**Oral History and Life Stories 2021 2022 – Update 19 November 2021**

**Course Supervisor:** prof. dr. Selma Leydesdorff

**Dates:** November 25; December 2, 9,

January 13 2022

Date additional skills lab: t.b.a.

**Place** Amsterdam

**Locations**

25 November 13.00-17.00 | Digital meeting

2 December 13.00-17.00 | Digital meeting

9 December 13.00 – 17.00 | Digital meeting

13 January 13.00 – 17.00 | REC E. 015 Amsterdam

The Zoomlink will be mailed to you by prof. Leydesdorff separately

**Candidates:** PhD candidates and advanced RMa students

**Credits:** 2 ECTS, with paper 5-6 ECTS

**Registration**: Before October 15, (bureau@onderzoekschoolpolitiekegeschiedenis.nl) Students and PhD candidates willing to participate have to write a motivation letter before 1 November.



**The course**

Historians and others who interview about the past often talk about memory and how they are informed by memory, while they know memory is a difficult and problematic source for historical knowledge. During this course we shall concentrate on the various uses of memory in historical research and look at the kind of knowledge we get when we interview. We will investigate various efforts to create a more systematic and theoretically grounded approach than ‘just talking about days long gone’ or ‘having a chat about the past’. How can we create a research pattern that overcomes the incidental and replace it by an integration of the changing character of spoken narratives about the past? When can we trust a story, why? And if we cannot, why can it still be important to listen. In addition, how do we listen?

General starting-point for discussion is the study of life stories in oral history as a tradition in the humanities and in the social sciences. During the course, additional attention will be given to alternative modes of in-depth interviews. Issues to be investigated in particular concern the questions of intersubjectivity; (self) reflection; identification with the Other and her/his past; and the interviewer’s role in the process of meaning/knowledge production. What are our responsibilities towards people we interview and do we have particular responsibilities in our research communities? What does it mean to be close to an interviewee, what happens if there is distance or when we do not like what we hear? Do we have to agree with our interviewees?

Part of the teaching will be done by looking at oral histories made by oral historians who published their interviews on websites.

We shall also compare spoken memories with other ego-documents, bearing in mind the many other existing and valid ways of interviewing about personal experience; we shall analyze when, and how we produce alternative and unfamiliar viewpoints. Because historical interviews ask a lot of research time, participants in this course will consider questions like: Do I really need interviews, what do I want to know, are there other ways to get this kind of knowledge?

During the course, several theoretical approaches are discussed. Apart from lectures by Selma Leydesdorff on theoretical approaches and past work, guest lecturers are invited as well to explain how they overcome difficulties during their research. Since the use of websites for the dissemination of narrated accounts and the making of interviews with the help of a camera has become more and more important, we discuss digitization. Also the various stages of larger projects will be followed. We will follow up some ethical and practical issues.

**Additional activity skills lab interviewing**

The option to participate in a skills lab on interviewing will be offered in case there is a sufficient number of participants. The skills lab will be supervised by Dineke Stam. More details will be made available later.

**Testing and evaluative criteria**

Presence during class is obligatory including collaboration on preparing the discussions. Rema students are requested to write 2000 words paper on one subject in the literature or about the integration of the course in their own work. PhD students who need credit points are requested to present a 3500 words paper on how they will use the literature. The deadline for handing in the papers is **March 1. 2022**

**Preparation, literature and assignment**

The literature consists of various articles, informing on how to organize a larger interview project, or discussing how to analyses interviews.. The list of literature is available below.

Advanced researchers who want to refresh their knowledge with recent literature and who want to bring their problems and subjects to the discussion will be welcome. They are asked to accept a status in which they are equal with other participants.

**Program**

During every meeting, the literature as mentioned in the program will be discussed. During the second part of the session (15.15 – 16.45 hrs.) guest lecturers will speak about their own work. The program consists of the following sessions:

1. **November 2021 Selma Leydesdorff , guest Sanneke Stigter**

Introduction to the course. Different ways to interview (e.g. narrative interview). Modern art collections in a museum as a source. What is auto-ethnopgraphy? When the object moves, how important is the interview.

***Literature***

Marianne Horsdal, ['The narrative interview - method, theory and ethics: Unfolding a life'](https://www.huizingainstituut.nl/wp-content/uploads/Horsdal-narrative-interview.pdf), in: *The Routledge International Handbook on Narrative and Life History* (New York and London, 2017) 260-271.

