

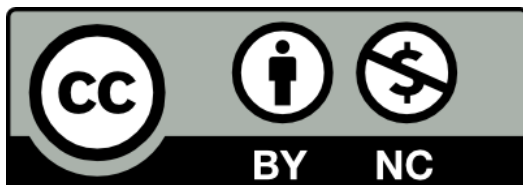


Improving Rural Interpreter Skills

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Module 3: Evolution of the sign language interpreting profession



Module content developed by Naomi Sheneman and Betty Colonomos
[ASL lecture](#) by Jennifer Rogers and Chris McQuaid

Module Overview & Objectives

Overview: This module gives participants different lenses on the history of the sign language interpreting profession. Participants will take into account all of those historical perspectives in order to determine how they will promote a deaf-centered interpreting future.

Learning Outcomes and Objectives

Upon Completion of this module participants will be able to:

1. Explain major events in the sign language interpreting profession in the United States
2. Describe some of the negative impacts of professionalization
3. Identify ways they can shift the future of sign language interpreting in the United States

Pre-Test

NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this pre-test

Answer the following questions:

1. Why is it important to know the history of the sign language interpreting profession in the United States?
2. What is the name of the national certifying body for interpreters in the United States?
3. Identify one negative impact of the professionalization of sign language interpreting.
4. What do you think should change for the future of interpreting?



Introduction

This module will give you an overview of various historical perspectives of the sign language interpreting profession in the United States, namely, the commonly told stories along with the less frequently told stories of Coda and Deaf interpreters as well as deaf consumers.

Histories, as we have seen in recent years, regarding marginalized groups are often told from a white, able-bodied perspective. We encourage that you all go into this module with open minds and hearts to learn the histories that are less known by the mainstream. It is the white, hearing individuals that became the gatekeepers in this profession. That needs to shift.

An interesting fact: the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) in 2019 (55 years after its founding) finally defined interpreting upon agreement among its members. One must ask what did interpreting mean in this 55-year period?

At the end of this module, you will be challenged to consider the information that you have reviewed in determining how you can promote changes that would shift the future of this profession.

GoReact Discussion: “A history or histories?”



NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this assignment

Original post directions:

Review the following resources:

1. [The Problem With History Classes](#)
2. [The Danger of a Single Story](#)

In your post, share the following:

1. A summary of the history of the sign language interpreting profession in the United States based on your existing knowledge (what you learned or were told).
2. What you learned from the two resources above and how both can be applied to the sign language interpreting profession.

Response post directions:

React to the post of one of your colleagues by asking clarifying questions, seeking additional information, or expressing an idea that encourages critical thinking and moves the conversation forward.

GoReact Discussion: Fant (1999) & Ball (2015)



NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this assignment

Original post directions:

View the following resources:

1. The [lecture video](#) about Lou Fant's (1990) book, *Silver threads: A personal look at the first twenty-five years of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf*.
2. Carolyn Ball's Street Leverage presentation [Does the Past Hold the Answer to the Future of Sign Language Interpreting](#).

In your post, share what you learned from those resources and if you have any further questions.

Response post directions:

React to the post of one of your colleagues by asking clarifying questions, seeking additional information, or expressing an idea that encourages critical thinking and moves the conversation forward.

GoReact Discussion: Other perspectives



NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this assignment

Original post directions:

- Review three articles from the Bilingual Mediation Center (Bienvenu, 1988; Levesque, 1991; & TBC, 1992).
- Watch the [Perspectives from Deaf People of Color on History of Interpreting and RID](#)

In your post, identify valuable nuggets you learned from those articles and the video.

Response post directions:

Review and respond to at least two other participants' proposed resources by asking clarifying questions, seeking additional information, or expressing an idea that encourages critical thinking and moves the conversation forward.

GoReact Discussion: What's next?



NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this assignment

Original post directions:

Review the following two resources:

- [Where Do We Go From Here? 5 Stages of Change for Sign Language Interpreters](#) Berlove, N. (2015)
- [ASL Lecture](#) of [Treasuring our Roots: Centering deaf situated knowledges in the signed language interpreting profession](#) Sheneman & Robinson (2020)

In your post, discuss what you think should be coming next? What can you do to support your local communities and states to promote deaf-centered interpreting practices and professional development?

Response post directions:

Review and respond to at least two other participants' proposed resources by asking clarifying questions, seeking additional information, or expressing an idea that encourages critical thinking and moves the conversation forward.

Post-Test

NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this post-test

Answer the following questions:

1. Why is it important to know the history of the sign language interpreting profession in the United States?
1. What is the name of the certifying body for interpreters in the United States?
1. Identify one negative impact of the professionalization of the sign language interpreting.
1. What do you think should change for the future of interpreting?

Correct responses: 1. Various answers can apply. 2. Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 3. & 4. Various answers can apply.



References, Part I

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Conway, M. (2015, March 16). The problem with history classes: Single-perspective narratives do students gross disservice. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from

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References, Part II

- Fant, L. (1990). *Silver threads: A personal look at the first twenty-five years of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf*. Silver Spring, MD: RID Publications.
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- Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. (2019). *2019 National conference business meeting results*. Retrieved from <https://rid.org/business-meeting-videos-timestamps/>
- Sheneman, N. & Robinson, O.E. (2020). Treasuring our Roots: Centering deaf situated knowledges in the signed language interpreting profession In C. McDermid, S. Ehrlich, & A. Gentry (Eds.), *Honouring the past, treasuring the present, shaping the future: Conferencing proceedings of the 2019 WASLI Conference*, (p. 96-115). Geneva, Switzerland: WASLI.
- The Bicultural Center. (1992, February). Interpreter education: Counting the casualties. *TBC News*, 44, 1-2.

Additional Resources

As we continue to seek more than the single story, explore [The Helen Keller Exorcism](#) by Radiolab (2022). For over a year the Radiolab team dug through primary sources, talked to experts, and discovered the real story of Helen Keller is far more complicated, mysterious and confounding than the simple myth of a young DeafBlind girl rescued by her teacher Annie Sullivan.

THE HELEN KELLER EXORCISM

A DEAFBLIND WRITER GOES
TO BATTLE WITH THE MYTH
OF HELEN KELLER



Additional Resources Continued

Centuries before we had American Sign Language, Native sign languages, broadly known as “Hand Talk,” were thriving across North America. Hand Talk would be influential in the formation of American Sign Language, but it has largely been written out of history. The [Hidden History of Hand Talk](#) the [Missing Chapters series](#) by Vox provides content about hidden histories that help you understand the present.

Read more from Dr. Melanie McKay-Cody, featured in the Hidden History of Hand Talk, on the history of Plains Indian Sign Language: [Memory Comes Before Knowledge- North American Indigenous Deaf: Socio-cultural Study of Rock/Picture Writing, Community, Sign Languages, and Kinship.](#)





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