

Voices of the Community

Interview Sephardic community members and contribute records to the database

Subject	History, Social Studies, Digital Humanities
Grade level	Secondary and undergraduate
Duration	Three-week project
Skills	Oral history, research ethics, structured data entry
Tools	Sephardi Spaces database (contributor access), recorder, world map

Overview

In this multi-week project, students work as oral historians. Each student interviews a member of a Sephardic community (a relative, neighbor, community elder, or synagogue member) and turns that conversation into a structured biographical record for the Sephardi Spaces database. Documentation creates history. Careful, ethical recording of living memory adds new evidence alongside what archives already hold, and student contributions help grow a public research resource.

Learning objectives

Students will be able to:

- Design and conduct an ethical oral history interview.
- Draw structured biographical and migration data out of a personal narrative.
- Enter a well-sourced record into the Sephardi Spaces database using its fields and conventions.
- Reflect on questions of memory, consent, and representation in public history.

Materials and tools

- Sephardi Spaces database (contributor or educational access, requested through the Contact page).
- Recording device or phone; optional transcription with an AI tool such as ChatGPT or otter.ai.
- Interview consent form and the class interview-question bank.
- Sephardi world map to geolocate the interviewee's family route.

Ethics and consent (read first)

Before any interview, students secure informed consent using the class consent form, explain that the record may appear in a public database, and let the interviewee review and approve what is submitted. Interviewees may decline any question or ask that details be withheld. No record is submitted without written permission.

Project sequence (about three weeks)

Week 1, prepare. Study one existing database record as a model. Draft 8 to 10 open-ended questions covering origins, languages spoken, migration route, work, and family. Complete a consent form and

practice with a partner.

Week 2, interview and transcribe. Conduct and record the interview, about 20 to 40 minutes. Transcribe key sections, optionally with an AI tool, and verify names, places, and dates with the interviewee.

Week 3, structure and submit. Map the narrative onto the database fields (name, dates, places, languages, occupation, sources), geolocate the route on the world map, and submit the record for review. Write a one-page reflection.

Deliverables

- One completed, source-cited database record submitted for review.
- The signed consent form and interview recording, kept privately per class policy.
- A one-page reflection on what memory adds to the historical record and where it complicates it.

Assessment

- Rubric focus: interview quality and ethics, accuracy and completeness of the record's fields, correct sourcing, and depth of reflection.
- Class extension: map all submitted records together to show the group's combined migration geography.

Differentiation

- **Support:** Provide a fill-in-the-blank record template and a fixed question bank.
- **Extension:** Students produce a short edited audio clip or a linked map story from their interview.
- **No local contact:** Pair students with a published memoir or archival testimony to build a source-based record.