

# Iranian and Iranian-American Identity Today

MEL 321 (41535), MES 342 (41787), CL 323, WGS 340

Fall 2016.....TTh 2-3:30.....Jester A216A

Michael Craig Hillmann, CAL 400

mchillmann@aol.com, 512-653-5152, www.utexas.Academia.edu/MichaelHillmann

Office Hours: TTh 9:30-11 am, and by appointment, CAL 400

Iranians throughout history down to the 1980s wrote very few memoirs or autobiographies. But in 2015, a book called *The Literature of the Iranian Diaspora: Meaning and Identity since the Islamic Revolution* identifies upwards of 200 Iranian autobiographical novels and memoirs/ autobiographies in English written in the thirty years since 1985.

**Iranian and Iranian-America Identity Today** presents life stories in English by Iranians and Iranian-Americans who have lived through the most important sequence of events in Iran since the establishment of the Safavid Dynasty (1501-1622), i.e., the Iranian Revolution in 1978/9 and the subsequently established Islamic Republic of Iran, and some of whom have participated in an unprecedented emigration from Iran to America with attendant and continuing thoughts and concerns about their hyphenated identity.

In the contexts of Iranian history from the Mosaddeq Era (1951-1953) into the second decade of the 21st century, academic writing on Iranian identity, and writing on the subject of biography and autobiography, **Iranian and Iranian-American Identity Today** treats the following texts: *A Stone on a Grave* (1964, 1989) and excerpts from *Lost in the Crowd* (1966) by Jalal Al-e Ahmad (1923-1969); selected poems (1954-1966) by Forugh Farrokhzad (1935-1967); Abbas Milani, *Tales of Two Cities: A Persian Memoir* (1996); Firoozeh Dumas, *Funny in Farsi: A Memoir on Growing Up in America* (2004); Marjane Satrapi, *The Complete Persepolis* (2004); Nahid Rachlin, *Persian Girls: A Memoir* (2007); and Azar Nafisi, *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* (2003).

Drawing from these texts, the course seeks answers to these questions, among others: What significance does Iranian identity have in today's world for it to serve as the subject of a university course? Why did Iranians write so few autobiographies until recent years? Why is most contemporary Iranian autobiographical writing appearing outside of Iran, and mostly in English rather than in Persian, and mostly in America than elsewhere? Why are there many more autobiographies by Iranian and Iranian-American women than men? How different is Iranian identity for Iranian-American writers from Iranian identity for Iranian-French writers or Iranians writing in Iran?

The course instructor, who writes and teaches on autobiography and Iranian cultural identity, lived and worked in Iran for six years just before the Iranian Revolution and has visited Iran three times since the establishment of The Islamic Republic of Iran as described in the autobiographical volume called *From Durham to Tehran* (1991). The instructor's 2016 review article called "Iranian Identity in Iranian-American Autobiographical Writing in English Since 1980" highlights several issues addressed in the course. Both *From Durham to Tehran* and the cited article appear online at [www.utexas.Academia.edu/MichaelHillmann](http://www.utexas.Academia.edu/MichaelHillmann)).

Course grading takes into account oral reports and participation in group discussion (20% of the course grade), six 2-page papers on cited autobiographies (4% of the course grade each), a term paper on course texts as statements about Iranian identity (15% of the course grade), and two review tests (20% of the course grade each). The grading scale is: A (93-100), A- (90-92), B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B- (80-82), C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C- (70-72), D+ (67-69), D (63-66), D- (60-62), and F (0-59). The course has no final examination. Information on holidays, holy days, excused absences, accommodations with respect to disabilities, and academic honesty appears in the course's Dropbox folder, along with copies of shorter texts, the course bibliography, and sample secondary sources.

