

PACIFICA GRADUATE INSTITUTE

Mythological Studies Program
EIII & GIII Summer 2005

Myths of the Self:
Memoir and Autobiography MS726
Instructor: Dr. Christine Downing

Office Hours: By appointment

COURSE SYLLABUS

A. Course Description

In a sense this course represents a return to themes and questions you first explored in Hendrika's class, but in the more sophisticated and theoretically-based vein for which your three years at Pacifica have prepared you. It also represents a return to themes and questions that we have considered together in other courses: issues related to genre and to gender, to authenticity and ethical responsibility, the importance of historical context, the challenge of dealing with primary texts.

Our exploration of the mythic aspects of autobiography and memoir will lead us to engage questions about the relation of memory and the imagination, of the individual and the archetypal, of self and others, of narcissism and guilt. We will look at classic examples of the genres (works by Augustine, Rousseau, Jung, Wiesel), and will also consider reflections on the defining characteristics of these genres by literary critics, narrative theorists, depth psychologists and feminists. Students will also have the opportunity to experiment with self-writing."

As you read the assigned memoirs and autobiographies I'd like you to reflect on how these examples relate to your own sense of the relation between *auto* (self), *bios* (life) and *graphie* (writing). I'd like you to think about your sense of what it is to be a self, your sense of the relationship in your own life between past, present and future, your sense of what constitute the most significant moments in your life and whether they conjoin to form some coherent plot (what Aristotle called a "mythos.") If you were to engage in self-writing would it take the form of autobiography or memoir, of diaries or letters? Whom would you be writing to or for?

I am experimenting for the first time with using a Digital Course Reserve Reader rather than a xeroxed and bound one. To access these readings: Login to the website: <http://www.online.pacifica.edu?dcr>. On the Digital Reserve Page enter: Email Address: Pacifica Graduate Institute; Password: lumen. Then click the link for MS726

Although I have listed Jung's *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* and my *The Goddess* on the syllabus, these are really there for you to *review* in relation to the perspectives of this course.

B. Class Schedule and Readings

Session 1:

REFLECTIONS ON THE GENRE

THE FIRST AUTOBIOGRAPHY: AUGUSTINE'S *CONFESSIONS*

REQUIRED READING:

Hampf, Patricia. *I Could Tell You Stories*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2000.
(especially pp. 11-37, 61-102, 166-183, 208-229.)

Augustine, Saint. *Confessions*. Trans. Rex Warner. New York: Penguin, 2001.
(especially Books 1-3, 8, 10, 11.)

On Digital Course Reserve:

Gusdorf, George. "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography." *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*. Ed. James Olney. New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1980. 28-48.

Starobinski, Jean. "The Style of Autobiography." *Literary Style: A Symposium*. Ed. Seymour Chatman. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1971, 73-114.

White, Hayden. "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality." *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987. 1-25.

Ricoeur, Paul. "The Human Experience of Time and Narrative." *Research in Phenomenology* 9. (1979). 17-34.

Supplementary Reading:

Eakin, Paul John. *Touching the World: Reference in Autobiography*. New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1992.

Olney, James. *Memory and Narrative: The Weave of Life-Writing*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1998.

Wills, Gary. *Saint Augustine*. New York: Viking, 1999.
(Also available on audiotape.)

Session 2:

THE FIRST MODERN AUTOBIOGRAPHY: ROUSSEAU'S *CONFESSIONS*
AUTOBIOGRAPHY AFTER FREUD: JUNG'S *MEMORIES, DREAMS,*
REFLECTIONS

REQUIRED READING:

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Confessions*. Trans. Angela Scholar. New York: Oxford UP, 2000.
(especially Bks 1-3, 7, 12.)

Jung, C.G. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. New York: Random House, 1961.
(especially "Introduction." "Prologue." chapters: 1, 2, 6, 10, 12.)

Downing, Christine. "Re-Visioning Autobiography: The Bequest of Freud and Jung." *Preludes: Essays on the Ludic Imagination*. New York: iUniverse, 2005, ch. 21.

On Digital Course Reserve:

Shamdasani, Sonu. "Memories, Dreams, Omissions." *Spring 57*, 1995. 115-137.

