Course Description:
“An identity would seem to be arrived at by the way in which the person faces and uses his experience,” wrote James Baldwin. This course will examine how writers “face and use” their life experience in a variety of genres, including private correspondence, journals, essays, and memoirs. What is the relationship between lived experience and literary experiment? Who is the “self” that emerges in a story? Do all identities count as “authentic”? These questions will frame our analysis of how personal writing gives shape to, and is shaped by, an author’s life. We will also consider how, and why, artists working in different media, such as song and film, create “self-portraits.” These different aesthetic approaches will help us understand how our reception of a life-story is informed by the style of its transmission. This course is designed to advance your skills and confidence as writer in general, and specifically as a writer of academic essays. We will experiment with a range of written exercises and you will write four formal essays, each revised at least once.

Office Hours:
I encourage you to take advantage of office hours! Stop by, chat with me about your ideas, and let me know how your writing is progressing. **You may attend office hours as often as you like, but I require you to come to my office hours at least twice during the semester: once before week 4 and once before the end of the semester.**

If you need additional help with your writing, you can contact the Gallatin Writing Center at 1 Washington Place, room 423. The Writing Center will open in early October. Make an appointment here:
http://gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/undergraduate/writing/writingcenterappointments.html

Required Texts:
*The other readings will be available on Blackboard*

Attendance and Participation:
I will accept one unexcused absences. After this, your absences will affect your grade. Tardiness will account against your attendance record, as will consistent lack of participation in class. It is your responsibility to inform me of any other circumstances – illness, family emergency, or religious observances – that will affect your attendance or performance in this class.

**Course Objectives:**
By the end of this course your work should indicate that you can:
1. Intelligently analyze not only traditional academic and literary sources but also other cultural materials (film, song, etc.).
2. Experiment with new ideas in class discussion and engage with your classmates’ ideas in a respectful, productive manner.
3. Employ a critical vocabulary appropriate for the evaluation of the various course materials (print materials, historical documents, film, and song).
4. Outline, draft, and edit your own academic essays and assist your peers with their drafting processes.
5. Develop a clear thesis with a well-supported argument that incorporates the assigned materials.
6. Follow MLA citation format.

**Writing Assignments:** I will assign a number of short exercises, completed both alone and in groups, at home and in class, to help you generate ideas for your final essays. Use these assignments as an opportunity to take risks, try out a new style, develop a new structure, or to think through a difficult concept. Additionally, you will be responsible for regular blackboard posts and regular in-class responses to your classmates’ blackboard posts.

**Essays:** You will write 4 essays this semester. Although I will distribute paper prompts at the start of each new unit, it is my hope that you will learn to develop your own paper proposals, thesis questions, and thesis statements by the end of this class. In-class draft workshops are an important part of this process and I expect you to bring complete drafts to each workshop. I will not accept late papers unless you have spoken with me about an extension well in advance. I will not give comments on unexcused late papers. Each day your paper is late, your work will be progressively downgraded.

**Essay Guidelines**
- Word process all essays.
- Use Cambria, 12 pt font.
- Double space, with one-inch margins.
- Number and staple your pages.
- Always include your name, the course number, the instructor’s name, the date, the essay number (i.e. Essay 3, draft 1) and the title of your essay.
• For citations, follow the MLA guidelines (See the Bobst library site for location information on MLA style guides and other helpful style guides: [http://library.nyu.edu/tools/styleguide/index.html](http://library.nyu.edu/tools/styleguide/index.html)). Purdue’s OWL (online writing lab) site is another useful resource: [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/)

All papers were will be circulated in hard copy during the writing workshops and uploaded to blackboard.

**Grades:** I will assign your final grade based on the strength of your written assignments, your completion of all course requirements, and your attendance and participation in class.

**Incompletes:** I strongly discourage incompletes and will grant them only for students facing truly extenuating circumstances.

**Anticipated breakdown of assignments:**
**Participation (includes short assignments):** 20%

- **Essay 1:** 15%
- **Essay 2:** 20%
- **Essay 3:** 20%
- **Essay 4:** 25%

**Technology in the classroom:** No phones, no Facebook, no gmail, no online distraction. You may use your laptop, tablet, etc. to take notes but I expect you to have hard copies of all the readings and to be alert and vocal during class discussion. If I feel that laptops are becoming a distraction, I will ban them.

**Academic Integrity:**
All the written work you submit in this course must have been written for this course and not for another. It must originate with you in form and content, with all sources fully and specifically acknowledged. Plagiarism, or academic theft, is passing off someone else’s work as your own. You are responsible for not plagiarizing, and for understanding what plagiarism is. I will uphold the University’s code of academic and personal conduct for all instances of plagiarism. You may find this code in your NYU Gallatin Bulletin. You can download the bulletin at: [http://www.nyu.edu/gallatin/pdf/GallatinBulletin.pdf](http://www.nyu.edu/gallatin/pdf/GallatinBulletin.pdf).

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**Week One**

**Wednesday, September 5th**
• Introductions

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**Week Two**

**Monday, September 10th**
Reading due:
• Joan Didion, “Goodbye to All That”

Writing due:
Short response paper to Didion’s story (2 paragraphs). Consider a metaphor Didion uses to describe her relationship to New York City. How does it affect your understanding of the story? Be prepared to discuss your response in class.

