

**READINGS IN WORLD LITERATURE  
AUTOBIOGRAPHY/WRITING THE SELF**

Winter 2022

**Course Description:**

This course will examine the nature of autobiographical writing from a wide range of cultural and historical contexts. While last quarter focused on the genre of the epic—texts that imagine and even create a people’s sense of a shared past and a shared culture—this quarter will focus on how individuals imagine their own, particular lives. We will explore, among other issues, how the self is constructed through reading and writing, the relationship between memory and identity, the claims of authenticity, the oscillation between interior and exterior life, and the peculiarities of individual voice.

**Course Readings:**

- 1) Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Sarah Ruden (Modern Library, 2017; ISBN: 0812986482)
- 2) Rousseau, *Confessions* (selection on CANVAS)
- 3) Sei Shonagon, *The Pillow Book* (Penguin Classics ; ISBN 0140448063)
- 4) Vladimir Nabokov, *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited* (Vintage; ISBN-13: 978-0679723394)
- 5) Wole Soyinka, *Ake: The Years of Childhood* (Vintage; ISBN-13: 978-0679725404)
- 6) Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* (Mariner Books; ISBN-10: 0618871713)
- 7) **INSTRUCTOR’S CHOICE**

## Course Calendar:

### Week 1

Tuesday Introduction

Thursday Augustine, *Confessions* (Books 1 and 2)

### Week 2

Tues Augustine, *Confessions* (Book 8)

Thurs Rousseau, *Confessions*  
**Paper #1 assigned**

### Week 3

Tues Rousseau, *Confessions*

Thurs Sei Shonagon, *The Pillow Book*

### Week 4

Tues Sei Shonagon, *The Pillow Book*

Thurs Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*: Chapters 1-5  
**Paper #1 due**

### Week 5

Tues Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*: Chapters 6-10  
**Paper #2 assigned**

Thurs Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*: Chapters 11-15

### Week 6

Tues Soyinka, *Ake*: Chapters 1-5 (pp. 1-76)

Thurs Soyinka, *Ake*: Chapters 6-10 (pp. 77-160)

### Week 7

Tues Soyinka, *Ake*: Chapters 11-15 (161-230)

Thurs Bechdel, *Fun Home*: pp. 1-120

**Paper #2 due**

Week 8

Tues Bechdel, *Fun Home*: pp. 121-232  
**Paper #3 assigned**

Thurs INSTRUCTOR'S CHOICE

Week 9

Tues INSTRUCTOR'S CHOICE

Thurs INSTRUCTOR'S CHOICE

Week 10

Tues Final discussion  
**Paper #3 due**

Thurs READING PERIOD