# Iranian Identity Course Schedule

## Fall 2016.....TTh 2-3:30 pm.....Jester A216A

- 1 Th Aug 26 Course goals, texts, activities, and assignments and the significance of the subject of Iranian identity.
- 2 T Aug 30 Iranian history, society, and culture from 1951 to 2016.
- 3 Th Sep 1 Autobiography in history and the contemporary world. Ideas about autobiography and autobiographical writing from an outline of Sidonie Smith and Julie Watson's *Reading Autobiography* (2nd edition, 2010).
- 4 T Sep 6 The dearth of autobiography in Iranian writing during the Pahlavi Era (1921-1979).
- 5 Th Sep 8 *A Stone on a Grave* (1964) by Jalâl Âl-e Ahmad (1923-1969) 1.
- 6 T Sep 13 *A Stone on a Grave* 2 and excerpts from *Lost in a Crowd* (1966).
- 7 Th Sep 15 Selected poems (1954-1966) by Forugh Farrokhzâd (1935-1967) as autobiography.
- 8 T Sep 20 *Funny in Farsi* (2003) by Firouzeh Dumas (b. 1965 ) 1.
- 9 Th Sep 22 *Funny in Farsi* 2.
- 10 T Sep 27 *Tales of Two Cities: A Persian Memoir* (1996) by Abbas Milani (b. 1949) 1.
- 11 Th Sep 29 *Tales of Two Cities: A Persian Memoir* 2.
- 12 T Oct 4 *Tales of Two Cities: A Persian Memoir* 3.
- 13 Th Oct 6 Iranian emigration after the Iranian Revolution (1978-9) and the Islamic Republic of Iran (1979- ). Iranians in America from 1979 (and the Iranian Hostage Crisis [1979-81]) to 2107.
- 14 T Oct 11 Review Test #1.
- 15 Th Oct 13 *Persian Girls: A Memoir* (2007) by Nahid Rachlin (b. 1946) 1.
- 16 T Oct 18 *Persian Girls: A Memoir* 2.
- 17 Th Oct 20 *The Complete Persepolis* (2004) by Maryam Satrapi 1.
- 18 T Oct 25 *The Complete Persepolis* 2.
- 19 Th Oct 27 *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* (2003) by Azar Nafisi (b. 1955) 1.
- 20 T Nov 1 *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* 2.
- 21 Th Nov 3 *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* 3.
- 22 T Nov 8 The *Reading Lolita in Tehran* Controversy: "Native Informers and the Making of the American Empire" (2006) by Hamid Dabashi and from *Jasmine and Stars: Reading More Than Lolita in Tehran* (2007) by Fatemeh Keshavarz.
- 23 Th Nov 10 "Iranian Identity iv. 19th-20th Centuries" (2006) by Ahmad Ashraf.
- 24 T Nov 15 from *The Literature of the Iranian Diaspora: Meaning and Identity since the Iranian Revolution* (2015) by Sanaz Fotuhi 1.
- 25 Th Nov 17 from *The Literature of the Iranian Diaspora* 2.
- 26 T Nov 22 Review Test #2.
- 27 T Nov 29 "The Perplexity of Iranian-American Identity" (2003) by Nilou Mostofi and from *Constructing Identity in Iranian-American Self-Narrative* (2015) by Maria Wagenknecht.
- 28 Th Dec 1 Conclusions about Iranian and Iranian American Identity.

## Biography: A Chronology

- 100s CE** *Parallel Lives* by Plutarch (c.50-c.125 CE) – **distinguishes between history and biography**  
*The Twelve Caesars* by Suetonius (c.70-c.140) – model for later Roman biography,  
inspired intimate biographies from 17th c.+
- 730s** *Life of Cuthbert* and *Lives of the Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow* by Bede (673-735)  
– **hagiology/hagiography**
- 830-3** *Life of Charlemagne* by Einhard (b.c. 770-840) – **first medieval biography of a lay figure**
- c.1513** *The History of King Richard the Thirde* by Sir Thomas More (1477?-1535)
- 1558 (1626)** *Life of Sir Thomas More* by William Roper (1498-1578) – **sustained narrative of an individual's life**
- 1557 (1641)** *The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey* by George Cavendish (?1499-?1561) – literarily successful
- 1579** *Plutarch's Parallel Lives*, translated (from French) by Thomas North (?1535-?1601)  
–sourcebook for Shakespeare's Roman plays
- 1641** *The Life and Death of Dr. Donne* by Izaak Walton (1593-1683)
- 1667** *Life of the Duke of Newcastle* by Margaret Cavendish (1623-1673)
- 1671 (1806)** *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson* by Lucy Hutchinson (b. 1620)
- 1683** *Plutarch's Lives*, translated by John Dryden (1631-1700) – **used the word "biography" in English**
- 1683 (1813)** *Brief Lives* by John Aubrey (1926-1698)
- c.1715 (1742-4)** *The Lives of the Norths* by Roger North (1653-1734)
- 1744** *Life of Thomas Gray* by William Mason (1725-1797) – **"life-and-letters" biography**  
*Life of Mr. Richard Savage* by Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) – masterpiece of literary biography
- 1779-1781** *Lives of the English Poets* by Samuel Johnson
- 1791** *The Life of Samuel Johnson* by James Boswell (1740-1795) – premier literary biography
- 1813** *Life of Nelson* by Robert Southey (1774-1843) – **used the word "autobiography" in 1809**
- 1837-8** *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott* by John Gibson Lockhart (1794-1854)
- 1857** *Biography of Charlotte Brontë* by Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell (1810-1865)
- 1881** *Reminiscences of Carlyle* by James Anthony Froude (1818-1894)
- 1917** Institution of the Pulitzer Prize for Biography or Autobiography
- 1918** *Eminent Victorians* by Giles Lytton Strachey (1880-1932)
- 1921** *Queen Victoria* by Lytton Strachey
- 1928** *The Development of English Biography* by Harold Nicolson (1886-1968)
- 1932** "The Art of Biography" by Virginia Woolf (1882-1941)
- 1958** *Young Man Luther* by Erik H. Erikson (1902-1994) – **psychobiography**
- 1969** *Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story* by Carlos Baker
- 1973** *Portrait of a Marriage* by Nigel Nicolson (1917-2004) – **experimental biography**
- 1978** *The Nature of Biography* by Robert Gittings
- 1986** *Biography: Fact, Fiction, and Form* by Ira Nadel
- 2004** *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life* by Walter Isaacson
- 2008** *Einstein: His Life and Universe* by Walter Isaacson
- 2015** *Steve Jobs* by Walter Isaacson

