Seminar: Biographies
Prof Yans

Biography as History: students are expected to research and write a paper documenting an individual's life. But "Biography" is broadly understood in this course: students may, for example, research and write about the life history of an institution, such as a university.

Students must be prepared to do their research in archival sources. This typically involves research in special collections, archival collections, or the personal papers of individuals. In the past, students have done their research in the Rutgers University Library Special Collections and in other archival sources in the New York and New Jersey area. In some cases, archival collections and personal papers of individuals may be located on the Internet. Students should not, however, assume that they can do all of their research for this course on-line. A major objective of the course is to familiarize students with the kind of archival research that historians do. Students will receive guidance from the professor and from Alexander Library staff concerning the location of archival and secondary sources and how to use them.

Some topics students have explored in the past include: General Patton and World War II, Dolly Madison, Jackie Robinson, Beethoven's early years. One student wrote the biography of her grandfather, a World War II veteran. Another explored the life of an eighteenth-century ancestor, an important figure in New Jersey History.