Andrea Fontana and James H. Frey, [‘The Interview, From Structured Questions to Negotiated Texts'](https://www.huizingainstituut.nl/wp-content/uploads/24-Fontana-and-Frey-Interview.pdf), in: *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (London, 2000) 645-673.

Selma Leydesdorff, ['Aleksandr (Sasha) Pechersky (1909-1990). In Search of a life story'](https://www.huizingainstituut.nl/wp-content/uploads/Leydesdorff-Pechersky.pdf), in: I. Goodson et.al, *The Routledge International Handbook on Narrative and Life History* (New York and London, 2017) 318-331.

Sanneke Stigter [‘Autoethnography as a new approach in conservation’](https://www.huizingainstituut.nl/wp-content/uploads/146276_Stigter_2012_Ger_van_Elk_The_Artist_Interview_Japsam_Books_102_111.pdf), *Studies in Conservation* 2 (2016) 227-232.

Alexander Freund, [‘Oral History Process Generated Data’](https://www.huizingainstituut.nl/wp-content/uploads/Freund-OH-Process-Generated-Data-HSR-2009-34.11-1.pdf), *Historical Social Research* 34 (2009) 22-48.

Alessandro Portelli, ‘What makes Oral History Different’, in: Alessandro Portelli, The Death of Luigi Trastulli, Form and Meaning in Oral History (New York, 1992) 45-58. Alessandor Portelli, ‘Living Voices: The Oral History Interview as Dialogue and Experience’, Oral History Review 2 (2018) 239-248.

Alessandor Portelli, ‘Living Voices: The Oral History Interview as Dialogue and Experience’, Oral History Review 2 (2018) 239-248.

2 December **Selma Leydesdorff, guest Marie Louise Janssen**

This session deals with interviewing in ‘other worlds’, another culture and interviews about secret knowledge. How to interview illegal undocumented women in prison? Marie Louise Janssen will discuss her work on Chinese women in massage parlours.

***Literature***

- Marie-Louise Janssen, 'The fluidity of a 'happy ending'. Chinese masseuses in the Netherlands', in: May-Len Skilbrei and Marlene Spanger (ed.), Understanding Sex for Sale. Meanings and Moralities in Sexual Commerce (New York and London, 2017) 142-158.

- Ken Plummer 'Intimate Citizenship. The politics of sexual story telling'. In: Telling Sexual Stories. Power, Change and Social Worlds (London and New York, 1995) 144-166

- Nan A. Boyd (2008) 'Who is the Subject? Queer Theory Meets Oral History', Journal of the History of Sexuality, Vol. 17(2): 177-189.

1. **December Selma Leydesdorff, guest Nanci Adler**

The many ways to interview. The ways memories are stored in our brain and change. Visual and audio interviews. Transforming oral history into a movie.

***Literature:***

Nanci Adler, [‘The Legacies of Stalinist Repression: Narratives of the Children of Loyalist enemies of the People'](https://www.huizingainstituut.nl/wp-content/uploads/tapestry-adler.pdf), in: Nanci Adler and Selma Leydesdorff, *Tapestry of Memory, Evidence and Testimony in Life Story Narratives (*New Jersey, 2013) 19-37.

Molly Andrews, [‘Beyond narrative: The shape of traumatic testimony’](https://www.huizingainstituut.nl/wp-content/uploads/mollya-andrews-traum.pdf), in: Hyvärinen, M., et al (eds.), *Beyond Narrative Coherence* (Amsterdam, 2010) 147-167.

Anna Sheftel and Stacey Zembrzycki, '[Slowing Down to Listen in the Digital Age: How New Technology Is Changing Oral History Practice'](https://www.huizingainstituut.nl/wp-content/uploads/SheftelZembrzycki-1.pdf), *Oral History Review* 1 (2017) 94–112.

1. **January 2022 Selma Leydesdorff, guest Fridus Steijlen**

Oral history and the experience of decolonization. Themes discussed are trauma, Indonesian decolonisation and oral history and dealing with large collections. The section on trauma focusses on interviewing traumatized people. What is trauma? Distortions after long imprisonment. The pain of decolonization.

Fridus Steijlen will speak about his participation in the project ‘Decolonization and Violence and War in Indonesia’ where he is doing interviews.