Bair, Deirdre. *Jung: A Biography*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2003. 585-617, 626-640.

Hillman, James. "The Pandaemonium of Images." *Healing Fiction*. Barrytown, New York: Station Hill Press, 1983. 53-81.

Session 3:

HOLOCAUST MEMOIRS: ELIE WIESEL'S *NIGHT*
SELF-WRITING BY WOMEN: MY OWN EXPERIMENTS

REQUIRED READING:

Wiesel, Elie. *Night*. New York: Bantam Books, 1987.

Downing, Christine. *The Goddess*. New York: Continuum, 1996.

Downing, Christine. "Dear Chris. . . Love, Christine." *Preludes: Essays on the Ludic Imagination*. New York: iUniverse, 2005, ch. 1.

Downing, Christine. "Imagination and Memory: Holocaust Reverberations." *The Luxury of Afterwards*. New York: iUniverse, 2004. ch. 1.

Downing, Christine, "how Little It Resembles Memory." *The Luxury of Afterwards*. New York: iUniverse, 2004. ch. 2.

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Bachelard, Gaston. "Reveries Toward Childhood." *The Poetics of Reverie*. Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1960. 97-141.

Supplementary Reading:

Schwarz, Daniel. *Imagining the Holocaust*. New York: St Martin's P, 1999.

Perreault, Jeanne. *Writing Selves: Contemporary Feminist Autography*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1995.

C. Course Requirements

A well-written 10 - 14 page paper. I see three very different kinds of papers as each an appropriate response to the course: an attempt at some preliminary autobiographical writing of your own, a response to some autobiographical text that is particularly interesting to you, theoretical or critical reflections on some aspect of the genre. If you want to consult with me by e-mail about your paper, I'm available at chris@orcasonline.com

Papers should be mailed to:

Christine Downing
Pacifica Graduate Institute
249 Lambert Road
Carpinteria, CA 93013

•E and G student papers (or Incomplete Forms) must be postmarked on or before September 20, 2005.

Incompletes:

Students are allowed four Incompletes per academic year. Should you choose to take an Incomplete in this class, the completed paper would need to be postmarked by October 11, 2005 for E & G students. When you complete the paper send it directly to the faculty *and include a Grade Change Form*.

Additional Bibliography

- Benstock, Shari. ed. *The Private Self: Theory and Practice in Women's Autobiographical Writings*. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: U of North Carolina P, 1988.
- Brodski, Bella. and Celeste Schenck, eds. *Life/lines: Theorizing Women's Autobiography*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell UP, 1988.
- Eakin, Paul John. *Touching the World: Reference in Autobiography*. New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1992.
- Freeman, Mark. *Rewriting the Self: History, Memory, Narrative*. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Gilmore, Leigh. *Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Women's Self-Representation*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell UP, 1994.
- Hartle, Ann. *The Modern Self in Rousseau's Confessions: A Reply to St. Augustine*, Notre Dame, Indiana: U of Notre Dame P, 1983.
- Jelinek, Estelle, ed. *Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana UP, 1986
- . *The Tradition of Women's Autobiography*. Boston: Twayne, 1986.
- Langer, Lawrence. *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination*. New Haven: Yale U P, 1975.
- Olney, James. *Memory and Narrative: The Weave of Life-Writing*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1998.
- . "Jung: My Personal Myth." *Metaphors of Self: The Meaning of Autobiography*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972. .
- Perreault, Jeanne , *Writing Selves: Contemporary Feminist Autography*, Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1995
- Smith, Sidonie. *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Mmarginality and the Fictions of Self-representation*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana UP, 1987
- Schwarz, Daniel. *Imagining the Holocaust*, New York: St Martin's Press, 1999.
- Weintraub, Karl. *The Value of the Individual: Self and Circumstance in Autobiography*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1978.

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Wiesel, Elie. *Memoirs: All Rivers Run to the Sea*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995

Wills, Gary. *Saint Augustine*. New York: Viking, 1999.
(Also available on audiotape.)

Young-Bruehl, Elizabeth. *Subject to Biography: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and Writing Women's Lives*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1998.

Young, James E. *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana UP, 1990,