

## Autobiography & Self-Portraiture - Syllabus

**LEH 300, Online-Hybrid (section ONH-03)**

Spring 2007 - Mondays, 2:00-4:30 p.m.  
Carman Hall, room 211

**Prof. Thomas C. Spear**

Dept. of Languages & Literatures, Carman 257  
718-960-8215

**Blackboard:** <www.cuny.edu> = <portal.cuny.edu> or directly <blackboard-doorway.cuny.edu>

**Lehman library:** <www.lehman.edu/provost/library>

“île en île”: <www.lehman.cuny.edu/ile.en.ile>

French Resources: <www.lehman.edu/deanhum/langlit/french>

### **Weekly assignments will be updated and posted on Blackboard.**

Week 1. Monday, January 29.

First day of class. Course objectives. Terms for autobiography, forms, theories and practices.

Week 2. Monday, February 5.

What is Autobiography? Rousseau (*Confessions*). Critical perspectives.

Blackboard introduction; student introductions and first postings.

Introduction to Duras, *The Lover*.

Week 3. Monday, February 12 = holiday

THURSDAY Feb 15 class (Monday schedule)

Duras, *The Lover*.

Week 4. Monday, February 19 = holiday

WEDNESDAY Feb 21 class (Monday schedule)

Duras, *The Lover*. Video excerpts of Duras interview.

Week 5. Monday, February 26.

Autofiction. Sarraute. Doubrovsky. Jean Genet, *Thief's Journal*.

First short paper due (Duras).

Week 6. Monday, March 5.

Jean Genet, *Thief's Journal*.

Week 7. Monday, March 12.

Jean Genet, *Thief's Journal*.

Week 8. Monday, March 19.

Gabrielle Roy, *The Road Past Altamont*. Régine Robin.

Week 9. Monday, March 26.

Régine Robin? (TBA). Film short, “The Lake.” Roy. *The Road Past Altamont*.

Second short paper due (option A: Genet). Deadline for approval of individual project theme.

April 2 AND April 9 = two week holiday

Week 10. Monday, April 16.

(wrap-up, Roy, *The Road Past Altamont*).

Visual Self-Portraiture: Painting (Rembrandt, Vincent Van Gogh, Frida Kahlo, Andy Warhol, Chuck Close...) & Photography (Claude Cahun, Robert Mapplethorpe...)

Confirmation of projects. Assignment of dates of presentations.

Week 11 Monday, April 23.

Chamoiseau, *School Days*. Second short paper due (option B: Roy).

Week 12. Monday, April 30.

Chamoiseau, *School Days*.

Cf. Film (Palcy), *Sugar Cane Alley / Rue Cases-nègres*. Other forms of autobiographical film.

Exposés (student presentations).

Week 13. Monday, May 7. Chamoiseau, *School Days*.

Online autobiography. Exposés (student presentations).

Week 14. Monday, May 14

last day of class. Forms and practices of autobiography, autofiction, self-portraiture.

final exam: date and time to be announced (May 21?)

Tentative program for two courses: Mondays, 2:00-4:30 p.m., Carman Hall, room 237

Students should plan schedule to be available and in class for that entire schedule.

2:00-2:45 LEH 301 - discussion group in English

2:45-3:45 - reserved for both sections for lectures, films, group discussion (in English)

3:45-4:30 FRE 352 - discussion group in French

	Grading structure		
	LEH 300 (English)		FRE 352
Informal online postings (1x at least 10 weeks)	20	10+	notes de lecture en ligne (style informel)
preparation and participation in class		10+	préparation, participation
short papers	20	30	3x 2 pages, compositions courtes
oral presentation of project		10	exposé
project paper with bibliography		20	1x 5 pages avec bibliographie, projet personnel
final exam (½ in class, ½ take home essays)		20	examen final
		100	

Please turn OFF cell phone, be in class prepared and on time, and refrain from eating in the classroom.

## **Autobiography & Self-Portraiture**

### Course description:

Traditionally, an autobiography carries an author's intention to tell the truth. Focusing on works where this truth is "bent" will permit us to differentiate autobiography from forms of autofiction, chronicles, memoirs and diaries. Close readings of autobiographical narratives will show how authors emphasize their uniqueness through an individual perspective of religion, "race," or a particular social or economic standpoint. Other autobiographies emphasize the larger community, and portray a specific national and historical context. In childhood narratives, an introduction to books, schools and often a foreign language offers constraints but also spaces of creative liberation for burgeoning writers. We will also examine self-portraits by painters and photographers, autobiographical narrative in film, and forms of constructed autobiography, self-promotion and narcissism found online.

