Community Engaged Learning and the Future of Higher Education: Rust-Belt Responses
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OHLA is a multi-year initiative of the Great Lakes Colleges Association’s Expanding Collaboration Initiative, supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

We use oral history and tools from the digital humanities to foster community-based and archives-informed learning across the colleges of the GLCA/GLAA.
MISSION

OHLA promotes alternative approaches to teaching and learning by:

• testing replicable frameworks for high impact practices
• animating liberal arts learning outcomes in small teaching-focused colleges through interview-based community learning
• building public-facing multi-media repositories of faculty-student learning
WHAT MAKES “ORAL HISTORY” A PREMIER METHODOLOGY FOR FIELDWORK IN HUMANITIES RESEARCH?

HOW CAN COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING BE MORE THAN OBSERVATIONAL & REFLECTIVE?

CAN ‘DEEP LEARNING” BE STRUCTURED FOR A DIVERSE ARRAY OF STUDENTS?
WHAT IS ORAL HISTORY?

- Informed consent is the guiding logic of oral history practice
- Amplifying voices, bearing against erasure, building diverse archives
- Grounded in a phenomenological-hermeneutic encounter with another
- Committed to making narratives available to other researchers
- Creates new primary source material
Practice—collecting

- Synthesizing best practices for oral history inquiry in higher education
- Articulating the nuances of copyright, FERPA, IRB, and related student privacy laws
- Sharing curricula and case studies; project planning resources
Pedagogy— supports for getting students out of the classroom and into the community (or the archive)

- Structuring community-based learning through key phases of the oral history process
- Emphasizing the importance of community partnerships (soft skills)
- Harnessing platforms from the digital humanities to use as pedagogical tools back in the classroom (OHMS)
Publication—

• Champion faculty review criteria & new forms of scholarly publishing

• Curate pathways through hyperlinked archival collections and experiment with new forms of digital storytelling

• Pilot a shared thematic repository across GLCA/GLAA institutions
OHLA provides micro-funding for:

- faculty projects with a curricular tie
- student-driven oral history research
- authorship of case studies describing exemplary collaboration models and white papers on pedagogical strategies
The OHLA Method engages

- HIPs
- URSCA
- LEAP’s Integral Learning rubric
- High-stakes research
- Research Skill Development Framework
The Research Skill Development Framework (Willison and O'Regan, 2007)

- identifying questions to pursue
- applying appropriate methods to collect data/information
- evaluating and organizing data
- synthesizing and analyzing collected data, and
- Communicating the results with an awareness of associated ethical and social issues
Higher education is in a period of intense introspection and educators are striving to find new means to achieve greater outcomes and more deeply engage students in their educational experience.

Across teaching-focused campuses, faculty are challenged to innovate and experiment with pedagogies outside or beyond the centuries-old lecture format (which research suggests too often fails to engage first-generation students and those from underserved communities) into something more interactive and immersive.
OHLA PHASES

OHLA Collective

Collection

Curation

Publishing

Training Institute

Pedagogical Reflection

CFPs

Tutorials/Resources
FACULTY & STUDENT PROJECTS: A GLIMPSE
NORIKO SUGIMORI @ KALAMAZOO
Itsuki Nakagaki

Noriko Sugimori, Interviewer | Kalamazoo College NS02
Oral History in the Liberal Arts | War Memories, International, Intergenerational Oral History Project

Noriko Sugimori: Where were you and what were you doing during the war?

Itsuki Nakagaki: I lived in a city named Sasebo in Nagasaki Prefecture. Sasebo is where my ancestors lived. My grandfather and father are both navy service people. I didn't think we would win the war because my father often commented on the difficulty of the situation. At that time, we did not live together. My father worked for the Navy Ministry in Tokyo. My grandfather left the navy and started working at a bank so he left home at around ten in the morning and came back before four. He often said that we definitely would not have an air raid, that this place would be fine because it is on the mountain.

I heard a rumor that the US Army would make a clean sweep of the neighborhood to build a living space for them. I don't remember who told me on the way back home, but I heard about this from a friend. I shared the rumor with my mother, but...
REGINA MARTIN
@DENISON
STUDENT PROJECTS
www.ohla.info
CLARA ROMÁN-ODIO
Professor of Spanish
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Latinos in Rural America (LiRA)

Community Engaged Learning and the Future of Higher Education: Rust-Belt Responses

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AAC&U Annual Meeting
Raising Our Voices: Reclaiming the Narrative on the Value of Higher Education
January 23-26, 2019, Atlanta, Georgia
**Objective**

To share a model whereby community-engaged learning (CEL) can help to shape environments in which people from different backgrounds, races, ethnicities, and generations engage as equals in conversations that can bridge the gown-town divide
Latinos in Rural America (LiRA)

Background / Demographic changes

• Latinos are driving a demographic transformation in Ohio

• Nearly every county across the state has seen their numbers increase in the last decade

• Yet many Ohioans know little about their neighbors who identify as Latino or Hispanic, despite their notable presence

https://development.ohio.gov/files/research/P7002.pdf
Latinos in Rural America (LiRA)

Project Overview

• What - Public Humanities Project
• How - Community-Engaged Learning
• Who - Research Team and SPAN 380 class
• Where - Traveling Exhibit Display at Multiple Venues
LiRA: A Bilingual Travelling Exhibit
La#nos in Rural America (LiRA)

Key Initial Questions / Challenges

• How to reach the local Latino community?
• How to make the project reciprocal?
• How to select narrators?
• How many interviews?
• Time table?
• How to measure learning / impact?
Latinos in Rural America (LiRA)

- Bridging into the community
- Face-to-Face & Community Questionnaire
- Reciprocity
- 15 interviews
- Project Calendar

Open Doors College Preparation Program

Free to download under a Creative Commons license @ http://digital.kenyon.edu/lkca_pub/1/
Latinos in Rural America (LiRA)

Examples of SPAN 380 CEL projects

• Translation of Interviews
• Archival Work in Digital Kenyon
• Bilingual Exhibit Brochure
• Primer for Cross-cultural Development
• Curriculum for the Open Doors College Preparation Program

Exhibit materials online @: https://digital.kenyon.edu/lkcaexhibit/
Student Responses / Testimonials

• Value of real community connection to ground meaning and authenticity in academic work.

