

Autobiography EH306
Spring 1999
TR 1-2:15, RSC

Hilde Hoogenboom
RSC, x7265
TR 11-12 office hours

Course Description

During the past few decades, with the emergence of new voices at the margins of society, especially those of women and minorities, autobiographical writing has become an important genre of our time. Yet, for most of the genre's 1500-year history, the right to write an autobiography belonged only to exceptional men and women. The readings are divided equally between the history of autobiography and the twentieth century, between men and women, between society's insiders and outsiders. The texts represent a variety of such types of autobiographies as religious, court, philosophical, literary, ethnic, and feminist. They include Augustine, Montaigne, Sévigné, Rousseau, Catherine the Great, Thoreau, Nabokov, Hurston, Conway, Watkins, and students' own choice of a recent confessional autobiography.

Requirements

- One five-page paper on a single work and one eight-page paper comparing two works. I do not grade the first paper, but make extensive comments and work with you on editing techniques, which you apply by revising the first paper for a grade. (30% and 35%)
- Two five-minute oral presentations on your ideas to the class before you write your papers. (10%)
- Final exam. (25%)

Required Texts

St. Augustine (354-430), Confessions
Michel de Montaigne (1533-92), Essays
Mme de Sévigné (1626-96), Letters
Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78), Confessions
Catherine the Great (1729-96), Memoirs
Henry David Thoreau (1817-62), Walden
Vladimir Nabokov (1899-1977), Speak, Memory
Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960), Dust Tracks on a Road
Jill Ker Conway, The Road From Coorain
Mel Watkins, Dancing With Strangers

Additional Reading

Paul DeMan, "Autobiography as De-Facement"
Philippe Lejeune, On Autobiography
Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, Women, Autobiography, Theory

1T	12 Jan	Introduction
R	14 Jan	St. Augustine (354-430), <u>Confessions</u> , Books 1-2
2T	19 Jan	Books 3-7
R	21 Jan	Books 8-9
3T	26 Jan	Michel de Montaigne (1533-92), <u>Essays</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •To the Reader •On idleness •On the education of children •On cannibals
R	28 Jan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •On the affection of fathers for their children •On repentance •On experience
4T	2 Feb	Mme de Sévigné (1626-96), <u>Letters</u>
R	4 Feb	
5T	9 Feb	Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78), <u>Confessions</u> , Books 1-3
R	11 Feb	Books 4-6
6T	16 Feb	Books 7-9
R	18 Feb	Books 10-12
7T	23 Feb	Catherine the Great (1729-96), <u>Memoirs</u> , Part I
R	25 Feb	Part I
8T	9 Mar	Part II
R	11 Mar	Henry David Thoreau (1817-62), <u>Walden</u>
9T	16 Mar	
R	18 Mar	Vladimir Nabokov (1899-1977), <u>Speak, Memory</u>
10T	23 Mar	
R	25 Mar	

- 11T 30 Mar** Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960), Dust Tracks on a Road,
Ch. 1-8
- R 1 Apr Ch. 9-16, Appendix
- 12T 6 Apr** Jill Ker Conway, The Road From Coorain
- R 8 Apr
- 13T 13 Apr** Mel Watkins, Dancing With Strangers
- R 15 Apr
- 14T 20 Apr** Confessional autobiographies (choose from a list)
- R 22 Apr
- 15T 27 Apr** Conclusion