Testimonio in the Americas: Voices In Pursuit of Social Justice
WST6935 x 3B38; WST4930 x 3D73; LAS6938 x 3B26; LAS4935 x 3E07; SPW6934 x 3B36

Instructors:
Dr. Clara Sotelo, Spanish and Portuguese Department
Office hours: Dauer 155, TBD
Dr. Ryan Morini, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program
Office hours: Pugh 247, TBD
Juanita Duque, Center for Latin American Studies and SPOHP

The course website is on Canvas, at elearning.ufl.edu. If you have trouble accessing it, please contact the instructors, or the UF Help Desk at (http://helpdesk.ufl.edu/).

**Required Texts:**
*Additional readings (which may include videos, etc.) will be available on Canvas.

Menchú, Rigoberta, and Elisabeth Burgos-Debray. *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman from Guatemala.*


**Description:**
This course critically reevaluates history through testimonio, challenging the myth of exceptionalism by listening to the voices of marginalized peoples from throughout the Americas. These accounts offer us openings to examine the destructive and contradictory nature of capitalism, opening a space for dialogue on changes within or alternatives to the current system that could accommodate all peoples of the world. In this course, we seek to break out of and transcend narrow conceptions of objectivity that dehumanize people and reduce them to subjects for study or numbers for calculation.

We pursue this reevaluation through testimonio because it helps us to break from and critically deconstruct the hegemony of dominant narratives by listening to the voices of those who have suffered the most without being heard. While testimonio has sometimes been understood as a specific literary genre spanning the divide between orality and writing, in this course we approach its liminality as a key to understanding it less as a definable genre than as an adaptable tool for breaking the silences imposed on marginalized peoples and groups. Testimonio has been an invaluable form of expression in the face of marginalization and oppression.
Testimonio is not exclusively the domain of women, but women have provided some of the strongest voices in testimonio, speaking out urgently about injustices faced by their communities. This perhaps more than anything helps to emphasize why testimonio is different from typical oral history/life history interviews, as well as from genres such as autobiography that are traditionally structured through the linear progressive development of the individual: testimonio challenges distinctions between the individual who is speaking and the collective that they speak from, and is more often driven by the direct action-fomenting power of storytelling than meditative or historically- ‘informative’ goals unto themselves.

This course is therefore not simply about a genre, but about the potential for intervention and for real change that goes beyond the limits of the academy. If we are really listening to the voices in the texts from this course, we are not simply thinking about parsing particularities of genre, but about how we can envision and work toward alternative futures that are more just and equitable than the world in which we currently reside.

**Course objectives:**
Students in this course will:
- Become familiar with testimonio as a tool for expression to open spaces for dialogue
- Sharpen skills in recognizing and confronting power asymmetries
- Develop critical understanding of the relationship between orality, literacy, narrative, and voice, especially as these are entangled with gender, race, sexuality, etc.
- Approach a people’s history of the Americas that meaningfully includes marginalized voices
- Learn about women’s and men’s roles in Indigenous and Black activism and resistance throughout the Americas

**UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND RESOURCES**

**Attendance and make-ups**
Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found in the online catalog at: https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx.

**Accommodations**
Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. For more information see http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc.

**Course Evaluations**
Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at https://evaluations.ufl.edu. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results.

Academic Integrity

Suggested wording: “UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (http://www.dso.ufl.edu/secr/process/student-conduct-honorcode/) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Resources Available to Students

Health and Wellness

- U Matter, We Care: umatter@ufl.edu; 392-1575
- Counseling and Wellness Center: http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx; 392-1575
- Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS): Student Health Care Center; 392-1161
- University Police Department: http://www.police.ufl.edu/; 392-1111 (911 for emergencies)

Academic Resources

- E-learning technical support: Learningsupport@ufl.edu; https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml; 352-392-4357 (opt. 2)
- Career Resource Center: Reitz Union; http://www.crc.ufl.edu/; 392-1601
- Library Support: http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask
- Teaching Center: Broward Hall; 392-2010 or 392-6420
- Writing Studio: 302 Tigert Hall; http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/; 846-1138

Procedure for Conflict Resolution

Any classroom issues, disagreements or grade disputes should be discussed first between the instructor and the student. If the problem cannot be resolved, please contact your Undergraduate or Graduate Coordinator or Department Chair. Be prepared to provide documentation of the problem, as well as all graded materials for the semester. Issues that cannot be resolved departmentally will be referred to the University Ombuds Office (http://www.ombuds.ufl.edu; 392-1308) or the Dean of Students Office.
Assignments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due date</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and participation</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion facilitation</td>
<td>As scheduled</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerging forms reflection paper</td>
<td>Sun, Oct 21, at midnight</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final project</td>
<td>Presentation Week 15; Project Mon, Dec 10, midnight</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 200

