

HONR-1000-703—Spring 2015
AUTOBIOGRAPHY BY WOMEN
Tuesdays – 10:30-11:20 a.m. – OLDC 003

Assist. Prof.	Dr. Lucero "Chelo" Tenorio	Office hours: MWF 10:30-11:30 am
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Description:

This course concentrates on selected autobiographical texts from the 20th and 21st centuries that show the multiplicity of women's experiences and voices as well as the revised discourses they fashion to express the realities of their lives. Students will explore course materials through formal critical theories and writings in addition to collaborative work and reading-response personal essays.

Over the course of the semester we will be attempting to address (but certainly not to fully answer) a variety of questions about women's self-narratives. Such questions will not necessarily be approached systematically; they will enter into the discussion as they seem relevant and we will return repeatedly to many of them. The critical and theoretical readings will help set questions and establish tentative frameworks, but just as they do not agree with one another, we need not to agree with them. They are there to help spark thinking –not to define or limit it.

Here are a few examples of the questions we will address:

- How closely should we read literary texts as reflections or translations of lived experience? How does a woman resolve the conflict between telling the truth and distorting it in making her life into art?
- How does the writing of autobiography help a woman affirm, construct, or reconstruct an authentic self? Is her goal to just write, or to record her life in the context of her times, her religion, or her relationship to others?
- Is there something definably "female" about women's writing? How do historical forces and conditions shape the writing of women?
- What calls women to write and what purposes seem to emerge from their text? Again, are there common motivations and goals?
- How do race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, age, physical ability, marital status, religion, traumatic experiences, and other social categories or personal identities affect the writing of women? Are there identifiable themes, styles, goals, etcetera, among women writers who have one or more of these experiences in common? Are there recognizable differences among women who do not?

Materials:

Textbook: *Reading Autobiography. A guide for interpreting life narratives.* Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson. Second Edition, 2010.

Books to access through the Kindle or other stores online, or printed (see attached list)

Course Objectives:

Upon successful completion of this course students will

- be able to recognize and appreciate the breadth, depth, variety, and remarkable contribution that women writers have made to the social, economic, political, and cultural orders in the world
- be able to discuss and compare themes, concerns, and styles of individual writers and "groups" of writers identifying significant commonalities and distinctiveness
- be able to formulate interpretative and evaluative statements on a variety of women's texts
- be able to express how their perceptions about "women's voices" have changed or been refined as a result of this class
- feel more confident with their own selves through writing about their own lives

Grading:

Discussion Leadership	25%	Standards:	90-100%	A
Reading Responses (5)	25%		80-89%	B
Group work	20%		70-79%	C
Take-Home Exam	15%		-70%	D
Participation	15%			

Participation: Reading, addressing issues during group and class discussions, leading the day's discussion, writing reading responses, active discussion and opinions in groups.

Group work: Throughout the semester, you will occasionally be given additional discussion questions and divided into groups. Ideally, everyone in the group should participate and then help when presenting the group's findings to the class' forum.

Leading the day's discussion: I call this 'be the teacher today'. You will be responsible for all of the reading materials for this day. You will have to summarize the pages read, give your opinion on them, associate with the theory offered in our textbook, and create an interactive atmosphere for all to participate by bringing Qs and promote discussion.

Reading response: You will write a personal 350-400 word-essay about a given text.

The Ouch Rule:

Because we are reading, writing about, and discussing very sensitive material -- and because we have all been acculturated in a society which remains racist/sexist/heterosexist/classist, etc. at the most profound linguistic level -- we need to be aware when we make comments which are hurtful or offensive to others. Hence -- "the Ouch Rule." If someone makes a remark, which causes you pain or offense, say "Ouch." It is not necessary to explain why you have said "ouch," although you may if you wish. The word itself will cause us to pause and rethink what has just been said.

Information about important dates, student conduct, disability act, etc. can be found in the OSU website page.