

FAMILY HISTORY ASSIGNMENT

Overview

This assignment provides you with the opportunity to interview a family member about three generations of your family's history (the family member you interview, as well as his or her parents and grandparents). In the process, you will not only learn more about your own family's story, but you also will have a chance to connect this narrative to the issues and trends that we have discussed in class this semester. For some students, this assignment may be a chance to spend time with and get to know an older relative and to further personalize your connections to our course materials. There are two elements to this assignment:

Part One: Interview (3 pages minimum; 6 pages maximum)

First, you will conduct an interview with a person who has significant memories and knowledge of your family's history—ideally, someone who is at least 60 years old, but an elderly relative (80 years+) would be ideal. Included below in this assignment are questions to help you prepare for the interview; additional interview tips can be found on the accompanying "Conducting an Oral History Interview" handout. Then, in a narrative form (not in a Q & A format) write up the information you gather during your interview.

Part Two: Analysis (5 pages minimum; 8 pages maximum)

In this section, you should connect aspects of your family's story to the overall family topics and trends that we have been discussing all semester. You also must provide your interpretation of WHY your family's history and contours unfolded as it did, in light of its location in terms of class, culture, race, gender, immigration, and/or educational statuses.

The primary references in this analysis should be our class discussions and readings. However, you may be inspired to undertake further library research for this section to guide your understanding of issues (such as immigration history) that we have not covered in class. Please be mindful about citing sources using MLA or APA format and providing a list of works cited at the end of your essay. The following works can help you get started if you need further information; they are located in the reference collection at the Cultural Heritage Center (5th floor of MLK Library):

| | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| <i>Encyclopedia Latina: History, Culture and Society in the United States</i> | E184.S75E587 2005 vols. 1-4 |
| <i>Oxford Encyclopedia of Latinos and Latinas in the United States</i> | E184.S75O97 2005 vols. 1-4 |
| <i>Latino Encyclopedia</i> | E184.S75L357 1996 vols. 1-6 |
| <i>Handbook of Hispanic Cultures</i> | E184.S75H365 1993 vols. 1-4 |
| <i>Atlas of Hispanic American History</i> | E184.S75O287 2001 |
| <i>Dictionary of Chicano Folklore</i> | GR111.M49 R69 2000 |
| <i>Encyclopedia of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement.</i> | E184.M5M458 2000 |

Suggested Timeline

- Oct 12 Receive these instructions and GET STARTED. Contact your potential interviewee ASAP.
- Nov 9 Aim to complete your interview by this date and begin working on Part Two
- Nov 16 In-class check-in regarding your interview experience
- Dec 2 Bring 4-5 pages of your preliminary draft to get in-class feedback
- Dec 16 Submit a hard copy of both Parts One and Two by 2:45pm to Clark 231B

Please remember: You are welcome to meet me at any time for one-on-one guidance and trouble-shooting with this assignment.

Technical Guidelines

- Due date: Wednesday, December 16
- 8 – 14 pages in length (see guidelines for Parts One and Two)
- 40% of overall grade (15% narrative; 25% analysis)
- Your work must be
 - Formatted with 1" margins all around
 - Double-spaced
 - Printed in 12-point Times New Roman
 - Numbered on all pages
 - Stapled before you turn it in
 - Spell-checked, carefully edited and proof-read
 - Follow MLA formatting
 - Include a Works Cited page

Guiding Questions for Components of the Assignment

- **Essay Components**
 - Interview: Do you provide a compelling overview of your family's story (as told by your interviewee)? Do you give a strong sense of your family's life and times by providing specific and unique details?
 - Analysis: Do you identify themes and trends that most affect t your family history? Did you analyze your family's story in a way that connects family members' life experiences to the era and communities in which they lived?
- **Writing Style**
 - Engagement: How lively is your writing? How creative and interesting is it? Do you show original and/or deeper thinking on the topic?
 - Use of Readings: Do you incorporate the readings into your analysis? How well do you integrate the authors' views into your own writing and explanation? Do you avoid the dreaded "greatest hits of discussion" approach?
 - Focus: How well-organized is your response? Do you stay on-track, or do you wander through unrelated arguments and evidence?
- **Technical Aspects of Writing**
 - Language: How easy to read are your sentences? Are your wording choices clear or confusing? Does your own writing voice emerge?
 - Mechanics: How carefully edited is your writing? Are there significant grammatical errors and careless typos? Is the format of your citations correct?

Sample Interview Questions

1. What is your full name? Explain why your parents gave you that name.
2. When and where were you born? Are you the oldest, youngest, or only child? Describe your home, your neighborhood, and the town you grew up in. If you moved homes during your childhood, explain why.
3. What memories do you have of your father (his name, birth date, birthplace, parents, etc.)?
4. What memories do you have of your mother (her name, birth date, birthplace, parents, etc.)?
5. How did your parents meet? What kind of work did they do? What was the household division of labor between them, and why?
6. Who set the rules in your home when you were growing up? Who enforced them? What would happen when someone challenged or broke the rules?
7. Were there two or three food dishes your mother or father made that were especially memorable?
8. Share some memories of your grandparents. How much do you know about their lives? What kind of work did they do? What role did they or other relative play in child-rearing?
9. When did your family come to the US? Where were they living before, and why did they emigrate? Did they have family or community to help them find their way?
10. What kind of hardships or tragedies did your family experience while you were growing up? How did your family deal with these challenges?
11. Are there any traits (physical or personality) that run in your family line?
12. What family traditions do you remember? Did your family have special ways of celebrating specific holidays?
13. Who were your aunts and uncles? Do any aunts or uncles really stand out in your mind? Give some details about them (names, personalities, events that you remember doing with them, and so on).
14. Where did you go to school? Share some details about what was school like for you and any memorable experiences.
15. What subjects did you like most and least in school? Explain why.
16. What kinds of messages about education did you receive from family members? (Did your family support your education?)
17. Was religion important for you and your family? If so, explain what religion your family practiced and what it meant to you. Explain if it is or is not an important part of your life today.
18. How did you meet your spouse? What was your courtship like? Describe your marriage day. Share some stories about your spouse.
19. How many children do you have? List their names and share a few memories about each one.
20. Describe some of the major community, national, and world events your family lived through. How did your family talk about or perceive these events?
21. When it comes to family, what are you grateful for?
22. What are three significant events or experiences in your family life? What effects did they have had on your family?
23. Has your family experienced major changes from one generation to the next? For example, do you keep the same traditions as your grandparents? Or would you say that later generations have had a better chance at getting an education? Why or why not?
24. Were there any family heirlooms or property that have been handed down from generation to generation? What are they? Where are they now?
25. What are some of the family life lessons that you have learned and would like to pass on to your descendants?