

**School of Undergraduate Studies
Ambedkar University Delhi
Course Outline**

Course Code: SUS1EL910

Title: Reading Autobiography

Type of Course: (Foundation/ Discipline/ Special Interest): Discipline

Cohort for which it is compulsory: NA

Cohort for which it is elective: BA IV Semester, all disciplines

No of Credits: 4

Semester and Year Offered: Monsoon Semester, 2018

Course Coordinator and Team: Sandeep R Singh (Coordinator) & Radha Chakravarty

Email of course coordinator: sandeeprsingh@aud.ac.in

Prerequisites: None

Aim: The course introduces undergraduate students to the discipline of comparative literature and translation studies through the study of autobiography as a literary genre. The course will offer theoretical and critical insights into how autobiography relates to questions of self, experience and representation in culture-specific contexts and from different subject locations. Issues of genre, gender and cross-cultural context will be examined through critical theory, comparative literary studies and contemporary cultural discourse. Along with critical theories, the autobiographical texts in the course are chosen from our part of the world in order to contextualize the construction of the self. The aim is to examine how writing autobiography entails a negotiation between the public and the private, and between individual histories and history at large. The course will also emphasize how autobiographers organize memory and how they negotiate the borderline between fact and fiction. It would help the student to understand the interventionist potential of this form of writing.

Brief description of modules/ Main modules:

Module 1: Situating Autobiography

This module will introduce students to histories and conceptual models related to autobiography. The approach will be comparative, focusing on diverse constructions of the self in varying historical and cultural contexts.

Primary Readings (Indicative list): Selections from the following:

Pandita Ramabai, *The High Caste Hindu Woman*, 247-253

Rassundari Debi, *Amar Jiban*, 192-202

Krupabai Sathianadhan, *Saguna: The Story of Native Christian Life*, 277-281

Rabindranath Tagore, *Boyhood Days*, Penguin, 2007.

Tasleema Nasrin, *My Girlhood*, 54-79. Kali for Women, 1998.

References:

Udaya Kumar, *Writing the First Person*, 12-21. Permanent Black, 2016.

Linda Anderson, *Autobiography: A New Critical Idiom*, 1-17. Routledge, 2001.

Module 2: Debating the Genre

This module addresses questions related to genre. It expands on literary theoretical debates to highlight multiple approaches to autobiography as a literary form.

De Man, Paul. 'Autobiography as De-Facement', *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*, 67-81, Columbia University Press, New York 1984.

Derrida, Jaques. 'The Law of Genre', *Acts of Literature*, Ed. Derek Attridge, 221-252 Routledge, New York 1992.

Kadar, Marlene. 'Whose Life is it Anyway? Out of the Bathtub and into the Narrative' *Essays on Life Writing: From Genre to Critical Practices*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1992.

Parekh, Bhikhu. 'The Indianisation of Autobiography', *Colonialism, Tradition, and Reform: An Analysis of Gandhi's Political Discourse*. 272 – 293, Oxford University Press, New Delhi 2008.

Douglas, Kate. 'Creating Childhood: Autobiography and Cultural Memory' *Contesting Childhood: Autobiography, Trauma, and Memory*. 67 – 83. Rutgers, New York – 1974.

Huddard, David. 'De-defining Autobiography' *Postcolonial Theory and Autobiography*. 26 - 57. Routledge, New York 2008.

Module 3: Negotiating the Self

This module will expand on the idea of how the self negotiates between the public and the private, and between individual histories and history at large, in the writing of autobiography.

Indicative Readings: Selections from the following:

Gandhi, Mohandas Karamchand. Chapters 1 to 5, 9, 10, 12, 14, 27. *A Story of My Experiments with Truth*, Routledge, 2010.

Valmiki, Omprakash. Trans. Mukherjee, Arun Prabha. *Joothan: A Dalit's Life*, Columbia University Press, New York: 2003.

Malini Chib, *One Little Finger*, Sage, 2011.

Module 4: The Other as Subject

This module will look at autobiography in relation to issues of marginality. Students will be introduced to ideas of autoethnography and the radical potential of autobiography as literary/political practice. Questions of translation will also be foregrounded. Notions of authorship and authority will be problematized.

Indicative Readings: Selections from the following:

Binodini Dasi, *My Life as an Actress*, 290-296. Kali for Women, 1998.

Urmila Pawar, *The Weave of my Life*, 1-3, 12-18, 119-139, 233-237. Stree, 2009.

Baby Haldar, *A Life Less Ordinary*, 1-12, 136-163. Zubaan, 2007.

Temsula Ao: *Once Upon a Life: Burnt Curry and Bloody Rags*, 36-57. Zubaan, 2013.

Hoshang Merchant: *The Man Who Would be Queen*, 153-172. Penguin India, 2011.

Assessment Details with weights:

Assessment will take place continuously and will include presentations (30%), two assignments (30%) and class test (40%).