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

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:


COURSE REQUIREMENTS

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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>93–100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87–89.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83–86.9</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77–79.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73–76.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67–69.9</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>63–66.9</td>
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<td>E</td>
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<td>A-</td>
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<td>B-</td>
<td>80–82.9</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70–72.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60–62.9</td>
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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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK/DATE</th>
<th>READINGS</th>
<th>PAGE COUNT</th>
<th>OTHER ASSIGNMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Jan 10</td>
<td>Charles Taylor, <em>Sources of the Self</em>, 111-14, 159-84 (Available on Canvas)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2. Jan 17 | Montaigne, *The Essays*  
Book I, essays 1, 8, 26, 31, 39, 57, *and*  
Book II, essays 1, 5, 8, 37 | 145 |  |
| 3. Jan 24 | Montaigne, *The Essays*  
Book III, essays 2, 3, 6, 13 | 113 | Presentation 1  
Quiz on Montaigne |
Letters from 1709 to 1739 | 246 |  |
Letters from 1739 to 1762 | 255 | Presentation 2  
Quiz on Lady Montagu |
From Nov. 15, 1762 to Feb. 25, 1763 | 155 |  |
From Feb 26 to Aug 6, 1763 (+ App. I) | 153 | Presentation 3  
Quiz on Boswell |
(All of Volume I) | 138 |  |
(Volume II, Appendix D, and Appendix F) | 149 | Presentation 4  
Quiz on Sancho |
(Books 1-5) | 198 |  |
(Books 6-8) | 158 | Presentation 5 |
(Books 9-12) | 233 | Presentation 6  
Quiz on Rousseau |
| 13. Apr 11 | Austen, *Mansfield Park*, 3-186,  
(Beginning to Vol II, Chap VI) | 184 |  |
**ADDITIONAL COURSE POLICY**

*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/)