

Saturday, June 26 1:30-4:30 PM, rm. 148

Symposium: **Oral History and History of Philosophy of Science**

Saul Fisher (moderator)

Babak Ashrafi

Richard Creath

Kevin Grau

Sally Smith Hughes

The history of philosophy of science is a domain ripe for exploration using the tools of oral history. Very many leaders of the twentieth century burgeoning of this field are still with us, and can help shape our understanding of numerous recent and important developments. Any number of promising projects might be advanced through oral history; some possibilities include:

1. The rise and fall of logical empiricism.
2. The growth of philosophy of biology in the late 1960s and early 1970s.
3. The internationalization of philosophy of science: tracing the diffusion of teachings of key 20th century figures, in universities outside the 'Anglo-American' world.

4. Physicists and philosophers since the 1950s.

Yet oral history represents an almost completely novel way to approach the history of this field, and there are several significant challenges to proceeding along these lines. First, we need to understand how the methods of oral history may be relevant to the general domain of history of philosophy of science. Second, particular topical projects may raise specific content-related questions, for example, relative to defining the topic's boundaries. Third, there are a host of practical issues to resolve. These include identifying promising projects and participants, sketching workplans, finding oral historians who can collaborate on such projects, and thinking through funding possibilities. Fourth, as the history of philosophy of science to date has been text-based, projects in this domain should be designed so as to easily integrate the oral histories with related written sources, to ensure comprehensive historical treatment.

The format of the workshop/panel on oral history is as follows: Short papers and presentations will be followed by discussion. The papers and presentations will focus on some number of these questions:

1. Why would oral history be an apt or fruitful tool for researching history of philosophy of science? Why not?
2. What practical steps (general or domain specific) should be taken to ensure successful projects of this sort? What practical constraints are there?

3. What are the risks, if any, of approaching history of philosophy of science in this fashion?

4. What are the most compelling projects of this sort?

Participants will include:

* Saul Fisher, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (moderator)

[sf@mellon.org]

* Babak Ashrafi, Center for the History of Physics [bashrafi@aip.org]

* Richard Creath, Arizona State University [creath@asu.edu]

* Kevin Grau, Indiana University [ktgrau@indiana.edu]

* Sally Smith Hughes, Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley

[shughes@library.berkeley.edu]