What impulses drive the writers of autobiographical work? What expectations shape the readers of such work? How do autobiographical narratives depict the relationship between personal experience and history, the present and the past, the individual and the collective? To explore these questions, we’ll read the following works:

Augustine’s *Confessions* (398)
Jean Jacques Rousseau’s *Confessions* (written 1769, published 1982)
Lev Tolstoy’s *Confession* (1880)
Sei Shonagon’s *Pillow Book* (c. 1001)
Harriet Jacobs’ *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861).
Frederick Douglass’s *Narrative of an American Slave* (1845)
Primo Levi’s *If This is a Man / Survival in Auschwitz* (1947)
Virginia Woolf’s “*A Sketch of the Past,*” (written 1938; published 1976).

Secondary reading may include work by Philippe Lejeune (on the autobiographical pact), James Olney, Nancy K. Miller, and others.

Course requirements include several short analytic papers (from 5 to 6 pages), some autobiographical writing, and a final exam.

This course fulfills a Humanities I, Tier 2 requirement.