

MHRD Scheme on Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN)

Course Title

**(166025F02) Oral History and the Art of Listening**

To be conducted by Department of Comparative Literature

Jadavpur University, Kolkata 700 032

**9-16 November 2016, 2016**

**Overview**

In the strengthening of democratic culture, one of the central concerns has to do with foregrounding the perspectives and the alternative knowledge systems of marginalized populations and endangered cultures. In India, large sections of these constituencies express themselves in oral rather than literary forms, be it by choice or for lack of formal literacy; thus expertise in the “art of listening” to oral narratives becomes necessary for accessing their standpoints. While the importance of engaging with cultures of orality is now widely acknowledged, yet systematic training in this field is rare.

On the other hand, one of the central concerns of Comparative Literature has to do with the relationship between “literature and the other arts”, and research in orality is clearly increasing in institutions of higher education, in both literature and social science departments. Yet, there is still very little awareness of the ways in which the insights of literary studies may enhance the “art of listening” to orally narrated perspectives of lived histories.

This interdisciplinary course, “Oral History and the Art of Listening” thus brings together vital concerns of both democratic culture and comparative literary studies. It focuses on ways in which the approaches of literary studies may enrich our understanding of oral resources of society, culture and history. Located at the interface of literature and history, it will offer valuable training to students and researchers in orality, both in the humanities and in the social sciences. It will be taught by one of the most internationally renowned experts in the field of orality - Professor Alessandro Portelli, scholar of literary studies, whose contribution to the fields of folklore, culture and oral history has been widely acclaimed as decisive. Members of the host department of Comparative Literature at Jadavpur University will draw upon their own expertise in the field to contribute to the discussions.

The course has been planned and offered as per the norms set by the Department of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University, Kolkata.

**Objectives**

The primary objectives of the course are as follows:

- i) Exposing participants to connections between orality, imagination, memory and history.
- ii) Generating awareness of the relationships between narrative form, aesthetics, subjectivity and memory in the shaping of historical perspectives.
- iii) Enhancing the capability of the participants to build sensitive and self-reflexive relationships between interviewer and interviewee etc.
- iv) Highlighting ethical issues and democratic concerns; providing exposure to practical problems and possible solutions, through case studies and actual histories.

**Tentative Schedule**

9 November 2016 (Wednesday)

Lecture 1&2: 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM — Prof. Alessandro Portelli on “Oral History, memory, and imagination”

10 November 2016 (Thursday)

Lecture 3&4: 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM — Prof. Alessandro Portelli on “Oral History and the art of dialogue”

11 November 2016 (Friday)

Lecture 5&6: 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM — Prof. Alessandro Portelli On “the uses of memory: memory as monument, as reflex, as disturbance”

12 November 2016 (Saturday)

Lecture 7&8: 12:00 PM to 2:00 PM — Prof. Alessandro Portelli on “History, myth, ritual and symbol: the massacre at the Fosse Ardeatine and its memory”

Participants’ presentation/ Written Test: 2:30 PM-3:30 PM

13 November 2016 (Sunday)

14 November 2016 (Monday — Guru Nanak Jayanti, university holiday)

15 November 2016 (Tuesday)

Lecture 9&10: 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM — Prof. Alessandro Portelli on “A case study: Harlan County, USA”

16 November 2016 (Wednesday)

4:00 PM to 5:00PM — General Discussion & Participants’ feedback (will be moderated by Prof. Alessandro Portelli)

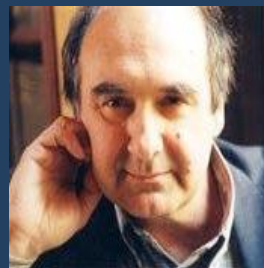
5:00 PM to 6:00PM — Written test/ paper presentation

6:00 PM to 6:30PM — evaluation & distribution of certificates

Host faculty members will be present in every session as respondents and will participate in post-lecture discussions.