***Literature***

Selma Leydesdorff, [‘When all is lost: Metanarrative in the Oral History of Hanifa, Survivor of Srebrenica’](https://www.huizingainstituut.nl/wp-content/uploads/Leydesdorff-When-all-is-lost.pdf), in: Cave, M. and Sloane, S.M., *Listening on the Edge, Oral History in the Aftermath of Crisis (*New York, 2014) 17-33.

Steve Cohen, [‘Shifting Questions: New Paradigms for Oral History in a Digital World’](https://www.huizingainstituut.nl/wp-content/uploads/Cohen-Shifting-Questions.pdf), in: *Oral History Review* 1 (2013) 154-167.

Fridus Steijlen, Adding new perspectives after half a century. The Oral History Project on Indonesia.

**Speakers and supervisor**

**Prof. dr. Nanci Adler** is Professor of Memory, History, and Transitional Justice at the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies and the University of Amsterdam. She has authored and/or edited, among others, Keeping Faith with the Party: Communist Believers Return from the Gulag (Indiana University Press, 2012),  Understanding the Age of Transitional Justice: Crimes, Courts, Commissions, and Chronicling (Rutgers University Press, 2018). Her current research focuses on transitional justice and the legacy of Communism.

**Dr. Marie Louise Janssen** **Dr. Marie Louise Janssen,**cultural anthropologist,lectures in the areas of gender and sexuality studies, social sciences and research methods and techniques at the department of Sociology of the University of Amsterdam. Her academic interests revolve around the intersection of sex work, migration and human trafficking.



**Prof. dr. Fridus Steijlen** is Endowed Professor ‘Moluccan Migration and Culture in a comparative perspective‘ at the Faculty of Social Sciences of the VU University, Amsterdam, and [senior researcher at KITLV](https://eur04.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.kitlv.nl%2Fresearchers-steijlen%2F&data=04%7C01%7CS.Leijdesdorff%40uva.nl%7C77666b45fda84f5fb68d08d929a04c68%7Ca0f1cacd618c4403b94576fb3d6874e5%7C1%7C1%7C637586590731172726%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C2000&sdata=qGmE%2FuvRJQ8DJnHwreFXLBTy9kkgUhWhQSJ%2BX5tffp4%3D&reserved=0). He is also one of the coordinators of the [Witness and Contemporaries Project](https://eur04.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ind45-50.org%2Findex.php%2Fen%2Fwitnesses-contemporaries&data=04%7C01%7CS.Leijdesdorff%40uva.nl%7C77666b45fda84f5fb68d08d929a04c68%7Ca0f1cacd618c4403b94576fb3d6874e5%7C1%7C1%7C637586590731172726%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C2000&sdata=LUxF9bmvnIYG48wQ%2FmcVV0XE1e17%2FAGuOB4MV%2BrnEYY%3D&reserved=0) of the large research program Independence, decolonization, violence and war in Indonesia, 1945-1950, conducted by KITLV, NIMH and NIOD.

**Dr. Sanneke Stigter** is Assistant Professor in [Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage](http://www.uva.nl/en/discipline/conservation-and-restoration/conservation-and-restoration.html) at the University of Amsterdam.  In 2007 she set up the specialisation in [Contemporary Art](https://www.uva.nl/en/discipline/conservation-and-restoration/education/specialisations/contemporary-art/contemporary-art.html) and has directed it ever since. is currently leading the NWO research project [Interviews in Conservation Research](http://www.uva.nl/en/discipline/conservation-and-restoration/research/research-projects/interviews-in-conservation-research/interviews-in-conservation-research.html) and [Media Art Conservation Module](https://www.nwo.nl/onderzoek-en-resultaten/onderzoeksprojecten/i/35/31235.html)

**Prof. dr. Selma Leydesdorff** is professor emerita of oral history and culture (University of Amsterdam). Over the last ten years she interviewed on life in concentration camps and recorded interviews with survivors of Auschwitz and Mauthausen in international projects. In 2002, she started a project with survivors of Srebrenica and since 2008, she has recorded life stories around the trial of John Demjanjuk in Munich. Recent publications include *Sasha Pechersky: Holocaust hero, Sobibor Resistance Leader and Hostage of History*. (Memory and Narrative). New York: Routledge 2017 and Narratives of the Survivors of Srebrenica: How Do They Reconnect to the World? In E. Bemporad, & J. W. Warren (Eds.), *Women and Genocide: Survivors, Victims, Perpetrators*(pp. 250-267). Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2018.