

# **London South Bank University**

**ENGLISH WITH CREATIVE WRITING**



**WRITING A LIFE AME\_5\_WAL**

**MODULE GUIDE 2017-18 SEMESTER 2**

## **.1. MODULE TITLE: WRITING A LIFE**

1.2	Module Level:	5
1.3	Module Code:	AME_5_WAL
1.4	Credit Value:	20
1.5	Student Study Hours:	150
1.5	Class Contact Hours:	60
1.7	Private Study Hours:	90
1.8	Pre-requisites:	Successful completion of Level 5 modules
1.9	Module Co-ordinator:	Dr. Suzanne Scafe

## **2.0 AIMS**

The aims of this module are to:

- Introduce students to a wide range of autobiography and autobiographical fiction
- Explore different approaches to the analysis of autobiographical content located in a variety of literary genres
- Encourage students to think critically about what constitutes autobiographical writing and the ways in which literary conventions are used to produce a textual self
- Introduce student to theoretical and critical studies of autobiography
- Examine these works in a historical, social and cultural context so that students recognise the changing demands and forms of the genre.

## **3.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES**

**On successful completion of the module students will be able to**

### **Knowledge and Understanding:**

- Demonstrate their knowledge of a wide range of twentieth-century autobiography
- Demonstrate familiarity with a variety of critical and theoretical material that relates to this subject

- Show an understanding of the self as a product of textual production

#### **Intellectual Skills:**

- Analyse the literary techniques and the stylistic and linguistic features that characterise the genre
- Explore in class discussions and in written assignments the dominant themes of the texts studied on the unit
- Critically analyse a selection of prose and poetry which represents both canonical and non-canonical literary production of the period;
- Develop independent research skills relevant to the area twentieth-century autobiography and autobiographical criticism

#### **Practical Skills:**

- Produce a coherently written assessment in response to a specific question that relates to the unit
- Critically examine written and oral responses to a range of autobiographical writing
- Use appropriate critical vocabulary in the production of written and oral assessments

#### **Transferable Skills:**

- Effective delivery of oral presentations
- Accurately written work that demonstrates critical and analytical abilities
- Independent research skills
- Effective group work and collaborative skills
- Skills in effective time management

### **4.0 OVERVIEW OF CONTENT**

One of the first theoretical works that we will read is Linda Anderson's 'Introduction' to *Autobiography* (2010), which gives an overview of the dominant theoretical approaches to autobiography. Anderson includes reference to Phillipe LeJeune and Paul de Man, described as foundational theorists in the area of autobiographical studies. We focus in the lecture on Paul John Eakin's work and de Man's assertion that 'empirically as well as theoretically, autobiography lends itself poorly to generic definition; each specific instance seems to be an exception to the norm; the works themselves always seem to shade off into neighbouring or incompatible genres' (920). We will address his work in relation to revelations about his own identity. Students will also examine more recent summaries of autobiographical theories by Laura Marcus, Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith. The texts chosen for this module present the autobiographical self in different guises, some closer to fictional subjects than others. The texts are drawn from a body of twentieth-century autobiographical writing, including autobiographical fiction; we explore the way in which writers use,

extend and subvert autobiographical conventions. Students are introduced to a variety of writing, from canonical autobiography to less well-known women's, black and postcolonial autobiographical work. Each type of writing has generated its own body of criticism and textual genealogy and some of our focus will be on criticism that does not centre on the text's autobiographical status.

## **5.0 TEACHING AND LEARNING PATTERN**

1 hour lecture

1 HOUR 30 MINUTE seminar

## **6.1 ASSESSMENT**

**1,000 word essay (25%) 7<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2018**

**1x 3,000 word essay (75%) due: 14th May 2018**

### **Extensions for Assessment**

EXTENSIONS CANNOT BE GIVEN FOR LATE WORK. PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU HAND IN WORK ON TIME.

### **Essay Tutorials**

YOU ARE ADVISED TO ATTEND ASSESSMENT TUTORIALS WHERE APPROPRIATE.

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## **THE PROGRAMME OF TEACHING AND LEARNING**

### **WEEK ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE MODULE**

We will be reading an extract from from Linda Anderson's 'Autobiography' (given as a handout). We will also be referring to the first chapter of Christopher Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin*.

## **WEEK TWO: CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD – *GOODBYE TO BERLIN***

We will continue with an examination of modernist narrative strategies as exemplified by Isherwood's prose style. The discussion of Isherwood's text will be linked to Stein's – discussed in Week 3 – focusing on Isherwood's use of the identity of 'Christopher' both to conceal and reveal his autobiographical subject. We will also look at issues of sexuality; sexual and gender identity and the historical context of the rise of Fascism, Nazism, Communism and Socialism in Europe during the 1930s.

## **WEEK THREE: GEORGE ORWELL – *DOWN AND OUT IN PARIS AND LONDON***

This session will examine the text's status as an identity as autobiography, in the context of its publishing history. We will look at the contrast between Orwell's Paris and the Paris of Stein's autobiography. Students will be asked to examine Orwell's portrait of the city, focusing on the city as an imaginary space: how does Orwell reimagine the city, investing it with socio-political and personal significance?

## **WEEK 4: GERTRUDE STEIN'S *THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ALICE B TOKLAS***

This session examines an example of autobiography in the third person. Although the autobiographical subject is named as Alice B Toklas, it is in fact an autobiography of Gertrude Stein. Stein represents herself in the third person, so that she assumes the narrative voice of Toklas. This is a complex narrative strategy, though the narrative itself is simply told.

We will look at Stein's idiosyncratic style.