<b>Duration</b>	<b>1 week</b> 9-12 November, and 15-16 November, 2016: 4 pm to 6-30 pm every day.
<b>You should attend if...</b>	You are a College or a University teacher, M.Phil-PhD Scholar or a Masters student.
<b>Fees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Individual from abroad: US \$500</li><li>• Individual from India: College and University Teacher: Rs. 500/- M.Phil-Ph.D Scholar: Rs. 500/- Masters Student: Free</li><li>• Number of participants for the course will be limited to fifty (50% will be selected from outside Jadavpur University).</li><li>• Fees include all instructional materials. No TA/ DA and accommodation will be provided to the participants. Accommodation for foreign participants may be facilitated. That is subject to prior intimation and availability.</li></ul>
<b>Apply with CV within 7 October, 2016 to...</b>	<b>Registration</b> <b>Step 1: One Time Registration</b> Candidate will have to get one time registration first to the GIAN Portal of IIT Kharagpur using the following steps: 1. Create login and password at <a href="http://www.gian.iitkgp.ac.in/GREGN/index">http://www.gian.iitkgp.ac.in/GREGN/index</a> 2. Login and complete the Registration Form. 3. Select Courses 4. Confirm your application and payment information. 5. Pay Rs. 500/- (non-refundable) through the online payment gateway. 6. Download and print a “pdf file” of your enrolment application form for your personal records and for a copy of the same to be sent to the Course Coordinator. <b>Step 2: Institute Registration</b> Interested candidates are requested to send their applications with GIAN enrolment fees, CV, a short note (max. 200 words) on why they wish to take this course, and a Demand Draft of the course fee applicable to the candidate in favour of “Registrar, Jadavpur University” to the course coordinator by 27 October 2016. Only the DDs of candidates admitted to the course will be encashed. The application and supportive documents may be sent in advance to the course coordinator. <b>Contact:-</b> Dr. Sujit Kumar Mandal (Coordinator and Host Faculty); <a href="mailto:sujitkumar.mandal@gmail.com">sujitkumar.mandal@gmail.com</a> , +918017884827/ 09432661243 (M) Department of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University, Kolkata- 700 32, WB, India <b>Last date for application: 27 October, 2016</b>
	<b>Professor Alessandro Portelli</b> is an Italian oral historian, scholar of American literature and culture, writer for the daily newspaper <i>il manifesto</i> , and musicologist. He is a professor of Anglo-American literature at the University of Rome La Sapienza. In the United States he is best known for his oral history work, which has compared workers' accounts of industrial conflicts in Harlan County, Kentucky and Terni, Italy. His publications in English include - <i>They Say in Harlan County: An Oral</i>

## Teaching Faculty



Professor Alessandro  
Portelli

*History* – New York, Oxford University Press, 2010 (Weatherford Prize, 2012); *The Order Has Been Carried Out*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004 (“Book of the Year”, Oral History Association of the United States, 2005); *The Text and the Voice. Writing, Speaking and Democracy in American Literature*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1994; and *The Death of Luigi Trasulli and Other Stories. Form and Meaning in Oral History*, State University of New York Press, Albany, New York, 1991 (Honorable Mention, Chicago Folklore Prize, 1991).

2013 – Degree Honoris Causa, Universidad de La Plata, Argentina

1981-2012 Professor of American Literature - Dipartimento di Anglistica -Università degli Studi di Roma "La Sapienza"

2012 – Premio Tenco (award as cultural operator and organizer)

— Mellon Visiting Fellow, University of Cape Town, South Africa

2011 – Weatherford Award (Best Book on Appalachia, USA) for *The Order has Been Carried Out*

– Onofri Award for travel literature and reporting for *America profonda*

2006-7, City Councillor; Council’s delegate for historical memory

2005-6, Simon Visiting Professor, Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in the Arts, U.of Manchester.

2005-2009, Honorary Professor, School of Divinity, History and Philosophy, University of Aberdeen.

2002-2008, Rome Mayor’s adviser for historical memory

1999 – Premio Viareggio (Book award for historical writing) for *L’ordine è già stato eseguito*

1972-to date - Chair, Circolo Gianni Bosio (“for critical study and alternative presence of non hegemonic cultures”)

- Board member, Rome Institute for Resistance History, 1977-2003

- "James Still Fellow", University of Kentucky, Lexington, 1983

- Editor, *Acoma*, international journal of American Studies

- Board member, *Appalachian Journal*

- Founder and co-editor, *Acoma*, International Journal of American Studies- 1994 - 2011

<http://oralhistorycentre.ca/alessandro-portelli>

<http://alessandroportelli.blogspot.in/>

<http://www.lettere.uniroma1.it/en/users/alessandro-portelli>

## Host Faculty



Professor Samantak  
Das

**Professor Samantak Das** teaches in the Department of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University (JU). He was Executive Head of *Bichitra*: the online Tagore variorum [<http://bichitra.jdvu.ac.in>], created by the School of Cultural Texts and Records (SCTR), JU. He is also Joint Coordinator of the Rabindranath Studies Centre, JU; member of the Joint Working Group (Ecology), Project E-QUAL, a European Union-funded international collaborative project on undergraduate education [<http://www.projectequal.net>]; and member of the editorial board, *Jadavpur Journal of Comparative Literature* (JJCL).

He was written and lectured extensively on 19th-century literature, translation, the relationship between the biological sciences and literature, environment, ecology and education. Apart from his academic work, he has for long been involved in voluntary work in rural West Bengal, primarily in the areas of education and training for self-employment.



Dr. Sujit Kumar Mandal

**Dr. Sujit Kumar Mandal** teaches in the Department of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University. He has been a member of the Academic Committee of the School of Media, Communication and Culture, JU, and is a member of the editorial board, *Jadavpur Journal of Comparative Literature*. Mandal writes on oratures and traditional performances and has presented his work in many seminars and conferences. He has completed extensive field work on a number of traditional forms and edited several volumes, including *Banabibir Pala* (Gangchil, 2009) and *Dukhushyam Chitrakar: Patua Sangit* (Gangchil, 2010). He has also published an annotated volume of Rabindranath Tagore’s translations, *Bideshi Phuler Guchchha: Rabindranath Thakur-krita Abharatiya Kabitar Anubad* (Papyrus, 2011). An active translator, who has many published pieces, he writes primarily in Bangla. He has recently collaborated with his students to develop a fieldwork-based online platform on *palagaan* [<http://palagaan.org>].