Grading Scale
The grade scale for this course is as follows:
A = 100-93  C(S) = 76-73
A- = 92-90  C-(U) = 72-70
B+ = 89-87  D+ = 69-67
B = 86-83  D = 66-63
B- = 82-80  D- = 62-60
C+ = 79-77  E = 59-0

Note to enrolled undergraduates: A grade of C- will not be a qualifying grade for major, minor, Gen Ed, Gordon Rule or Basic Distribution Credit courses. For further information regarding passing grades and grade point equivalents, please refer to the Undergraduate Catalog at https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx.

Attendance and participation  (Weekly)  40 points (20%)
This is a seminar-style class, and consistent attendance and active participation in this course are critical. This entails not only showing up on time to class, but also doing the readings and whatever else is needed to be able to engage in the day’s activities with the rest of the class--in other words, not just showing up, but also contributing. We allow one unexcused absence without any penalty (not including a week when you are required to present something), but any more than one absence requires being able to provide a legitimate excuse or you will lose points. If you do expect to be unable to make it to class for any reason, please let us know as soon as you’re able and we’ll do our best to work with you.
There are at least three dates including specific activities as part of attendance, and your grade for those days will depend on your active participation in them:

**Week 5 (Sep 20) - Final Project Proposal Discussion**
Students will present their proposals for their final projects via informal classroom discussion, and turn in a 1-2 page written proposal for instructor feedback

**Week 11 (Nov 1) - TRC presentations**
Students will each research a different Truth and Reconciliation Commission and report to class on what they found as part of a comparative discussion

**Week 15 (Nov 29) - Final Project Draft Presentations**
Students will give short--but pithy--presentations/discussions of their final projects to facilitate feedback and intellectual exchange

**Discussion Facilitation (As selected) 40 points (20%)**
Students can select from Weeks 4-10 and 12-13; students can sign up during Week 2

Each week, one student will lead and facilitate class discussion. (If there are more students than available weeks, it may be possible for students to pair up.) The facilitator should do the readings especially carefully, and possibly do some background research to better lead discussion (instructors can offer advice to this end). The facilitator’s responsibilities include:

1) Generating a 1-pager with discussion questions, notes, and major themes
2) Guiding discussion with little to no intervention from the instructors

**Emerging forms comparative reflection (10/21) 50 points (25%)**
In this reflection paper, students will compare/contrast an emerging form of testimonio--e.g. the use of social media by Black Lives Matter, #SayHerName, #MeToo, Standing Rock, the Flint water crisis, Nicaraguan student activism, Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria, etc.--to a canonical/genre testimonio. The analysis should consider both form and function, looking substantively at the relationship between texts such as *I, Rigoberta Menchú* and newer movements such as testimonial forms of activism on Twitter. What connections can you draw between them? What differences are there? What can we learn by looking at them both as testimonio? What potential do each offer in creating real social change?

This paper should be submitted through the Assignments tab on Canvas as a Word file (.doc or .docx) in size 12 Times New Roman font or comparable, double-spaced, with 1” margins. All papers should include a Works Cited. Undergraduates should write 5-7 pages; graduate students should write 8-10. Page counts do not include Works Cited or title page, nor any images (e.g. screen shots from Twitter) that might make the actual document longer.
The Final Project, which is titled *Marginal Voices in a Community: Finding Alternative Histories*, has three components:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Schedule</th>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposal Discussion</td>
<td>9/20 (Week 5), in class</td>
<td>(participation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Presentation</td>
<td>11/29 (Week 15), in class</td>
<td>(participation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Project</td>
<td>12/10 at midnight</td>
<td></td>
<td>70 points (35%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The proposal discussions will be short, informal presentations given in class along with a printed 1-2 page proposal describing your vision for your final project, including main topic and methods.

The project presentations will be short, semi-formal presentations given in class where your peers will offer feedback on your work and you can share ideas, readings, and strategies. The final project itself will be due on Monday, December 10 by midnight on Canvas.

The main idea for this project is to get some firsthand experience creating a testimonio. You will not be able to do a full-blown testimonio for the course, but this assignment is about working directly with the narratives of people from marginalized or oppressed groups to work on ways of sharing those narratives more widely in pursuit of social justice. The assignment can result in a paper, but could also include artistic elements, and could be composed partly or possibly entirely as a podcast. Students will need to consult with the instructors to determine the nature and scope of their projects, and we will periodically devote class time to giving brief updates.

