

## Writing the Self

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ENG 4953 | Spring 2018

Meeting times: W 9-11 | Classroom: FLI 0101

*Instructor:* Roger Maioli

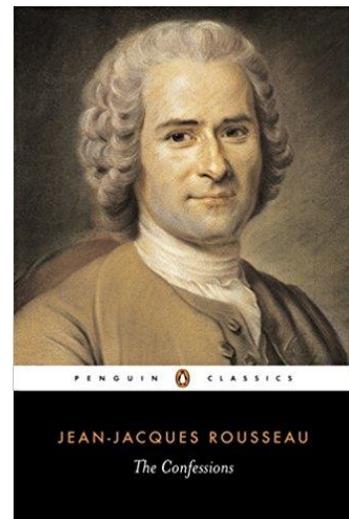
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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

“The universe,” according to a twentieth-century poem, “is made of stories, not of atoms.” We are storytelling creatures, and among the most important stories we know are the ones we tell about ourselves: those mental autobiographies that streamline our past experiences into plots with a meaning and a direction. Now, this story — the story of the self — itself has a history. The way we imagine ourselves as protagonists in secret personal dramas owes much to the movies we’ve seen, the songs we know, and the narratives available in our oral and literary tradition, whose formal features we internalize and learn to imitate. This seminar is about the written half of that tradition. We will confront a number of stories about the self, by men and women writing from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries, in Britain, France, and the United States; and we will examine the resources they developed for articulating, through words, a sense of selfhood and personal identity, at times when those very notions were topics of intense philosophical debate. The authors will include Michel de Montaigne, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Jane Austen, and Herman Melville. Together, they illustrate how the self can be articulated (or not!) through a variety of written genres, from essays and letters to autobiographies and the novel.



**Important:** This will be a reading-intensive seminar involving frequent class participation. You should expect to read an average of 200 pages a week.

## READINGS

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We will be working with seven texts in specific editions. You are welcome to use an electronic version should it be available; you can also re-use a different edition in case you already have one. But if you are planning to buy an edition, then **buy the edition listed below**. Seminars involve frequent reference to the texts, which is a lot easier when everyone has the same pagination. The books are listed in the order in which we will read them:

- ❶ Michel de Montaigne, *The Essays: A Selection*. Translated by M.A. Screech (Penguin Classics, 2004).
- ❷ Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *Selected Letters*. Edited by Isobel Grundy (Penguin Classics, 1997).
- ❸ James Boswell, *London Journal 1762-1763*. Edited by Gordon Turnbull (Penguin Classics, 2014).
- ❹ Ignatius Sancho, *Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, an African*. Edited by Vincent Carretta (Broadview Editions, 2015)
- ❺ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions*. Translated by J.M. Cohen (Penguin Classics, 1953).
- ❻ Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*. Edited by Jane Stabler (Oxford Worlds Classics, 2003).
- ❼ Herman Melville, *Billy Budd, Sailor and Selected Tales*. Edited by Robert Milder (Oxford Worlds Classics, 2009).

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

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The requirements for this course fall under five heads: (a) attendance and participation, (b) quizzes, (c) weekly responses, (d) an in-class presentation, and (e) a final essay. These five requirements will be weighed as follows:

Attendance and participation:	20%
Quizzes:	20%
Weekly responses:	20%
In-class presentation:	15%
Final essay:	25%

Final grades, in turn, will be based on the following scale:

	A	93–100	A-	90–92.9
B+	B	83–86.9	B-	80–82.9
C+	C	73–76.9	C-	70–72.9
D+	D	63–66.9	D-	60–62.9
E		0–59.9		

Here are further details about each requirement:

*a) Attendance and participation.* You should be in class, but because this is a seminar you should also frequently participate in class discussion. The grading policy is that you gain points by participating and lose points by missing class. You begin the semester with 88 points, and you can raise that score by participating in class discussion. You lose points for any of the following reasons: disruptive behavior in class, undue use of the internet during class, or unexcused absences. With regard to the last item, you are entitled to **two** unexcused absences during the semester. (Absences on the first week of class count towards that total!) Each additional unexcused absence will reduce your Attendance and Participation score by a third of a letter — for instance, from 88 (B+) to 85 (B). **Important: Five or more unexcused absences will result in failure. Let me say this again: if you miss five classes without a justification, you will fail the course.**

*b) Quizzes.* There will be a total of seven quizzes, one on each of our main sources. You will be taking the quizzes according to the schedule you will find below. The principle is that whenever we finish reading a source, there will be a quiz. When calculating your final grade for the quizzes, I'll drop your two lowest scores. In other words, only your top 5 scores will count towards your final grade. You can only take a make-up quiz in case of a documented absence.

