

An Oral History Project on the First Years of Coeducation at Yale

Our Goal: Capturing the History

The Oral History Project (OHP) seeks to record, make available to researchers and others, and preserve an archive of high-quality audio-visual and audio accounts of the early years of coeducation at Yale, as experienced by the women who lived it. The project will record individual and group first-person narratives, with a primary focus on the first three classes of undergraduate women - in the Classes of '71, '72, and '73 - who arrived at Yale in September 1969.

Framing Principles:

- Our hope is to interview as many members of the first three classes of women - as well as select others - as time, personnel, funding, and geography allow. Rather than focus on “recognizable names,” we hope to interview a broad cross-section of women with diverse backgrounds, interests, and life experiences.
- We wish to encourage interviewees to tell their own stories about whatever they believe future generations should know about the early years of coeducation in Yale College and the individuals who made it happen.
- We want these interviews to be as open and unbiased as possible: we hope to avoid constricting material to pre-determined narratives or tailoring histories to fit present-day themes.
- The context of the world in 1969 is crucial to understanding these stories and events at Yale during that time.

Products of the Oral History Project:

- The collection of whole digital interviews, minimally edited (e.g., to eliminate awkward intervals), will be archived in the Manuscripts and Archives division of Sterling Memorial Library at Yale where they will be available to library users and researchers.
- Transcripts of these whole interviews will be created to facilitate access and use. These transcripts will also be available at Sterling Memorial Library.
- Select portions of individual interviews may be used to create short themed videos – and possibly a micro-website consisting of a collection of such short videos - for the *50WomenAtYale150* website or related Yale media where this material will be publicly accessible.
- Composite “reels” of excerpts from the interviews that can be shown at gatherings and events during the 2019 – 2020 anniversary year and beyond, may also be created.
- Although a longer film or documentary made from the collection of videos is not currently contemplated, there is a possibility that one may be created in the future.

Interviewing the women who arrived in September 1969 in the Classes of '71, '72, and '73:

Professionally-recorded interviews have been offered in several settings:

- On-campus during the reunion of the Class of 1973 in May/June 2018

- On scheduled dates in a number of U.S. “hub cities” during the 2018 – 2019 year
- At “The First Women in Yale College: A Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration” weekend September 19-22, 2019

We plan to continue conducting interviews in spring 2020:

- We hope to identify new filming dates and locations for spring 2020 in a small number of U.S cities where concentrations of interested classmates make sending a camera crew feasible. When available, information will be emailed to women in the three classes and posted to the website.
- For women who cannot access formal recording options, we are exploring the use of Skype and cell phone video interviews – or audio interviews – that can be transmitted to the project. We hope to have a more detailed plan and guidelines to facilitate this option at a later date.

Some useful information for prospective interviewees:

- In person interviews in hub cities will be scheduled in advance by Yale staff for a specific time and location.
- Cell phone or Skype interviews will be scheduled by the participants.
- Generally, interviews will be 45 minutes in length. A shorter timeframe is also possible for those who wish it.
- We anticipate that many/most interviews will be of individuals - but small groups of 2 - 3 are also welcome to participate.
- Interviewees will be asked to sign a release form before recording; the form is the standard Yale release form.
- No other preparation for the interview is necessary. However, we will provide some “big-picture” questions, as well as some related “food for thought” topics for those who schedule an interview and wish to consider potential topics beforehand. Ultimately, we want interviewees to be able to tell the stories they want to tell. These questions and topics can also be found on the website under “Prompts to Help Spark Memories.”

If you have any questions, you may email yalecoeducation50@yale.edu