Self-portraiture and autobiography operate a selection from memory that may include fictional or exaggerated events, characters and chronologies. We will focus on works where the truth-or-fiction element of autofiction and autobiography is most pronounced. Narrative works will be selected from a French-language canon. Course readings will include some short theoretical essays. Individual projects can focus on a particular painter or photographer, or be drawn from a work by one of many suggested authors.

## **Blackboard Discussion Board Forums**

- 1. Open Forum**
- 2. For further reading**
- 3. Visual Autobiography: Painting, Photography, & Film**

### **Narrative**

4. Duras, Marguerite. *The Lover* (1984). New York: Pantheon, 1998.
5. Genet, Jean. *Thief's Journal* (1949). Trans. Bernard Frechtman. New York: Grove, 1964. New York: Grove/Atlantic, 1987. New York: Olympia Press, 2004. [www.olympiapress.com](http://www.olympiapress.com)
6. Roy, Gabrielle. *The Road Past Altamont* (1966). Trans. Joyce Marshall. Lincoln: U. of Nebraska, 1993.
7. Chamoiseau, Patrick. *School Days* (1994). Trans. Linda Coverdale. Lincoln: U. of Nebraska, 1997.
8. **Online Autobiography:**  
Blogs, Cyborgs, MySpace, forms of online autobiography.
9. **Personal Projects**

### Recommended Titles (in English):

X = in bookstore

- X Begag, Azouz. *Shantytown Kid (Le Gone du Chaâba 1986)*. Trans. Naïma Wolf and Alec G. Hargreaves. Lincoln: U. of Nebraska Press, 2007.
- Bugul, Ken. *The Abandoned Baobab; The Autobiography of a Senegalese Woman. (Le Baobab fou 1975)*. Trans. Marjolijn de Jager. Brooklyn: Lawrence Hill Books, 1991. (out-of-print?)
- Choukri, Mohamed. *For Bread Alone (Le pain nu)*. Trans. Paul Bowles. 1974, San Francisco: City Lights Books 1987, London: Saqi Books, 1993, 2000. (out-of-print?)
- X Condé, Maryse. *Tales from the Heart (Le Coeur à rire et à pleurer, contes vrais de mon enfance 1999)*. Trad. Richard Philcox. New York: Soho Press, 2001.
- X Danticat, Edwidge. *The Butterfly's Way: Voices from the Haitian Diaspora in the United States*. New York: Soho Press, 2001.
- Djebar, Assia. *Fantasia, an Algerian Cavalcade (L'Amour, la fantasia 1985)*. Trans. Dorothy S. Blair. New York: Heinemann, 1993. (out-of-print?)
- X Lorde, Audre. *Zami, a New Spelling of my Name*. Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1982.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Confessions*. Penguin Classics, 1953.
- Saint-Augustine. *Confessions (400)*. Penguin Classics, 1961.
- Sarraute, Nathalie. *Childhood (Enfance, 1983)*. Trans. Barbara Wright. New York: Braziller, 1984, 1985. (out-of-print?)
- X Sebbar, Leïla, ed. *An Algerian Childhood: a Collection of Autobiographical Narratives*. Trans. Marjolijn de Jager.. St. Paul, MN: Ruminator Books, 2001.
- X Soyinka, Wole. *Ake: The Years of Childhood*. Random House/Vintage: 1989.
- Zobel, Joseph. *Black Shack Alley (La Rue case-nègres 1950)*. Trad. Keith Q. Warner. Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1980.

### Critical Bibliography (in English).

® - Reserve, Lehman Library | # - available electronically (Blackboard)

- # Atlas, James. "The Age of the Literary Memoir is Now". *The New York Times Magazine* 12 May 1996: 25-27.
- ® Begley, Adam. "The I's have it; Duke's 'Moi' Critics Expose Themselves." *Lingua Franca* 4.3 (March/April 1994): 54-9.
- # Célestin, Roger. "Autofiction and Beyond, an Interview with Serge Doubrovsky." *Sites* 1.2 (Fall 1997): 397-405.
- ® Eakin, Paul John. *Fictions in Autobiography, Studies in the Art of Self Invention*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1985. PS366 .A88 E26 1985
- ® —. *Touching the World: Reference in Autobiography*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992. Available via ebrary.
- . *How Our Lives Become Stories*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1999.
- # Elsley, Judy. "Inherited Slides: Photo(auto)biography." *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature* 51.2 (1997): 19-30.

