



## **DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND EDUCATION**

### **COURSE OUTLINE – WINTER 2013**

#### **SO2950 AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

#### **Section A3**

**(University Transfer - 3 Credits: Calgary, Lethbridge, Athabasca, Augustana, Grant MacEwan, UVic)**

**INSTRUCTOR:** Alan Segal

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**OFFICE:** C410

**E-MAIL:** asegal@gprc.ab.ca

**OFFICE HOURS:** Mondays and Tuesdays: 13:30 - 14:15. Wednesdays: After the Night Class.  
Or by appointment.

**PREREQUISITE(S)/CO-REQUISITE:** SO1000

#### **REQUIRED TEXT/RESOURCE MATERIALS:**

Reading Autobiography: A Guide For Interpreting Life Narratives (Second Edition) - Sidonie Smith & Julia Watson

Mark Twain's Autobiography 1910-2010 - Michael Kupperman

Son Of Hamas - Mosab Hassan Yousef

A Long Way Gone - Ishmael Beah

**CALENDAR DESCRIPTION:** In contemporary western culture the personal asserts itself vigorously through theatre, music, film, books, comics, and now, in a more accessible significance, technology. Facebook, YouTube, chat lines, and an array of similar outlets, indicate our search for referents of individual lives. This course opens a door to the varieties of representation of ourselves. It explores the meanings of autobiography, and how social contexts endorse, foster, inhibit, or valorize it.

**CREDIT/CONTACT HOURS:** 3 University Credits

**DELIVERY MODE(S):** Class and Group Discussion, Lectures, Film Analyses

**TRANSFERABILITY:** \*\*\* Grades of 'D' or 'D+' may not be acceptable for transfer to other post-secondary institutions. Students must be aware it is their responsibility to contact receiving institutions to ensure transferability.

**GRADING CRITERIA:**

GRADING CONVERSION CHART			
Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guidelines	Designation
A+	4.0	95 – 100	EXCELLENT
A	4.0	90 – 94	
A-	3.7	87 – 89	FIRST CLASS STANDING
B+	3.3	83 – 86	
B	3.0	80 – 82	GOOD
B-	2.7	77 – 79	
C+	2.3	73 – 76	SATISFACTORY
C	2.0	65 – 72	
C-	1.7	60 – 64	
D+	1.3	55 – 59	MINIMAL PASS
D	1.0	50 – 54	
F	0.0	0 – 49	FAIL
WF	0.0	0	FAIL, withdrawal after the deadline

**NOTE:** On the College's marking grid there is no D-. Therefore no such final mark will be recorded. However, for the course assignments, I will use D- as an additional non-failing mark.

## EVALUATION:

Academic assignments for this course emphasize synthesis of ideas from a sociological standpoint, and the best questions you can think of to advance that synthesis. Analysis does not mean just reporting what others have said on a topic. Important as this is, other authors' ideas or conclusions are valuable because they add insight or specific details that help you to ask questions about the topic you have selected. My assignments are a philosophical inquiry that is advanced through your and others' investigations. Deciding what questions are worth raising is an important part of analysis. Conclusions can be valuable but aren't obligatory for any of my assignments.

### *Tabulating Grades:*

All of your assignments will receive a letter mark. At the end of the course I will add the Total Grade Points you have received based on the letter-grades your assignments have received. The grid above shows you the Grade Point Value for each letter. Maximum Grade Points available from all your assignments for this course is 14. Attaining a Grade Point Total of 14 is the same achievement as receiving 100%. When I have your Total Grade Point I will divide it by 14. A percentage will be derived based on this calculation, and the percentage will be reconverted to a final grade according to the grid above.

## **Assignments**

### ***Midterm Essay: (F, D- to A+) [Maximum 4 Points Out Of 14 = 29%]***

An essay of 1000 words minimum that presents your autobiography, life history, etc. You will reflect on how different forms of representation communicated to you through the main text and lectures, might impact the account you give and how you express it. In other words you will consider how you might change your autobiography, if at all, were you to utilize different autobiographical forms and concepts. No research is necessary beyond what is assigned for the course.

Due Date: Last class before the winter break.

### ***Final Essay: (F, D- to A+) [Maximum 4 Points Out Of 14 = 29%]***

One essay based on an autobiography of whatever form. You will draw on concepts from the main text and lectures for the course, to analyze your selection. Your purpose will not be to summarize the selection, but to offer a substantive sociological analysis of it. Think of the questions we have raised in the course about autobiographies. The minimum length for this assignment is 1800 words. All research must be cited in the text and in a References section at the end, according to MLA style.