“Each semester, I take classes related to social justice issues, and all too often, I find myself frustrated in how inapplicable the course material seems to be. Participating in the CEL project made me realize that community-engaged-learning does not mean you must compromise traditional academia. Rather, by creating the primer, I was able to learn course content and more importantly, assist a greater need in the community.”

-Hannah Celli, junior, Kenyon College
• The promise of replicating the project in other areas of the country as a way to increase intercultural understanding

“In order to better understand the immigrant experience, we have to read and expose ourselves to more of these traveling narratives. As a bilingual teacher serving in an underserved community in Dallas, I often reflect on the promise replicating this oral history project in other areas of the country has for increased intercultural contact and understanding within the United States.”

-P. Mota, 2016 Kenyon graduate
Student Responses / Testimonials

• Applying what is learned in academia to what is needed in society through civic engagement efforts.

“It is one thing to read the statistics, and quite another to sit with a student as they attempt to overcome years of struggling in a system that neither supports nor celebrates their unique background. Before this course, I thought of my college career as something that would prepare me to take on the world’s problems. My Spanish degree allowed me to study cultures from around the world, but it had never before challenged me to take on the problems facing Latinos/as ten minutes down the road. It is through taking on this leadership role that I have realized that college is not the time to study problems from afar, but engage with them head-on.”

-Mary Sturgis, senior, Kenyon College
Community Response

• Connections between local issues and national debates
  “Relevant study undertaken at the right time in the larger context of debates on immigration.”

• Embracing cultural difference
  “Love that it is bilingual. The variety of stories told also show the multiplicity of experiences—crossing age and socio economic spectrum.”

• Enjoying this form of learning
  “I really enjoyed learning about the Latinos/as in and around Kenyon College. It was insightful and inspiring to hear their stories and understand the difficulties of being a minority in rural Ohio.
  “Open dialogues, MORE EXHIBITS, Programs which support Latin@ children and educators who are culturally sensitive to these issues, equipped with the tools to provide support.”
LiRA Conclusions / Long-term Impact

- Oral history effective tool for documenting an alternative history
- Visibility & community voice to express challenges and aspirations
- CEL pedagogy:
  - strengthened undergraduate research
  - developed civic engagement and critical thinking
  - offered valuable learning to propel future civically-engaged careers
- Empowered first-generation students and their families
- PH & CEL created a context for the exchange of peoples and ideas that bolstered the university as a public good
LAURA REECK,
Professor of French and Chair, International Studies Program, Allegheny College
“A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy’s Future” (2009)

One of five essential actions for democracy’s future:

Advance a contemporary, comprehensive framework for civic learning – embracing U.S. and global interdependence – that includes historic and modern understandings of democratic values, capacities to engage diverse perspectives and people, and commitment to collective problem solving.
The Global Citizen Scholars @ Allegheny College

- Commitment to learn at the interface of civic engagement, global learning, and U.S diversity.
- Course over three semesters.
- One-year civic engagement commitment in Meadville.
- A local immersion experience.
- Language study and study abroad.
- Focus over three years on asylum-seeking and refugees relocating to the United States, namely in the “Rust Belt.”

@ https://sites.allegheny.edu/admissions/global-citizens-scholars/
The Global Citizen Scholars working with community partner Catholic Charities in Erie, PA
Oral history interviews with refugees in Erie, PA

Conversations across boundaries of identity [...] begin with the sort of imaginative engagement you get when you read a novel or watch a movie or attend to a work of art that speaks from some place other than your own. So I'm using the word 'conversation' not only for literal talk but also as a metaphor for engagement with the experience and ideas of others. (Appiah, Cosmopolitanism 85)
Video project by Erblin Shehu
Reflection: Refugees share key American values

When we did the home-visit, I asked what the family’s hopes were for the future. The husband said that he hopes to work as a janitor in a college to get his master’s degree and to support his family. His wife just wants to get her daughter back and hopefully get back to school. The husband hopes that by coming to America, that he and his daughter can get medical treatment for their conditions. I think the value of hope in America is important because the American Dream is the hope that all the hard work that you do pays off and you can support your family. Even though refugees come from all over the world, they still have the same values and hopes of Americans. -- Sherrell Daley
Reflection: No place substitutes for home

I came to a deeper understanding, that I must remember that many refugees have gone through a great loss. Even though many people frame the United States as a place many aspire towards, people do not want to leave their homes. Many had no desire to ever come here. I knew that on some level, but hearing that X would be willing to die just to be in his home for one more month really made me realize how deeply that sense of home and the feelings of displacement sat. -- Erin Zehr
Impact

Students: • Adjusted understanding of place and displacement  
    • New connections between regional, national, and international forces and phenomena  
    • Recognition of shared values and also recognition of wholly different experiences.

Refugees: • Recognition of importance of telling their stories  
    • Valorization of their experience  
    • Cultural exchange in their new cultural setting.
Questions? Comments?