Course Description: This course will offer a critical examination of the nature, function, and development of the human self. It will emphasize the dynamic, open-ended qualities of the healthy, normal self as well as the construction of self-identity, especially in relation to one’s sense of meaning in life.

Learning Objectives: In addition to learning about the self, I expect that you will develop your ability to read with discrimination, to think carefully and analytically, to listen with respect and comprehension, to discuss openly and honestly, to work efficiently and productively both alone and in groups, to give adequate attention to detail while also showing appropriate creativity as you work on your autobiography, and to express yourself articulately both in writing and in conversation.

Learning Process: This course will be run as a seminar. It will depend upon everyone’s active participation. You will be expected to come to class fully prepared to discuss the assigned material. (Please bring the appropriate readings to each class.) You will also be expected to hand in reports on the reading assignments, to facilitate class discussions, to write several reflections on the self and yourself as well as on some autobiography or alternative expression of autobiographical insight, and to compose a personal autobiography. (See the Syllabus Supplement for more details.) We will rely upon one another to make the experience of this course worthwhile and enjoyable. Each of us should do what we can to assure that everyone leaves this course with good memories as well as enhanced knowledge and skills. I look forward to working with each of you. Please come and see me during my Office Hours, either with specific course-related issues or simply to chat about ideas, concerns, current events, or life-plans.

Texts to Purchase:  

Readings: References to the assigned readings are given in abbreviated form in the schedule below. Full references and the location of each reading are indicated at the end of the syllabus.

Other Course Details: See the Syllabus Supplement.

PRELIMINARY OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

8/22 Introduction to the Course

8/24 The Self in Western History and in the Behavioral and Social Sciences  
   Historical survey: Martin & Barresi (2006)  
   Topical survey: Davis (2011)  

Start gathering information for your life story by writing down recollections and thoughts in response to the “Questions about Your Self” that you were given at our
first class meeting, and start defining your independent study project for 9/12. (See the Syllabus Supplement for an explanation of the independent study project.)

8/29 Classic Approaches: I. William James on the Self

8/31 Classic Approaches: II. Carl Rogers on the Self
Rogers (1961)

9/5 Psychoneurological Approaches: I. Brain, Consciousness, and Core Self
Damasio (2010), pp. 3-30 & 157-209

9/7 Psychoneurological Approaches: II. Autobiographical Self and Human Culture
Damasio (2010), pp. 210-240 & 284-297

9/12 Interlude: Oral and Written Thoughts on Your Self & Independent Study
There is no assigned reading for today, but you are to respond in writing to the “Questions about Your Self” that were distributed at our first class meeting. You should be prepared to speak about your responses and to submit a printed copy of your typed responses at the end of class. Be sure to save your own copy.

Also hand in a separate short description of the autobiography, movie(s), music, novel, poetry, and/or other creative expression(s) of human experience that you plan to read, view, and/or listen to in preparation for writing a report that will be due on 11/2. See the description of this Independent Study on the Syllabus Supplement.

**THE NARRATIVE CREATION OF THE SELF**

9/14 The Narrative Shaping of Self
Bruner (2003), Chs. 1, 3, & 4

9/19 Self-Narration: How Our Lives Become Stories
Eakin (1999)

9/21 Mythmaking and the Self

9/26 Making Lives into Stories
McAdams (1997), Chs. 3-5

9/28 Characterizing the Self
McAdams (1997), Chs. 6-7

10/3 Challenging the Self
McAdams (1997), Chs. 8-9

10/5 Developing a Life Story
McAdams (1997), Ch. 10, Epilogue, & Appendices

10/10 No Class – Fall Break

10/12 Interlude: Oral and Written Thoughts about the Self and Your Self
Reflect on the major insights, questions, and concerns that have occurred to you, up to this point in the course, regarding the self in general and regarding your self in particular, based on class readings and discussions as well as the responses you have made to the “Questions about Your Self.” Write a 2-3 page, typed, double-spaced “Thoughts about the Self and My Self” that you will hand in and be prepared to discuss in class. Be sure to save your own copy.
**REVIEW AND ELABORATIONS ON THE NARRATIVE SELF**

10/17 Review: From Personology to the Narrative Self and Beyond  
Barresi & Juckes (1997)

10/19 Elaborations: I. Repeating Life Events with Modifications – Script Theory  
Tomkins (1979)

10/24 Elaborations: II. From One to Many Voices – The Dialogical Self  
Hermans (1996)

10/26 Elaborations: III. Purpose, Efficacy, Values, and Worth – Meaning and the Self  
Baumeister & Vohs (2002)

10/31 Elaborations: IV. Relating to Multiple Audiences – The Fragmenting of the Self  
Gergen (1991)

11/2 Interlude: Oral and Written Reports on Independent Study Projects  
Write, submit, and be prepared to discuss what you learned from the autobiography, movie(s), music, novel, poetry, and/or other creative expression(s) of human experience you have studied. Your 3-5 page, typed, double-spaced report should very briefly summarize what you have studied before sharing your reflections on what you have learned from the project.

**WRITING AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY–WITH–COMMENTARY**

11/7 Issues: Memory, Imagination, and History  
Hampl (1999a) or Hampl (1999b)

11/9 Examples: Your Teacher and One of Your Authors  
Leary (2005) or McAdams (2005)

11/14 No Class – Individual Meetings with Instructor and Work on Your Autobiography

11/16 Interlude: Oral and Written Progress Reports on Autobiographies  
Write, submit, and be prepared to discuss a 2-3 page, typed, and double-spaced report on the progress you’ve made on your autobiography, focusing in particular on any central insights that are emerging, the “angle” you plan to take, the possible mode of organization, an outline if possible, the literature you are finding useful as you reflect upon yourself, and any difficulties you are having as you proceed.

11/21 No Class – Individual Meetings with Instructor and Work on Your Autobiography

11/22 Due by 5:00 p.m.: First Draft of Your Autobiography-with-Commentary

11/23 No Class – Thanksgiving Holiday

**CONCLUSION OF THE COURSE**

11/28 Discussions on Autobiographies-with-Commentary

11/30 Discussions on Autobiographies-with-Commentary

12/13 Due by 5:00 p.m.: Autobiography-with-Commentary plus Written Reflections on the Autobiography-with-Commentary Assignment
REQUIRED READINGS

Bruner (2003), Damasio (2010), and McAdams (1997) are available for purchase in the campus bookstore. You are expected to have your own copies, to mark them up, and to bring them to the relevant class sessions. The other readings are available through our course Blackboard site. After printing these readings, mark them up, and bring them to the class session for which they are assigned. Full references for all course readings are provided below.