- Gilmore, Leigh. *Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Women's Self-Representation*. Cornell University Press, 1994. PN98.W64 G55 1994
- # de Grazia, Edward. "An Interview with Jean Genet." *Cardozo Studies in Law and Literature* 5.2 (Autumn, 1993): 307-324.
- # Kelly, Dorothy. "The Cracked Mirror: Roland Barthes's Anti-Autobiography *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*." *French Literature Series* 12 (1985): 122-128.
- Lejeune, Philippe. *On Autobiography*. (Ed. Paul John Eakin; Trans. Katherine Leary.) Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.
- ® Miller, Nancy K. *Getting Personal; Feminist Occasions and other Autobiographical Acts*. New York: Routledge, 1991. PN98.W64 M55 1991
- # —. "Facts, Pacts, Acts." *Profession* 1992: 10-14.
- # —. "Public Statements Private Lives: Academic Memoirs for the Nineties." *Signs* 22.4 (Summer 1997): 981-1015.
- # —. "Representing Others: Gender and the Subjects of Autobiography." *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 6.1 (Spring 1994): 1-27.
- Reynolds, Dwight F., ed. *Interpreting the Self: Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition*. Berkeley: U. of California, 2001. <<http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft2c6004x0>>.
- Rodríguez, Juana María. "Scripting Autobiographical Subjectivity Online: Confessions of a Latina Cyber-Slut." *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies* 15.2 (Fall 2000): 223-47.
- ® Sheringham, Michael. *French Autobiography: Devices and Desires: Rousseau to Perec*. New York/Oxford: Oxford, 1993. PQ771 .S48 1993
- Smith, Sidonie and Julia Watson. *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader*. Madison: U. of Wisconsin Press, 1998.
- # Smith, Sidonie. "Self, Subject, and Resistance: Marginalities and Twentieth-Century Autobiographical Practice." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 9.1 (Spring 1990): 11-24.
- # Spear, Thomas C. "Autofiction and National Identity." *Sites* 2.1 (Spring 1998): 89-105.

### **For French readers / en français :**

- Colonna, Vincent. *Autofiction & autres mythomanies littéraires*. Paris: Tristram, 2004.
- # Darrieussecq, Marie. "L'Autofiction, un genre pas sérieux." *Poétique* 107 (septembre 1996): 369-380.
- Despentes, Virginie. *King Kong théorie*. Paris: Grasset, 2006.
- ® Doubrovsky, Serge. *Autobiographiques ; de Corneille à Sartre*. Paris: PUF, 1988. PQ771 .D6 1988
- Gasparini, Philippe. *Est-il je ? Roman autobiographique et autofiction*. Paris: Seuil, 2004.
- Harel, Simon. *Le récit de soi*. Montréal: XYZ, 1997.
- , sous la direction de. *Le Cabinet d'autofictions*. Montréal: CELAT / UQÀM, 2000.
- Hornung, Alfred and Ernstpeter Ruhe, eds. *Autobiographie & Avant-garde*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1992. (Alain Buisine, "Serge Doubrovsky ou l'autobiographie postmoderne": 159-68.)

