



**Honors College 489 Studying Oral Histories
Fall 2014**

Instructor: Dr. Eric Gruver
Time & Location: TR 11-12:15, Gruvs' Office
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COURSE INFORMATION AND REQUIREMENTS
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Texts and Other Necessities:

****Catching Stories: A Practical Guide to Oral History*, Donna M. DeBlasio et al.

****Thinking about Oral History: Theories and Applications*, Thomas L. Charlton et al.

Interns will also use archival sources and sources within the library (stacks, databases, and ILL) as needed for research and analysis. Interns will need a laptop and a reliable Internet connection when not in the library in order to perform research.

University Catalog Description: Individualized instruction/research at an advanced level in a specialized content area under the direction of a faculty member.

Student Learning Outcomes: In collaboration with the University Archivist and Digital Collection Specialist, students become interns with the East Texas War and Memory Project (ETWMP) and will analyze and then observe and conduct oral history interviews in order to examine how war affects veterans and their families during and after the military service experience. ETWMP interns will complete several assignments during the course, including conducting oral history interviews and attending campus and off-campus events related to the East Texas War and Memory Project. This is a 3-hour course, which means interns should expect to spend the equivalent of 6-9 hours per week—3 hours in class or its equivalent and 3-6 hours studying/preparing outside of class—working on assignments related to the internship.

Course Requirements

A. Process Journal

Students will maintain a weekly process journal during the course and will submit each week's journal via electronic attachment on Saturday by 12:00 noon. Create and maintain a single document, adding week 2's entry to week 1 and so on. Interns should discuss (a) challenges they encountered and how they coped and dealt with them; (b) positive or surprising events and their impact on the intern's psyche; (c) research performed and questions that arose during the research; and, (d) reactions to the

veterans. This assignment **IS NOT** to be a summary of the course's information or activities but rather a critical and thoughtful reflection of the student's experiences engaging with veterans and their stories. Failure to submit the process journal on time will result in grade reduction.

B. Schedule of Activities

- Week 1 = **Introductions (Hasik, Archives staff)
**Review Syllabus

- Week 2 = **Discuss DeBlasio = What is Oral history (OH)? Why is it important?
Elements of and problems with? Debates?
**Birthday cards = sort and organize and send

- Week 3 = **Forms = Meet with Andrea and Adam
**Discuss Charlton and comparisons/contrasts to DeBlasio

- Week 4 = **QUIZ (people, OH, historians)

- Week 5 = **Watch pieces of several OHs and critique

- Week 6 = **Train on equipment and how we do what we do (video cameras; digital cameras; microphone; scanner; lighting; background)

- Week 7 = The Process (see below pages 2-5; first section is "Communication")

Communication

1. Set all electronic devices to receive messages via Facebook internship group, email, text, and phone. Messages should be answered promptly, not 5 hours later or the next day. Sometimes things happen that you need to know immediately. No excuses for not knowing something or not replying to a message.
2. Hayley is the Graduate Assistant Coordinator for the ETWMP and she speaks for me. Respect her instructions and messages as you do mine. If a disagreement arises because an intern did not follow instructions, things won't be pleasant.
3. Referrals of veterans
 - a. We will receive names of veterans people think we should interview. Graciously accept the contact information and then forward it to Hayley.
 - b. Do not make promises and say that we'll interview someone. We must prioritize and Hayley and I will determine those priorities.
 - c. Remember, we will lose the race but we will keep running. Be mindful, though, that we cannot lose ourselves, families, health, jobs, or scholarships in running too quickly.

Guidelines for Preparing for an Interview

1. Create a permanent folder/binder that contains several copies of all required forms, including:
 - a. Biographical data sheet
 - b. Oral history release form
 - c. Digital collections materials release form
 - d. Copies of all interview scripts (WWII, Korea, Cold War, Vietnam).
2. Once an interview is scheduled, an intern must call 48 hours prior to the interview day to confirm with the veteran. Some veterans may ask to call them the day before or the morning of the interview; accommodate them when necessary.

3. When confirming the interview, ask the veteran if s/he has photos or documents from his/her military experience. If so, ask them if they would mind if we scanned/copied them for the Digital Collections. This will speed the process on the day of the interview.
4. FOLLOW UP INTERVIEWS
 - a. Interns must watch and listen to previous interview(s). Request DVDs from Adam. This must be done at least 4 days prior to interview.
 - b. Submit follow up questions to Gruvs at least 48 hours prior to interview. You should be an expert on the person and I should be able to ask “Did s/he talk about _____?” and you should know.
 - c. No minimum or maximum questions. Ask about everything. If we didn’t do the initial interview, use questions from our scripts to fill in gaps in information.
 - d. Interns can always ask questions not on the scripts.
5. Reserve a video camera. Interns have access to four cameras: Andrea’s (2), ETWMP, and the library studio. (A) For interviews scheduled on campus in the library studio, interns must reserve the studio and camera immediately by talking to library personnel (circulation desk and form). DO NOT attempt to reserve the library studio by phone or email. (B) For off campus interviews, interns must check the interview schedule on the Facebook page in order to determine which camera they should reserve and/or use. This should be done THREE (3) days prior to an interview. (Note: If the interview occurs on Monday, interns should be checking with Gruvs on Wednesday.) Timing is crucial and interns need to consider the time of day of the interview, Adam’s availability, and the camera’s status for the next day. (C) Scenario = If we have an interview in Greenville on Monday at 4:00, then that camera will not be available for an interview on Tuesday. (D) Interns using the ETWMP camera must come by my office the afternoon prior to the interview to ensure that the camera is charged/charging.
6. We will begin using a portable scanner this Fall to take to veterans’ homes to capture digital images of photos and documents. All interns must come to Gruvs office to ensure that their laptops will interface with the scanner. When you make the confirmation call, make sure to ask the veteran if they have any photos or documents they would allow us to scan. These are just as important as the interview.
7. *MOST IMPORTANTLY = Emotions*
 - a. Be human. This is more than an interview. Get to know the veteran and the family. Accept a drink if they offer it. They love you for what you’re doing.
 - b. Let down your guard. Nerves and anxiety prevent you from being real and from helping the veteran/family feel comfortable.
 - c. We are not checking boxes. These interviews are not an exercise; they are historical records and should be respected. When an interview ends, you should feel weird leaving because you and the family became comfortable.