*c) Weekly responses.* Over the course of the semester you will write a series of responses to the readings (150-200 words). These responses will be posted to Canvas starting the third week of class. They are due **by 10 AM** every Wednesday. I will be explaining them in class, but each response should do one of three things: offer a personal reading of a passage or text, identify a feature of the source that seems to call for an explanation, or pose a question for class discussion. Responses will not be graded for content, but regular submission counts for 20% of your grade. You are allowed to miss **one** of them.

*d) In-class presentation.* This is a little tricky and I will be explaining it in class, but the basics are as follows: You will choose a source on which to give a short presentation in class, and I will create a general presentation schedule. Each presentation will include two people: a Speaker and a Respondent. The Speaker will be responsible for writing the first post on Canvas that week, **by 5 PM** of Tuesday; their presentation will be an expanded version of that post. Everyone will be posting replies to the Speaker's post, including the Respondent. But the Respondent will present an expanded version of their reply in class, immediately after the Speaker. Each presentation (whether by the Speaker or by the Respondent) should be 550-700 words long. They will be followed by a Q&A, and I will be acting as moderator.

*e) Final essay.* This will be a 6–8 page essay in which you will analyze either one or a combination of sources. I will say more about the essay in class. The basic idea is that you should expand your in-class presentation (even though you are free to choose another topic or source). The essay will be due the last day of class. Late essays will lose a third of a letter grade per day that they are late.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK/DATE	READINGS	PAGE COUNT	OTHER ASSIGNMENTS
1. Jan 10	Charles Taylor, <i>Sources of the Self</i> , 111-14, 159-84 (Available on Canvas)	30	
2. Jan 17	Montaigne, <i>The Essays</i> Book I, essays 1, 8, 26, 31, 39, 57, and Book II, essays 1, 5, 8, 37	145	
3. Jan 24	Montaigne, <i>The Essays</i> Book III, essays 2, 3, 6, 13	113	Presentation 1 Quiz on Montaigne
4. Jan 31	Lady Montagu, <i>Selected Letters</i> , 1-246 Letters from 1709 to 1739	246	
5. Feb 7	Lady Montagu, <i>Selected Letters</i> , 247-501 Letters from 1739 to 1762	255	Presentation 2 Quiz on Lady Montagu
6. Feb 14	Boswell, <i>London Journal</i> , 1-155 From Nov. 15, 1762 to Feb. 25, 1763	155	
7. Feb 21	Boswell, <i>London Journal</i> , 155-307 From Feb 26 to Aug 6, 1763 (+ App. I)	153	Presentation 3 Quiz on Boswell
8. Feb 28	Sancho, <i>Letters</i> , 45-182 (All of Volume I)	138	
9. Mar 14	Sancho, <i>Letters</i> , 187-299, 311-16, 333-360 (Volume II, Appendix D, and Appendix F)	149	Presentation 4 Quiz on Sancho
10. Mar 21	Rousseau, <i>Confessions</i> , 17-214 (Books 1-5)	198	
11. Mar 28	Rousseau, <i>Confessions</i> , 215-373 (Books 6-8)	158	Presentation 5
12. Apr 4	Rousseau, <i>Confessions</i> , 374-606 (Books 9-12)	233	Presentation 6 Quiz on Rousseau
13. Apr 11	Austen, <i>Mansfield Park</i> , 3-186, (Beginning to Vol II, Chap VI)	184	

14. Apr 18	Austen, <i>Mansfield Park</i> , 186-372, (Vol. II, Chap. VII to the end)	187	Presentation 7 Quiz on Austen
15. Apr 25	Melville, "Bartleby the Scrivener," 3-41 (The whole story)	39	Quiz on Melville <b>Final Paper due</b>

## **ADDITIONAL COURSE POLICY**

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*Cellphones and computers:* Cellphones are strictly prohibited and should be kept turned off and out of sight during class. Computers are allowed with the wi-fi feature off. All other uses are prohibited.

*Punctuality:* I will take attendance at the beginning of class. If you are not in class at that point, you will be counted as absent.

*Plagiarism:* All written assignments should be your own work. Plagiarizing the work of others (by copying printed or online sources without acknowledgement) is illegal, and you may fail the course if you plagiarize. If you have questions about how to document your sources, or if you want to make sure you are not committing plagiarism without realizing it, please ask me.

*Special accommodations:* Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with the Office of Student Service in order to determine appropriate accommodation. I will be pleased to provide accommodation, but students are responsible for notifying me at the beginning of the semester.

*Counseling and Mental Health Resources:* Students facing difficulties completing the course or who are in need of counseling or urgent help should call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center.

*Sexual Assault and Harassment:* Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are civil rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources here:

[http://www.ufsa.ufl.edu/faculty\\_staff/fees\\_resources\\_policies/addressing\\_sexual\\_misconduct/reporting\\_sexual\\_misconduct/](http://www.ufsa.ufl.edu/faculty_staff/fees_resources_policies/addressing_sexual_misconduct/reporting_sexual_misconduct/)