- Lejeune, Philippe. *L'Autobiographie en France*. Paris: Seuil, 1971.
- . *Le Pacte autobiographique*. Paris: Seuil, 1975.
- . *Moi aussi*. Paris: Seuil, 1986.
- . *Pour l'autobiographie; chroniques*. Paris: Seuil, 1998.
- . “Cher Écran...”: *Journal personnel, ordinateur, Internet*. Paris: Seuil, 2000.
- Robbe-Grillet, Alain. “Je n’ai jamais parlé d’autre chose que de moi”. *L’Auteur et le manuscrit*. Sous la direction de Michel Contat. Paris: PUF, 1991: 37-50. [Salgas, Jean-Pierre. « Robbe-Grillet: “Je n’ai jamais parlé d’autre chose que de moi” »]. *La Quinzaine littéraire* 432 (16-31 janvier 1985): 6-7.]
- ® Robin, Régine. *Le Golem de l’écriture: De l’autofiction au Cybersoi*. Montréal: XYZ, 1998, 2005. PN56 .D67 R59 2005
- . *Cybermigrances*. Montréal: XYZ, 2004.
- . “Le Texte Cyborg” *Études françaises* 36.2 (2000): 11-38.  
<<http://www.erudit.org/revue/etudfr/2000/v36/n2/005262ar.pdf>>.
- de Toro, Alfonso. “La ‘Nouvelle Autobiographie’ postmoderne ou L’Impossibilité d’une histoire à la première personne: Robbe-Grillet, *Le Miroir qui revient* et de Doubrovsky, *Le Livre Brisé*.” *Autobiographie Revisited: Theorie und Praxis neuer autobiographischer Diskurse in der französischen, spanischen und lateinamerikanischen Literatur*. Alfonso de Toro et Claudia Gronemann, eds. Hildesheim/Zürich/New York: Olms, 2004: 79-113.  
<<http://www.uni-leipzig.de/~detoro/sonstiges/LaNouvelle.pdf>>.
- Vilain, Philippe. *Défense de Narcisse*. Paris: Grasset, 2005. PQ145.6 .S32 V55 2005

### **Conversations / entretiens (en français):**

- Cocteau par Cocteau*. Jean Cocteau; entretiens avec Pierre Brive (1962). Paris: l’Archipel, 2003.
- Duras, Marguerite. *Les Parleuses*. Entretiens avec Xavière Gauthier. Paris: Minuit, 1974.
- . *Les Lieux de Marguerite Duras*. En collaboration avec Michèle Porte. Paris: Minuit, 1977.
- . “Apostrophes”. Antenne 2 avec Bernard Pivot. Réalisation Jean Cazenave, diffusion le 28 septembre 1984.
- Genet, Jean. *L’Ennemi déclaré*, textes et entretiens. Albert Dichy, éd. Paris: Gallimard, 1991.
- Laâbi, Abdellatif. *Un continent humain*. Entretiens avec Lionel Bourg et Monique Fischer. Paris: Paroles d’Aube, 1997.
- Laferrère, Dany. *J’écris comme je vis*, entretien avec Bernard Magnier. Outremont / Vénissieux : Lanctôt / La passe du vent, 2000.
- Robin, Régine. “Portraits”, une série de neuf émissions réalisées par Stéphane Lepine, Radio-Canada. Novembre 2001-février 2002.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. “Autoportrait à Soixante-Dix Ans” (1975). *Situations X: Politique et Autobiographie*. Paris: Gallimard, 1976: 133-226.

### **sites d’auteurs :**

- Tahar Bekri : <http://tahar.bekri.free.fr>
- Renaud Camus : <http://perso.wanadoo.fr/renaud.camus> & [www.renaud-camus.org](http://www.renaud-camus.org)
- Chloé Delaume : [www.chloedelaume.net](http://www.chloedelaume.net)
- Assia Djebar : [www.assiadjebar.net](http://www.assiadjebar.net)

Irène Frain : [www.figuresdestyle.com/frain](http://www.figuresdestyle.com/frain)  
Sophie Germain : [www.sophiegermain.com](http://www.sophiegermain.com)  
Abdellatif Laâbi : [www.laabi.net](http://www.laabi.net)  
Amin Maalouf : <http://membres.lycos.fr/amaalouf>  
Jean Métellus : [www.jeanmetellus.com](http://www.jeanmetellus.com)  
**Régine Robin**, *Papiers perdus*, [www.er.uqam.ca/nobel/r24136](http://www.er.uqam.ca/nobel/r24136)  
Abdourahman Waberi : <http://waberi.free.fr>  
(others listed in Blackboard)

### **blogues :**

Jean-Claude Bourdais, *Journal de Nogent le Rotrou* : [www.jcbourdais.net](http://www.jcbourdais.net)  
Alain Mabanckou : [www.alainmabanckou.net](http://www.alainmabanckou.net)  
Jean-Marc Tera'ituatini Pambrun, "L'Épicurien" : <http://blog.lecriturien.org>

Afriblog = [www.afriblog.com](http://www.afriblog.com)  
Blogueurs à Paris = [www.paname-ensemble.com](http://www.paname-ensemble.com)  
Montréal = <http://yulblog.org>  
New York = [www.nycbloggers.com](http://www.nycbloggers.com)

### **Autobiographies / Autofictions (2<sup>e</sup> liste):**

Toute la série "Haute Enfance", par exemple:

Confiant, Raphaël. *Ravines du devant jour*. Paris: Gallimard, 1993, 1995; *Le Cahier de romances*, 2000.

