EIU 4064-001: Autobiography

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Introduction:

Focusing on the literary genre of autobiography, this course will explore various styles of self-representation in diaries and letters, captivity narratives, travel memoirs, spiritual autobiographies, slave narratives, and autobiographical fiction. Ultimately, the class will take part in this literary expression through our own journal-keeping, critical analysis, small discussion groups, collaborative creative projects, and, finally (optionally), in writing our own short autobiographies.

Required Texts:

Mary Rowlandson, *The Captive: The True Story of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*
Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of...*
Harriet Ann Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Written by Herself*
Richard Rodriguez, *Hunger of Memory*
Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*
Marlo Morgan, *Mutant Message: Down Under*

Please note: There are also a number of readings which will be held ON RESERVE at Booth Library. These will be announced in class ahead of time.

Course Requirements:

1) Reading, attendance, and participation in class discussions.

It is very important that you keep up with our class reading schedule; there will be short (unannounced) quizzes on the assignments throughout the semester to ensure that you are keeping up with the schedule. Attendance is equally important. If you miss more than three classes, it will seriously affect your final grade: your grade will be lowered a half-grade for each additional class missed. That is, should you have a final grade of a B for the course and you miss a fourth class, your grade would drop to a B-. Please feel free to discuss this policy with me at any time during the semester, should you have questions about your attendance record. I will also be placing emphasis on your class participation, which will be accounted into your final grade. PLEASE DO NOT BE LATE TO CLASS.
2) Group projects. You are to notify me of your top three (3) choices by Monday, January 20th (please put a note in my mailbox or email me at: cfmlt@eiu.edu). Groups will be announced on Tuesday the 21st. Each group will consist of 2-3 students and will meet several times to discuss strategies for presenting the literary piece to the class, in a 15-20 minute creative presentation followed by a thorough analysis of the text in relation to the study and criticism of autobiography. You might want to present a historical overview of the writer, for example, or the public reception of her/his work. You are to investigate and research any critical essays written on this piece, in order to present different ideas to the class -- the more critical essays, the better and stronger your presentation should prove to be. Share ideas with each other, and be as creative as you dare. You are to lead class discussion on the literary piece, presenting your peers with questions about the work which incorporate the critical research you have shared with them. Your group must meet with me once before your presentation (during my office hours).

Then, at the class following your presentation, you are to turn in a group packet with the following materials:
1) copies of any critical essays you've read, along with your group’s own critical comments and responses to these essays (in a typed summary).
2) a list of questions your group designed to ask the class, to stimulate discussion and ideas.
3) each group member’s personal, confidential summary of the "group" experience, including insights, comments and suggestions, in retrospect (this should be sealed, so that others in the group don't read it, etc.)
4) any other creative memorabilia you might have included in your presentation, such as handouts for the class, etc.

3) Written Work: Research Paper
Your topic will most likely evolve from your group project research, class discussions, or conference sessions. If you have any difficulty in finding a topic, I will certainly help you by suggesting a few. You are free, however, to choose your topic, but be sure to clear it with me before you put too much work into it. This paper will be the culmination of your work in research and critical thinking about Autobiography.

Autobiography: After spending the semester reading and discussing the literary genre of autobiography, you will be invited to write your own autobiography. Although you are not required to write this, you may do so for extra credit at the seminar’s end.

4) Final Examination. This will be comprehensive, based on the process of the class. This is why attendance is so very important.
5) **Thought for the Day.** Just a little enhancement for the course. On the day you select, please bring a quotation to write on the board and share with the class; it could be a song lyric, a poem, an excerpt from a speech, even a passage from a diary. You decide...

**Grading percentages/breakdown:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(incl. quiz grades)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Project</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Examination</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**A note on lateness:** Unless you have made prior arrangements with me, any late work will receive a failing grade. You must, however, turn in all work to be considered for a passing grade.

**Plagiarism:**

The English Department's statement on plagiarism:

Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism -- "The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work" (Random House Dictionary of the English Language) -- has the right and the responsibility to impose the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignments of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of NC for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.

**Information for Students with Disabilities:**

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.
EIU 4064C: Autobiography
Professor Michele Tarter

Spring 1997

Syllabus

(Please note: These dates/assignments are subject to change. I often announce changes at the end of class, due to the process and progress of our discussions. Therefore, should you miss a class, you should have a peer's phone number, to check in and see where we left off in discussion and where we are headed in the next class.)

Jan. 14: Introduction to class

  16: The Theory of Autobiography

  21: Expanding the Canon of Autobiography

  23: Mary Rowlandson, The Captive

  28: Rowlandson, continued

Group Project #1.

  30: Rowlandson, continued

Feb. 4: Benjamin Franklin, Autobiography (selected readings)

  6: Franklin, continued

Group Project #2.

  11: Franklin, continued

  13: Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of...

  18: Douglass, continued

Group Project #3.

  20: Douglass, continued

  25: Harriet Ann Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of...

  27: Midterm Conferences

Mar. 4: Midterm Conferences

  6: Jacobs, continued

  11: Jacobs, continued

Group Project #4.

  13: Jacobs, continued
***** spring break *****

25: Richard Rodriguez, *Hunger of Memory*

27: Rodriguez, continued
    Group Project #5.

Apr. 1: Rodriguez, continued

3: Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*
    ***RESEARCH PAPERS DUE.***

8: Kingston, continued

10: Kingston, continued
    Group Project #6.

15: Kingston, continued

17: Marlo Morgan, *Mutant Message*

22: Morgan, continued

24: Morgan, continued
    Group Project #7.

29: Morgan, continued

May 1: Last day of classes
    Autobiographies due (optional)