In recent years, there has been a resurgent interest in the genre of memoir. Many of these contemporary texts are written by young(er) people of color. In this course, we will read classic memoirs in conversation with more recent publications to explore the intersections of gender and race and the unique ways that writers of creative non-fiction use the genre to explore identity politics, trauma, pleasure, the (recent) past, and worldmaking. Learning how to write in this style is a useful skill for all students—regardless of field, discipline or career path. To that end, students will write and revise an autobiographical essay, with attention to developing voice and tone, pacing, and social/cultural/political texture.

Attendance and participation is mandatory.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- to introduce students to older and current memoirs
- to think critically about the intersection of race, gender, and life writing
- to expose students to different methods/style of memoir writing
- to develop a “voice” as a writer of narrative nonfiction
- to build a supportive community of writers

**ASSIGNMENTS**

**Weekly one-pagers:** Due on the days we read a memoir. 1-page, single-space document in which you 1) briefly summarize the memoir (in 1 paragraph), 2) describe your favorite scene in the book (and explain why), 3) identify best/favorite paragraph of writing (type out the paragraph, include page number), 4) identify the sentence that most resonates with you (type out the sentence), 5) explain the greatest lesson the book taught you about the craft of writing. *This is not an essay.*

You can divide the document into sections with the following headings:

- Summary
- Scene
- Paragraph
- Sentence
- Lesson
We will use your one-pagers to generate discussion.

**Writers’ Workshops:** There will be three writing workshops in which students exchange 3pp of their memoir with another classmate, ahead of class. The reader will provide 1-2 paragraphs of feedback in class. These workshops are designed to be a space for students to discuss their feelings about writing, share best practices, etc.

**Memoir Draft:** Due the day of the first writers’ workshop (3/3). Students will submit to me a full draft of their 20-25pp memoir essay.

**Final Memoir:** Due May 15. A 20-30pp memoir essay that should be the final version of the drafts students have been writing and revision all semester.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

1/28   Introduction to course


3/3   **Writers’ Workshop: Memoir Draft #1**


3/31   Karr, *The Art of Memoir*, pp. 103-218

   **Writers’ Workshop: Memoir Draft #2**

4/7   **NO CLASS** (Wed. schedule)

***SPRING BREAK***


5/12  **Writers’ Workshop: Memoir Draft #3**

**Final memoirs: due 5/15 via email submission (tford1@gc.cuny.edu)**