Maximin, Daniel. *Tu, c'est l'enfance*. Paris: Gallimard, 2004.

Ollivier, Émile. *Mille Eaux*. Paris: Gallimard, 1999.

(Ahmed Abodehman, Rabah Belamri, Régine Detambel etc.)

Bâ, Amadou Hampaté. *Amkoullel, l'enfant peul*. Arles: Actes Sud, 1991. *Oui, mon commandant!* Arles: Actes Sud, 1994.

Barthes, Roland. *Roland Barthes*. Paris: Seuil, 1975.

Begag, Azouz. *Le Gone du Chaâba*. Paris: Seuil, 1986.

Djebar, Assia. *L'Amour la fantasia*. Paris: Lattès, 1985; Casablanca: Eddif, 1992.

Duras, Marguerite. *L'Amant*. Paris: Minuit, 1984.

Khatibi, Abdelkader. *La Mémoire tatouée : autobiographie d'un décolonisé*. Paris: Denoël, 1971, 1982.

Lefèvre, Kim. *Métisse blanche*. Paris: Barrault, 1989.

Perec, Georges. *W. ou le souvenir d'enfance*. Paris: Denoël, 1975.

Robbe-Grillet, Alain. *Le Voyageur*. Paris: Seuil, 2003; *Préface à ma vie d'écrivain*. Paris: Seuil, 2005.

Sebbar, Leïla, textes réunis par. *Une enfance algérienne*. Paris: Gallimard, 1999.

Sebbar, Leïla, sous la direction de. *Une enfance Outremer*. Paris: Seuil, 2001. PQ3809 .E542 2001

**Film** (working list)

- Calle, Sophie and Greg Shephard. *No Sex last night*, in French and English, 76 min, 1996.
- Chedid, Andrée. *Les saisons de passage*.?? XX
- Cozarinsky, Edgardo. *Jean Cocteau: Autoportrait d'un inconnu*, in French, 66 min, 1985.
- Guerdjou, Bourlem. *Vivre au paradis / Living in Paradise*, in French and Arabic, 105 min, 1998.  
(based on Brahim Benaïcha novel)
- Palcy, Euzhan. *Rue Case-nègres / Sugar Cane Alley*. In French (English subtitles). 107 min, 1983.
- Varda, Agnès. *Les glaneurs et la glaneuse The Gleamers and I*. XX

**Online Ressources:**

- “Les Archives de soi”, bibliographie (Librairie Compagnie)  
<[http://www.librairie-compagnie.fr/envitrine/themes/archives\\_soi.htm](http://www.librairie-compagnie.fr/envitrine/themes/archives_soi.htm)>.
- Association pour l'Autobiographie et le patrimoine autobiographique. <<http://sitapa.free.fr>>.
- Colonna, Vincent. “L'autofiction, essai sur la fictionalisation de soi en littérature.” Thesis / PhD  
(20 March 1989), Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), Paris.  
<<http://tel.ccsd.cnrs.fr/documents/archives0/00/00/66/09/index.html>>.
- Doubrovsky. Serge Doubrovsky et l'autofiction, site de l'Université de Birmingham  
<<http://artsweb.bham.ac.uk/artsFrenchStudies/sergedou>>.
- Lejeune, Philippe. “AutoPact,” le site de Philippe Lejeune (bibliographies),  
<<http://www.autopacte.org>>.

**Journals / Revues :**

- a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*, <<http://facstaff.uww.edu/hoganj/ab.htm>>.
- Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*. (formerly *Sites*) Two special issues on  
Autobiography, 1.2 (Fall 1997) and 2.1 (Spring 1998).
- French Literature Series* (“Autobiography in French Literature”) 12 (1985).
- Genre* 26.1 (Spring 1993) (special issue on Doubrovsky).
- Le Magazine Littéraire*, numéro spécial 409 “Les écritures du moi” (mai 2002).
- Research in African Literatures*. Special Issue: Autobiography and African Literature. Patricia  
Geesey, ed. 28.2 (Summer 1997).