Oral Histories: Voting While Black and Female in Nashville
Maymester 2020

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Course Description

2020 marks the centennial of the ratification of the 19th amendment to the American constitution, which was hailed as closing the suffrage gap so that all Americans could vote. As history demonstrates, however, suffrage remained and still remains out of reach for many citizens of this country, most of whom are African-American. Jim Crow laws, voter suppression laws and movements, and the frustrations associated with gerrymandering have disfranchised generations of African-American citizens, men and women. During this centennial year celebrating women’s suffrage, this course will investigate the real-life voting experiences, opinions, and struggles of African-American women in Nashville.

Students in this course will recruit interview participants, conduct interviews, and create an oral history database of African-American women of all ages reflecting on suffrage. We will construct a framework of voices that consider the following:

- The role of civic engagement in identity and identity construction
- The socializing conditions that create political identity
- Stories of voting in contemporary and historic Nashville
- The intergenerational transmission of stories and perspectives that shape and inform the contemporary voter

Course Requirements

This is a course devoted to oral history collection, transcription, and housing. There are many steps to the process:

1. Research in Voting Rights and Access in Nashville
2. Training in Interview Ethics
3. Construction of Interview Questions and Scripts
4. Training in Recording Devices
5. Database Construction
6. Recruitment of Interview Participants
7. In-Person Interviews
8. If possible, Collection of Artifacts
9. Transcription
10. Database Upload and Transfer of Transcripts to the Vanderbilt Library
11. Follow-Up with Interview Participants

**Course Rules**

**Plagiarism:** All incidents of plagiarism, academic dishonesty, or fabrication of data will be handled in accordance with Vanderbilt’s Honor System. The minimum penalty is an F for the entire course and may extend to suspension or expulsion from Vanderbilt. If you ever have questions concerning academic honesty, contact me immediately.

**Attendance Policy:** Maymesters are intensive and fast-paced. This Maymester is particularly rigorous; due to the interview schedule and the ethical requirements of accurate transcription, every hour of class is essential. Please talk to me if you anticipate any absences or schedule conflicts.

**Schedule**

**Week 1:** History, Interview Questions, Interview Ethics, and Database Construction

**Week 2:** Interviews

**Week 3:** Transcription and Transcription Review

**Week 4:** Final Transcription Review and Presentation of Results