS (<https://www.uvm.edu/health/CAPS>). They are free! If you need a same-day appointment, tell them that, and they will help you right away. If you're worried your mental health is going to affect your school performance, student services can help you arrange accommodations with your professors – this is very common!

I'm experiencing food/housing insecurity

If you are facing problems securing your food or housing and think this may affect your school performance, I strongly encourage you to contact student services as well. You can also notify me if you feel comfortable, so that I can provide any resources/accommodations if needed.

*I adapted some of this section from UVM economics professor Emily Beam's syllabi. This stuff is true for all of your classes. Everyone here wants you to succeed.

More UVM Resources:

Writing Center: For support and feedback at any point in the writing process, consult with a tutor at the Writing Center. For more information about the Writing Center, including a list of tutors and their majors/minors, see www.uvm.edu/writingcenter. To make an appointment (it's free!) or apply for a Writing Partner, go to uvm.edu/tutor.

Tutoring Center: The Tutoring Center offers tutoring in different areas: Learning Skills, Subject Area Tutoring, and Supplemental Instruction. To schedule an appointment, call 802-656-4075 or visit the Tutoring Center, 244 Commons L/L. Find out more at uvm.edu/learnco/.

UVM Libraries: The UVM library website and the physical contents of the Bailey/Howe library are invaluable resources. And if you need research help, there's no one more knowledgeable than the UVM librarians. Have a look around the website: library.uvm.edu.

Counseling and Psychiatry Services (CAPS): UVM counselors can work with you regarding any issue. Counseling sessions are free for full-time UVM students, are confidential, and are typically scheduled once/week for 45-50 minutes. To set up an appointment or to inquire further about individual counseling, call 802-656-3340. Read more at <https://www.uvm.edu/health/CAPS>.

C.A.R.E.: If you are concerned about a UVM community member or are concerned about a specific event, we encourage you to contact the Dean of Students Office (802-656-3380). If you'd like to remain anonymous, you can report your concerns online by visiting the Dean of Students website at uvm.edu/~dos/

Other UVM policies:

Student Learning Accommodations: If you have a disability that requires accommodation, please let me know how I can help. Student Accessibility Services (located in the Living Learning Center; uvm.edu/access/) can help you negotiate academic requirements. In keeping with UVM policy, any student with a documented disability interested in utilizing accommodations should contact SAS. All students are strongly encouraged to meet with faculty to discuss the accommodations they plan to use in each course. UVM's Disability Certification, Accommodation, and Support-Students Policy can be found at uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/disability.pdf.

Grading: For information on grading and GPA calculation, see catalogue.uvm.edu/graduate/academicenrollment/gradingpolicies. Incompletes are rare. You must have done 80% of the coursework at a passing level in order to be eligible, and you must have experienced some unusual interruption in your ability to do the work (e.g., serious illness or the arrival of a child in the last weeks of the semester). If you find yourself in this situation, please tell me ASAP so we can make plans for you to complete the course.

Grade Appeals: If you'd like to contest a grade, please follow the procedures outlined in this policy: uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/gradeappeals.pdf

Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities:
uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/studentcode.pdf

FERPA Rights Disclosure: Know your rights regarding access to, and privacy of your student educational records as provided for in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974. uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/ferpa.pdf

Observance of religious holidays: Students have the right to practice the religion of their choice. Each semester, students should submit in writing to their instructors by the end of the second full week of classes their documented religious holiday schedule for the semester. Faculty must permit students who miss work for the purpose of religious observance to make up this work. If you miss this class for a religious holiday (or for any other reason), you can earn attendance/participation credit for that day by emailing me a 500-word response to the assigned reading/exercise by 11:59pm the following day. This option is available for up to three absences over the course of the semester.