Guidelines for Conducting an Interview

Tip for this section: Any intern who thinks “Oh, that’s good enough” at any point of this process should question their commitment and passion to the ETWMP and to veterans’ sacrifices overall. Veterans and their families welcome us in to their homes, and we will not dishonor their service and sacrifice by accepting mediocrity.

1. Interview attire = ETWMP polo and nice jeans (no holes) or slacks. No hats, caps, sloppy jeans, T-shirts, casual shorts (short or sport), unkempt hair (e.g., messy buns), and/or revealing clothing (low cut or deep V-neck tops are a no-no).
2. No gum. Mints are fine to start but don’t keep getting them during interview.

3. Complete release forms before turning on the camera = Oral History release and Digital Collection release (photos and documents)
4. Biographical Sheet = besides the release forms, this is the most important item to complete. We need accurate information on each veteran and Gruvs will require interns to return to visit a veteran if the Bio sheet is completed unsatisfactorily.
5. Before turning on the camera, explain to the veteran/family that you simply want to have a conversation. And tell them the first question(s) you'll ask to give them time to think about how they'll say the answers.
6. Always have note pad and pens/pencils
 - a. Take notes during the interview = new information or a follow up question that you need to ask when the veteran pauses his story.
 - b. Don't write so much that you lose connection with the veteran. Maintain eye contact and head-nod.
7. Introductory statement
 - a. "My name is _____ and today is (date). The East Texas War and Memory Project is glad to be here with _____. Please state your full name and your birth date."
8. As the veteran talks, use the script as a guide, not a rigid instrument. If s/he says something that is interesting, ask about it. If s/he answers another question, then skip that question or ask a question that requires a more detailed answer. If the veteran veers away from the script completely but keeps talking, do your best to keep up and ask follow up questions about whatever it is. ALWAYS be sure to ask for dates—years are okay, but month and year is better—even if they've already talked about something. Example: "A few minutes ago, you mentioned being inducted into the Army. When did you report for service? Do you remember where you reported?"
9. Closing statement
 - a. "On behalf of myself and the East Texas War and Memory Project, we thank you for your service and for speaking with us today."

Post- Interview Process

Do not attempt to off-load interview or photographs yourself. For scanned images, bring your laptop to Gruvs office ASAP to off-load those files.

1. Photograph of intern(s) and veteran/family = check out ETWMP digital camera from Gruvs
 - a. Pay attention to lighting and background. Don't be afraid to ask to move to improve the quality of the photo.
 - b. Take multiple shots with and without flash.
 - c. View the photos before leaving the veteran's home. I will send you back if we can't use any of the photos you took.
 - d. Don't get sloppy!
2. Each intern conducting an interview will write and send via email a brief biography of the veteran's experience to Gruvs by 8:00 a.m. of the day following the interview.
3. Biographical Sheets
 - a. As soon as you return to Commerce...
 - i. Scan bio sheet using KIC scanner on first floor of library. Library is open 24 hours so NO EXCEPTIONS
 - ii. Scanner sends form as PDF via email = send to Gruvs (etwmp@tamuc.edu). Gruvs should have bio sheet to use when editing the veteran's bio.
 - b. Submit paper form to Andrea next time Archives opens (DO NOT FORGET THIS STEP)
4. Returning the cameras
 - a. Archives closes at 4:45

- b. Interviews that end after 4:45 = interns return cameras to Gruvs or Hayley immediately upon return to Commerce.
- c. Do not keep the cameras with you overnight.
- 5. THANK YOU NOTES = will be sent next day. Stop by Gruvs's office following the interview to get stationary. You are responsible for sending thank you notes to the veterans you interview.
- 6. Other Internship Activities—attending presentations for various organizations (at least 3 a semester including lecture series and banquets).

---Weeks 8-15 = **Observe one interview per week (as scheduled) for two weeks
 **Assist with one interview per week (as scheduled)
 **Attend War and Memory Lecture Series and Veterans' Vigil
 **Other events as scheduled

Grading:

- a) Process journal = 40%
- b) QUIZ = 20%
- c) Lecture series, including Veterans Vigil speakers = 20%
- d) Interviews = 20%

Technology Requirements: The student must possess a laptop with wireless capability (within the library) as well as reliable access to the Internet when not in the Archives. Students may also want to access a digital camera and printer to facilitate the acquisition and preparation of materials relevant to the digital collection.

Attendance: The class meets Tuesday and Thursday 11-12:15, and you are expected to be in class each day unless you are conducting an interview or attending a related function. I also expect punctual attendance; tardiness will be frowned upon. An intern who misses more than TWO classes during the semester will receive a one-letter grade penalty.

ADA Statement and Student Behavior

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Office of Student Disability Resources and Services in the Gee Library Room 132, call (903) 886-5835, or email StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu.

All students enrolled in the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See the Student Handbook.)