## **WEEK FIVE (Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> February) ASSESSMENT TUTORIALS in the teaching room**

**Q1 – 1-2pm; Q2 – 2-3pm; Q3 – 3-4pm., in the teaching room.**

## **WEEKS SIX and SEVEN : MICHAEL ONDAATJE *RUNNING IN THE FAMILY***

*Running in the Family* will be explored in relation to theories of autobiographical identities as well as Bart Moore-Gilbert's theories of postcolonial autobiography and its disavowal of a unified and coherent self. We will look at the text's portrayal of the colonial past; of class and its representations of a mixed, colonial elite. We will also examine the text's fragmented structure and its representation of colonialism's production of fractured and fragmented subjectivities.

## **WEEK EIGHT: HANIF KUREISHI – *MY EAR AT HIS HEART: READING MY FATHER***

This week we look at Kureishi's text as an example of auto/biography, that is an autobiographical form that combines biography and autobiography. As with Ondaatje's text, *My Ear at His Heart* includes a search for Kureishi's father through the recovery of his 'fictional' writing. In the process, readers are given an understanding both of their relationship, as father and son, and of Hanif Kureishi's own identity.

## **EASTER HOLIDAYS: Monday 26<sup>th</sup> March – Friday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2018**

## **Week 9: JEANETTE WINTERSON – WHY BE HAPPY WHEN YOU CAN BE NORMAL**

This week we will examine Winterson's use of the bildungsroman to construct her autobiography. We will continue the discussion of relational identities begun in Weeks 6-8, and examine Winterson's representation of her gender and sexual identity.

## **WEEKS 10, 11 & 12 FINAL ASSESSMENT TUTORIALS – CW2 due 14/05/2018.**

## **8.0 CORE READING (PRIMARY TEXTS IN THE ORDER THAT THEY WILL BE STUDIED)**

## **8.1 CORE READING (SECONDARY TEXTS (this list will be supplemented by the week by week bibliography on PowerPoint and Moodle)**

- Alabi, Adetayo (2005). *Telling Stories: Continuities and divergences in Black Autobiographics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- Anderson, Linda (2001). *Autobiography*. London: Routledge
- Eakin, Paul John (2004). 'What Are We Reading When We Read Autobiography?' *Narrative* 12 (2) 121-132.
- Eakin, Paul, John (1999). *How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- De Man, Paul (1979). 'Autobiography as De-facement.' *MLN* 94(5) 919-30.
- Harbus, Antoinia (2011). 'Exposure to Life-Writing as an Impact on Autobiographical Memory.' *Memory Studies* 4. 2 206-220.
- LeJeune, Philip (1977). 'Autobiography in the Third Person.' trans. Annette Tomarken, Edward Tomarken Source: *New Literary History*, 9, ( 1), 27-50.
- Moore-Gilbert, Bart (2009). *Post-colonial Life Writing: Culture, Politics and Self-Representation*. London: Routledge.
- Parker, David 2004. Narrative of Autonomy and Narratives of Relationality in Auto/biography. *Auto/Biography Studies* 19:1,2 100-117.
- Polkey, Pauline (1999). *Women's Lives Into Print: the Theory, Practice and Writing of Feminist Autobiography*. Basingstoke, Macmillan.
- Smith, Sidonie and Julia Watson (eds) (1998). *Women, Autobiography, Theory*. Madison, University of Wisconsin Press.
- Stanley, Liz (1995). *The Autobiographical 'I': the Theory and Practice of Life-Writing*. Manchester, Manchester University Press.

## **BACKGROUND READING**

Bloom, Harold ed. (2003). *George Orwell*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers.

Bladek, Marta (2002). "The Place One Had Been Years Ago": Mapping the Past in Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family*'. *Life Writing* 9 (4) 391-406.

Bluemel, Kristin (2004). *George Orwell and the Radical Eccentrics: Intermodernism in Literary London*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Feigel, Lara (2012). "I Am Not a Camera": Camera Consciousness in 1930s Berlin and the Spanish Civil War'. *Textual Practice*. 26 (2) 219-242.

Holderness, Graham, Bryan Loughrey and Nahem Yusaf eds. (1998). *George Orwell*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Kerr, Douglas (2003). *George Orwell*. Tavistok: Northcote House.

Kime-Scott, Bonnie ed. *The Gender of Modernism: a Critical Anthology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Long, Judy 1999. *Telling women's Lives: Subject/ Narrator/Reader/Text* New York: New York University Press.

Orr, Jeffrey (2010). 'Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family* and W.G. Sebald's *The Emigrants*. *Moving Worlds: a Journal of Transcultural Writings*. 10 (2) 31-42.

Page, Norman (1998). *Auden, Isherwood: the Berlin Years*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Polkey, Pauline (1999). *Women's Lives into Print: the Theory, Practice and Writing of Feminist Autobiography*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Pulda, Molly (2007). The Grandmother's Paradox: Mary McCarthy, Michael Ondaatje and Marjane Satrapi'. *A/B Auto/biography* 22(2) 230-149.

Eagleton, Mary and Emma Parker eds (2015). *The History of British Women Writers, Volume X*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Waddington, George (2007). 'Running in the Lear Family: Familial cultural Patrimony in Michael Ondaatje's *Autobiography*'. *A/B Auto/Biography* 22(1) 66-93. 9

**Most of this material is available either in the library or on the Moodle site 2015-16.**

**Journal articles that relate to the work of the writers we are studying will be posted on Moodle in advance of every session. These are not listed in the Module Guide, but please ensure that you cite the correct bibliographical details of these texts.**



**You can also search the library's academic online journal service through 'e-journals/Academic One' on the library website.**