

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey  
History Seminar (History 01:506:401:02)  
**Oral History of the American Experience in World War II**  
Fall 2016, Wednesdays 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> Periods, 1:10 - 4:10 p.m.  
Location: 215 Scott Hall, College Avenue Campus (CAC)  
Instructor: **Dr. John W. Chambers**, Professor of History, in cooperation with  
**Mr. Shaun Illingworth**, Director of the Rutgers Oral History Archives

**Professor Chambers**

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**Description**

What were the experiences of Americans during World War II? What did the wartime generation think of the conflict's causes and aims? How did they regard the enemy? How did they cope with war's innumerable anxieties, such as those caused by military service, the perils of combat, and social and economic changes on the home front? Since the 50th anniversary of the war, the American public has displayed a new curiosity about the generation that fought the war. Through oral interviews, memoirs, and contemporary letters, a history traditionally dominated by famous political and military leaders has broadened to include the diverse perspectives of ordinary participants. A crucial source of information on the experience of the average soldier, sailor, marine, aircrew member, Coast Guard member, and the civilian at home has been oral history.

Oral history has become in recent times a vital methodology of the new social history that has sought to recall and understand history "from the bottom up" instead of simply the history of political, economic, social, and military elites. **Oral history is an historical method involving the systematic collection of extensive recorded and transcribed interviews to preserve firsthand accounts and interpretations of people's lives, events, places, ways of life, or an historical period to make them available for research.**

In this seminar, we will explore the American experience in the Second World War through the methodology of oral history as a technique for learning about the experiences of ordinary men and women in an extraordinary time. This course is taught in conjunction with the Rutgers Oral History Archives, a highly acclaimed program sponsored by Rutgers alumni and the History Department, which gathers, processes, and posts to the web the oral histories of Rutgers alumni and other persons connected to New Jersey who were involved in the Second World War, Korea, Vietnam, and the Cold War.