Wednesday, September 12th
Reading due:
• St. Augustine, Books 1&2 (blackboard)

Week Three

Monday, September 17th
Reading due:
• Book of Margery Kempe: “The Birth of Her Fist Child and Her First Vision”; “Her Pride and Attempts to Start a Business”; “Pilgrimage to Jerusalem”; “Margery Nurses Her Husband in His Old Age. (blackboard)

• Mary Mason, “The Other Voice: Autobiographies of Women Writers” (blackboard)

Writing due:
• Blackboard post (one paragraph). What is Mason's argument and how does it inform your reading of the Book of Margery Kempe?

Wednesday, September 19th
Reading due:
• Rousseau, Confessions, Book 1 (blackboard)

Writing due:
• One page of thoughts for essay #1 (bring 1 copy and email 1 copy to me before class).

Week Four

Monday, September 24th
Reading due:
• Rousseau, Confessions, Book 2 (blackboard)
• Linda Anderson, “Historians of the Self” (blackboard)

Wednesday, September 26th
WRITING WORKSHOP – Essay #1 (2 pages) due in class. Bring THREE copies of your paper. Email a copy to me.
FINAL DRAFT ESSAY #1 due SUNDAY 9/30 by 6 pm. Submit to Blackboard.

Week Five

Monday, October 1st
Reading due:
• Harriet Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (1-45)

Wednesday, October 3rd
Reading due:
• Harriet Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (45-96)

Writing due:
• Blackboard post (paragraph): Harriet Jacobs confesses many details of her private life. But what parts of her personal history does she hide? Why?

Week Six

Monday, October 8th
Reading due:
• Harriet Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (finish)

Wednesday, October 10th
Reading due:
• Harryette Mullen, “Runaway Tongue: Resistant Orality in Uncle Tom’s Cabin, Our Nig, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, and Beloved” (in the back of your Norton edition of Incidents).

Writing due:
• Ideas for Essay #2 (1 page – bring one copy to class and email a copy to me before class).

Week Seven

Monday, October 15th: No class/ Fall Recess

Wednesday, October 17th
Reading due:
• James Baldwin, “Notes of a Native Son” (blackboard)

Week Eight

Monday, October 22nd
WRITING WORKSHOP (First session) for Essay #2 (3-4 pages). Bring TWO copies. Email a copy to me before class).

Wednesday, October 24th
WRITING WORKSHOP (Second session) for Essay #2. Bring THREE copies of the revised draft. Email a copy to me before class).
FINAL DRAFT ESSAY #2 due on SUNDAY 10/28 by 6pm. Submit to Blackboard.

Week Nine
Monday, October 29th
Reading due:
• Richard Rodriguez, The Hunger of Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez (1-43)

Wednesday, October 31st
Reading due:
• Richard Rodriguez, The Hunger of Memory (43-79)

Writing due:
• Blackboard post (1 paragraph). Rodriguez calls himself a “comic victim of two cultures” (5). What does he mean by this and how does his role as a “comic victim” evolve?

Week Ten
Monday, November 5th
Reading due:
• Richard Rodriguez, The Hunger of Memory (79-151)

Wednesday, November 7th
Reading due:
• Richard Rodriguez, The Hunger of Memory (finish)

Writing due:
Short personal narrative (1-2 pages). Bring a hardcopy to class and email me a copy.

Week Eleven
Monday, November 12th
Reading due:
• Anita Desai, “Writing in the Language of the Other” (blackboard)
• Edwidge Dandicat, “Crabs” (blackboard)

Writing due:
Ideas for Essay #3 (1 page – bring one copy to class and email a copy to me before class).

Wednesday, November 14th
• Guest Lecturer, filmmaker and video artist Sarah Halpern (clips from autobiographical films will be watched and discussed in class).
Week Twelve

**Monday, November 19th**
WRITING WORKSHOP (First session) for Essay #3 (4-5 pages). Bring TWO copies. Email a copy to me before class).

**Wednesday, November 21st**
WRITING WORKSHOP (Second session) for Essay #3. Bring THREE copies of the revised draft. Email a copy to me before class).

**FINAL DRAFT ESSAY #1 due SUNDAY 11/25 by 6 pm. Submit to Blackboard.**

Week Thirteen

**Monday, November 26th**
Reading due:
- Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home*, 1-87

**Wednesday, November 28th**
Reading due:
- *Fun Home*, 87-121

Writing due:
- Blackboard: One paragraph discussing how Bechdel incorporates one of McCloud’s categories for comics (word specific, picture specific, duo specific, additive, parallel, montage interdependent).

[THANKSGIVING]

Week Fourteen

**Monday, December 3rd**
Reading due:
- *Fun Home*, finish

Writing due:
- Ideas for Essay #4 (1 page – bring one copy to class and email a copy to me before class).

**Wednesday, December 5th**
- **Guest Lecturer**: Kip Berman, songwriter and front man of *The Pains of Being Pure at Heart*. He will lead a discussion about how personal experience is translated into song. You can stream his music here: thepainsofbeingpureatheart.com (I will specify three tracks to listen to before class).

Week Fifteen

**Monday, December 10th**
WRITING WORKSHOP (First session) for Essay #4 (5 pages). Bring TWO copies. Email a copy to me before class).

Wednesday, December 12th

WRITING WORKSHOP (Second session) for Essay #4. Bring THREE copies of the revised draft. Email a copy to me before class).

FINAL DRAFT ESSAY #1 due SUNDAY 12/16 by 6 pm. Submit to Blackboard.