

Introduction to Sociology SSS100.1958

Professor Lynne Turner

Short Essay #2 – Oral Interview

This assignment is due by email to the professor at lturner@gradcenter.cuny.edu no later than Friday, April 19 at 11:59pm.

This is a 450 word essay based upon an approximately 30 minute oral interview of somebody you know with experience related to Inequality/Labor, Racial justice, Migration or Gender justice.

Goals of this short essay are:

- Learn from a personal story about how your interviewee experienced your chosen social problem
- AND what they did to address it (individually or as part of an organization/movement)
- AND to tie what you learn from the interview back to course content

Essay Structure:

- Introduction, including your primary research question
- Interview content based upon responses to your interview questions. Use both quotes and paraphrase to synthesize interview content. List key questions and responses below it - you may combine questions to best synthesize the responses that you received. ***You are required to include 3 direct quotes from your interviewee of approximately 25 words each.***
- Paragraph tying what you learned from your interview back to course content (readings and/or class lecture/discussion). ***Include at least one citation from course readings.***
- Concluding paragraph - Summarize what you learned and close with 1-2 sentences providing your perspective about its significance.

Short essay #2 will be assigned a letter grade for quality and is worth 25% of your overall course grade. The grade will be based principally on essay content and secondarily on quality of writing. You are encouraged to utilize the LaGuardia Writing Center as a resource; bring me their note that you attended and receive 2 points extra credit.

Sample Interview Questions. These are based on questions we generated in class and a few others. Adapt and/or add questions as needed to fit your situation.

1. Everyone should ask for – name, age, where they were born and where they live now.
2. What has been your personal experience with injustice or discrimination based upon race? (can substitute “gender” or “labor inequality” or “injustice at work” or “migration”)

Or

Have you encountered inequality or injustice at work? If so, what took place? (can substitute race or gender)

2. What steps have you taken make things better (or to address this situation)?
3. Have you been part of organizations or movements to change this situation? (If yes, what did you do as part of this movement/organization?)
4. What does racial justice mean to you Or What changes would help bring about racial justice? (can substitute gender or labor justice/equality)
5. A few specific questions related to migration:
 - a. Why did you come to the United States? (also ask what country they came from)
 - b. What was the process of migrating? Was it a difficult process? If so, in what way was it difficult?
 - c. How was the adjustment to living in the United States?
 - d. How has being an immigrant impacted your identity (and/or life circumstances?)
 - e. Have you been part of movements or organizations to improve life for immigrants in the United States? (if so, what did you do...)

10 TIPS FOR INTERVIEWERS – adapted from UNC Southern Oral History Program resources page - <https://sohp.org/files/2012/04/10-Interview-tips.pdf>

1. Choose a quiet locale and properly position your microphone/phone/voice recorder.
2. Ask one question at a time. State your questions as directly as possible.
3. Ask open-ended questions--questions that begin with "why, how, where, what kind of," etc. Avoid "yes or no" questions other than to clarify. Be prepared with follow-up questions as needed to elicit a further description of what took place.
4. Start with non-controversial questions.
5. Understand that periods of silence will occur. These are useful periods of reflection and recollection for your interviewee.
6. Avoid interrupting the interviewee.
7. If the interviewee strays away from the topic in which you are interested, don't panic. Sometimes the best parts of the interview come about this way. If you feel the digression has gone too far afield, gently steer the interviewee back to the topic with your next question.
8. Be respectful of the interviewee. Use body language to show you are interested in what he or she has to say. Remember, the interviewee is giving you the gift of his or her memories, experiences, and time.
9. After the interview, thank the interviewee for sharing his or her experiences.
10. Don't use the interview to show off your knowledge, charm, or other attributes. Remember, "good interviewers never shine--only their interviews do."