Possible topics could include (but are not at all limited to): racial politics of housing development and gentrification in Gainesville; state erasure of Native presence in Florida; immigration and policy disparities between Cubans and Haitians; La Casita and/or IBC (and/or Latinx and Black histories at UF); etc. *Topics are not limited to Florida. They do require that you are able to find examples of people’s direct testimony, so secondary research is not enough for this assignment. However, you are welcome to use the interviews in SPOHP’s archives, as well as any number of other public archives worldwide.*

Required components of the assignment:
- Oral history narratives/direct testimony, featured prominently in extended verbatim quotations
- Background research to better understand the context of the narratives
- Reflexive element considering why you chose the topic, why you approached it as you did
- Comparison between narrators’ testimony and official discourses
- Conclusions on the importance of your ‘para-testimonial’ work, and discussion of what a future researcher could do to make the research stronger

**WEEK 1 (August 23)**
Introductions to the class and each other
In-class videos and discussion

**WEEK 2 (August 30)**
Thinking about the history of testimonials and resistance in the Americas
Mignolo, Walter
2011 Epistemic Disobedience and the Decolonial Option: A Manifesto

Guaman Poma de Ayala (excerpt, and consult link)

Winnemucca, Sarah. 1883. Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims. (Excerpts)
Chapter 1 (http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/winnemucca/piutes/piutes.html)

WEEK 3 (September 6)
Guatemalan testimonio

Our Culture Is Our Resistance (excerpts)

Suggested/additional:
Arias, Arturo, ed. 2001. The Rigoberta Menchú Controversy. (Selections)

WEEK 4 (September 13)
I, Rigoberta, cont’d, thinking further about the implications of the book’s legacy
Defining and understanding “testimonio” as a complex genre

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. “Can the Subaltern Speak?”
Spivak 1996, “Subaltern Talk- Interview with the Editors” (optional/suggested)
Campbell, Sue. 2003. “Framing Women’s Testimony: Narrative Position and Memory Authority.”
Chapter 3 of Relational Remembering: Rethinking the Memory Wars.

WEEK 5 (September 20)
Revisiting the history of testimonials and resistance in the Americas, and our ability to envision alternative futures.

FINAL PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE--in-class discussion


**WEEK 6 (September 27)**

Barnet, Miguel, and Esteban Montejo. 1966. *Biografía de un cimarrón*.


**WEEK 7 (October 4)**


*Suggested readings:*


**WEEK 8 (October 11) [Juanita and Ryan in Montreal]**


Arundhati Roy, “Come September” (44 min): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fHz8cpULupo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fHz8cpULupo)

**WEEK 9 (October 18)**

Hispanic/Latinx testimonios

*New forms of testimonio reflection due Sun, Oct 21*


My Name is Story- Aurora Levins Morales (pp. 100-103)

Welcome to the Ivory Tower - Latina Anónima (pp. 218-224)

*Suggested*


Cruz, Cindy. 2001. Testimonial Narratives of Queer Street Youth: Toward an Epistemology of a
WEEK 10 (October 25)
Chile

Partnoy, A. *The Little School*
NPR interview with Alice Partnoy,

Nueva trova y nueva canción as testimonio
“Sobre la Nueva Canción”
https://folkways.si.edu/la-nueva-cancion-new-song-movement-south-america/latin-world-struggle-protest/music/article smithsonian

Songs by Violeta Parra, Victor Jara, Mercedes Sosa, Silvio Rodriguez, and others

WEEK 11 (November 1)
Truth and Reconciliation Commissions

Fernandes, Sujatha. 2017. *Curated Stories: The Uses and Misuses of Storytelling.* (Excerpts)
*Each student looks at a different example of a TRC & presents on it, e.g. Guatemala, El Salvador, Chile, Peru, Argentina, Canadian Indian Residential Schools, etc.

*Suggested:*

WEEK 12 (November 8)

First Stories, “Two-Spirited” (6:49)
https://www.nfb.ca/film/first_stories_two_spirited/

Simpson, Leanne. “How to Steal a Canoe.” (https://youtu.be/dp5oGZ1r60g)
WEEK 13 (November 15)
Eco-testimonios; testimonials and environmental justice
In-class videos

*Aluna* (Kogi) [https://youtu.be/hRgTtrQOiR0](https://youtu.be/hRgTtrQOiR0) (1 hr, 27 min)

WEEK 14 (Nov 22) NO CLASS

WEEK 15 (November 29)
Final project presentations

WEEK 16 (December 6) NO CLASS

WEEK 17 FINALS WEEK

**FINAL PROJECT DUE DEC 10**