Due Date: First Class of April

***Two Journals: (F, C+ to B) (Maximum 6 Grade Points Out Of 14 = 42%)***

Each journal is to be at least 400 words. Any thought or observation regarding autobiography, ideas introduced in class discussions or lectures, class interaction, personal experience, etc., is suitable. Observations about, and suggestions for, the course are also suitable. No research is necessary or expected. The journals are an informal type of communication with me. Grammar and general writing clarity are expected in all written assignments in university courses. While recognizing that we speak and write informally when communicating our personal observations, the journals should be coherent and as articulate as possible. Evaluations will reflect this expectation.

Due Dates: February 1<sup>st</sup> and March 16<sup>th</sup>.

**\*\*Grammar is important to communicating precise meaning. Therefore, while it will not be valued as highly as content, it will be evaluated and therefore can affect your mark.**

**\*\*\* JOURNALS ARE SUBJECT TO LATENESS PENALTIES OF ONE GRADE FOR EACH DAY PAST THE DEADLINE. ESSAYS ARE SUBJECT TO LATENESS PENALTIES OF ONE GRADE LEVEL PER CALENDAR DAY BEYOND THE DUE DATE. THERE IS ALSO A ONE-GRADE PENALTY FOR ASSIGNMENTS THAT ARE LESS THAN THE MINIMUM LENGTH.**

**\*\*\*\*ALL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE SENT BY EMAIL, TO MY COLLEGE ACCOUNT:**

**[asegal@gprc.ab.ca](mailto:asegal@gprc.ab.ca) ALSO, YOU MUST INCLUDE THE WORD 'ASSIGNMENT' IN THE SUBJECT LINE, AND INDICATE WHICH ASSIGNMENT IT IS.**

***Discussion Bonus: (A, B, C, D)***

Every person in the course may (but not necessarily will), receive a bonus mark based on a combination of the frequency and quality of the participation. Discussion postings to a Moodle discussion forum also will be considered class participation. You will be eligible for a bonus mark only if you display commitment to the course by reading the books and completing all written assignments. Although attendance is not relevant to the regular assignments for the course, it is important to your eligibility for a bonus mark. Eligibility for the bonus is nullified if you are absent for more than 2 classes. The bonus mark offers an A, B, C, or D. No plus or minus signs will be used. If you receive a bonus mark, it will be added to your overall grade total prior to working out a final mark. Bonus grades will not result in more than a 3-level rise in final grades.

## **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:**

University courses provide the best intellectual and perhaps social experience, when students arrive prepared for the day's work. My classes are heavily discussion -oriented and therefore require commitment from students.

1. Read assignments.
2. Participate in class conversation about the material.
3. Complete all written work.
4. Indicate on submitted material your name; section and course number; and which assignment is being sent to me.
5. All written work must be sent via email to [asegal@gprc.ab.ca](mailto:asegal@gprc.ab.ca) You MUST use the word 'assignment' in the subject line.
6. \*\*\* Electronic Devices: People who must have contact with others during class time may leave their cell phones on 'vibrate', and leave the room if a response is required. Otherwise, texting or use of phones will result in you having to miss that particular class. Please do not put me in a position of having to do this.

## **STATEMENT ON PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING:**

In an academic setting, presenting others' work as your own is a serious violation. However, referencing articles and books and online academic products do not prevent you from building on their ideas and speculations. For a more precise definition of plagiarism and its consequences, refer to the Student Conduct section of the College Admission Guide at <http://www.gprc.ab.ca/programs/calendar/> or the College Policy on Student Misconduct: Plagiarism and Cheating at [www.gprc.ab.ca/about/administration/policies/\\*\\*](http://www.gprc.ab.ca/about/administration/policies/**)

\*\*Note: all Academic and Administrative policies are available on the same page.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE/TENTATIVE TIMELINE:**

1. Introduction to SO2950
- 2: Chapters 1 & 9 - Reading Autobiography:

Narratives, definitions, and subjectivity are introduced to you in relation to autobiography. What are they and why should we consider them sociologically pertinent to autobiography? Why would anyone need strategies for reading autobiographies?

- 3: Chapters 2 & 3 - Reading Autobiography; Chapters 1 – 10 - Son of Hamas  
What are autobiographical subjects, and autobiographical acts? Might there be any self-referencing experience that would not rank as an autobiographical act? How are acts related to autobiography?
4. Chapter 5 - Reading Autobiography; Chapters 11 - Afterword - Son of Hamas
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6. Music and Autobiography
7. Mark Twain's Autobiography 1910 – 2010; Chapter 4 - Reading Autobiography
8. Chapters 1 -15 - A Long Way Gone
9. Chapters 16 – 21 - A Long Way Gone
- 10: Chapter 6 - Reading Autobiography
11. Lecture: Sigmund Freud, Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Homi Babha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Judith Butler
12. Lecture: Colonialism, Postcolonialism, Race, Gender, Sexuality, Myth
13. Chapters 7 & 8 - Reading Autobiography