



Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling
Centre d'histoire orale et de récits numérisés

Summer Institute: Oral History & Creative Practice May 12-26, 2025

Storytelling, as both an art and a practice, occupies a central role in many cultures. The evocative power of oral history has made a major impact in the worlds of public history, museum/curatorial practice, and the arts. Our inaugural Summer Institute in “Oral History & Creative Practice” – hosted by Concordia’s [“Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling”](#) (COHDS) – offers you an opportunity to develop an oral history project that aspires to the kind of public-facing research that has become synonymous with COHDS, including digital storytelling, podcasts, creative writing, visual arts media, and the performing arts.

This Summer Institute brings together graduate and senior undergraduate students, activists, artists, oral historians, and community members in a shared exploration of the intersection of oral history and creative practice. It will provide you with a strong grounding in the theory, methodology, and ethics of oral history while offering a space to “translate” your oral history research into works of research-creation. Participants will work with leading experts in the field; collaborate in workshops on oral history, storytelling, and research creation; and forge connections within an interdisciplinary group of peers.

As a field of inquiry, oral history has grown up on the margins. Oral history interviewing has been undertaken for many reasons: artistic; community-building; truth and reconciliation; political action; storytelling, preservation, and research. Common to these projects is a commitment to lending an ear to marginalized voices. This year’s institute is a blend of a traditional seminar that revolves around deep engagement with assigned readings and a workshop that affords us a space to reflect on interview dynamics, learn about best recording practices, and explore innovative and creative ways of interpreting life stories.

Week 1 of the Summer Institute is organized around five seminar modules that serve as an introduction to the theory and practice of oral history, including: Sharing Authority; Ethics in Research; Mapping Memories; Memory and Narrative; Oral History and Advocacy. You will engage in deep listening exercises and explore place-based storytelling in the form of audio-

walking tours such as the prize-winning “[Refugee Boulevard](#)” and “[Walking the Post-Industrial Lachine Canal](#).” Advanced workshops in audio-editing and digital media production will provide you with the technical and conceptual tools for your own interview and research practice.

Week 2 of the institute shifts to guided independent work undertaken within a community of practice. Closely accompanied by a team of mentors, you will develop an oral history project while conducting a life-story interview and producing a critical interview reflection. You will attend workshops on performing arts, creative writing, and oral history and photography to deepen your knowledge about oral history and creative practice. In conversation with award-winning COHDS affiliates, you have an opportunity to envision your own work of research creation.

Why Concordia?

As a cross-faculty research unit at Concordia University with nearly 300 affiliated members, COHDS has strengths in place-based storytelling, new and digital media as forms of public engagement, oral history research-creation, and community-grounded scholarship. Through COHDS, Concordia has emerged as a global leader in the field of oral history.

Who may apply?

We welcome all levels of experience. The Summer Institute is oriented towards graduate students and senior undergraduate students (from Canada and beyond) as well as researchers, activists, and community members who wish to learn more about the theory, practice, and ethics of oral history and are invested in going public with their work.

When and where is the institute held?

The Summer Institute will convene for ten days in Spring 2025 (May 12-26, 9:00-17:00). There is no class on Monday, May 19, which is a statutory holiday. The institute is hosted at Concordia’s “Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling,” 1400 De Maisonneuve Blvd. W. on the 10th floor of the SGW Library Building (LB-1019 & LB-1042).

How much does it cost?

Concordia Students: Concordia will charge program participants, registered in Concordia degree programs (Bachelor’s, Master’s or PhD), for **3 credits** of undergraduate or graduate tuition.

Graduate students from other Québec universities must submit requests for courses through the [Inter-University Agreement \(AEHE/BCI\)](#) process.

Graduate students from Canadian universities outside of Québec must complete the [Graduate Transfer Agreement between Canadian Universities \(CAGS\) form](#) or obtain a letter (or form) of authorization from their home university. This document must be submitted to the degree program offering the course in which they are interested.

International students: Graduate students from universities outside of Canada must contact [Concordia International](#) if their home university has an exchange agreement with Concordia. They will be considered as Visiting Exchange students. If no exchange agreement exists, the student must obtain a letter of permission from their home university stating which courses they are permitted to take. The students must also provide information on their home university, official transcripts and immigration documents.

Community members: We have set aside a handful of spots for community members who must pay a registration fee of \$200. Community participants will receive a certificate of attendance upon successful completion of the institute.

How to prepare?

In preparation for the institute, participants are expected to dedicate approximately **five full days** to complete pre-course readings on the seminar modules. You are also required to listen in advance to two life stories, drawn from the extensive oral history collection of COHDS and made available on our Moodle course site. All participants are expected to attend one preparatory meeting in mid-April.

What to expect?

Course assignments are designed to encourage deep and exploratory work on your own project while fostering engagement with the work of your peers. All coursework is contained within the two-week institute, with two exceptions:

- You are expected to submit a public-facing research outcome by Monday, June 23rd, accompanied by a written, scholarly reflection.
- You are invited to participate in a *Journée d'étude* on "Oral History & Creative Practice" in September 2025 (in-person/online). Participation in this day of reflection, exchange, and discussion is meant to offer you a capstone experience while giving back to the COHDS community that has so generously embraced this inaugural Summer Institute.

How to apply?

Your application must include the following:

- **Letter of Intent** (500-750 words). Please describe why you wish to participate in the Summer Institute. Tell us why you are interested in oral history and what it would mean for you to explore the relationship between oral history and creative practice. – If you have a current oral history project, please include a brief project description. If your goal is to develop a new project, please include a brief proposal of your ideal project.
- **Curriculum Vitae** (CV) – 1-2 pages.
- **Transcript** (for student applicants only). Please include a copy of your most recent transcript, whether from Concordia or another institution. Unofficial Concordia transcripts are acceptable.

Please submit your application to Donna.Whittaker@concordia.ca by **Sunday, March 23, 23:59 EST**

For any academic inquiries or additional questions about the Summer Institute in “Oral History & Creative Practice,” please reach out to Dr. [Barbara Lorenzkowski](mailto:Barbara.Lorenzkowski@concordia.ca), Director of the Summer Institute and Lead Co-Director of Concordia’s “Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling” at Barbara.Lorenzkowski@concordia.ca