## Autobiography: A Chronology

- Herodotus's *History*, Xenophon's *Anabasis*, Caesar's *Commentaries*
- 170s (1555)** *Meditations* by Marcus Aurelius (121-180 CE)
- c.400** *Confessions* by Augustine of Hippo (354-430)
- 700s** Brief account of author's life in *Ecclesiastical History of England* by Bede (673-735)
- 1420s** *The Book of Margery Kempe*, dictated by Margery Kempe (c.1373-c.1439)   **first autobiography in English**
- 1464** *Commentarii* by Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini (1415-1464)
- A Book of Songs and Sonetts* by Thomas Whythorne (1528-1596)
- 1575** *The Book of My Life* by Girolamo Cardano (1501-1576)
- 1580** *Essays* by Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592)
- 1608** *Relation of Such Occurences and Accidents of Noate as Hath Hapned* in Virginia by John Smith (xxxxxxx)
- 1609 (1951)** *An Autobiography of an Elizabethan* by John Jerard (1564-1637)
- 1656** "True Relation of My Birth, Breeding and Life" by Margaret Cavendish (1623-1673)
- 1666** *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* by John Bunyan (1628-1688)
- **Bibliographies cite 11,000+ autobiographical writings by Americans between the mid-17th century and 1980.**
- 1672** "To My Dear Children" by Anne Bradstreet (b.c. 1612-1672)
- 1675** "A True History of the Captivity and Resoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson" (c.1637-1711)
- 1681-1724** *Diary of Cotten Mather* (1663-1728)
- 1689+** *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* by Matsuo Basho (1644-1694)
- 1694** *Journal* by George Fox (1624-1691)
- (1875-1879)** *Diary* by Samuel Pepys (1633-1703)
- (1730)** *The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini* by Benvenuto Cellini (1500-1571)
- 1740** *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber* by Colley Cibber (1671-1757)
- c.1740** "Personal Narrative" by Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)
- 1750s+** *Journal of John Woolman* by John Woolman (1720-1772)
- 1774** *The Trials of Young Werther* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)
- 1777** *My Own Life* by David Hume (1711-1776)
- 1781/1788** *The Confessions* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)
- 1771-89 (1868)** *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* by Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)
- 1797** The English word "autobiography" appears in *The Monthly Review*..
- 1793 (1796)** *Memoirs* by Edward Gibbon (1737-1794)
- 1805 (1850)** *The Prelude* by William Wordsworth (1770-1850)
- 1809** Robert Southey (1774-1843) uses the word "autobiography" in an essay on Portuguese literature.
- 1821** *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* by Thomas De Quincey (1785-1859)
- Autobiography* by Thomas Jefferson (1743-1926)
- 1832** *Poetry and Truth* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)
- 1833** *Autobiography of Ma-Ka-Tai-Me-She-Kia-Kiak* or Black Hawk by Black Hawk (1767-1838)
- first Native American autobiography**
- 1836** *Sartor Resartus: The Life and Opinions of Herr Teufelsdröckh* by Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881)
- 1845** *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass,*  
*An American Slave* by Frederick Douglass (1817?-1895)   **African American autobiography**
- 1881** *Song of Myself* by Walt Whitman (1819-1892)   **poetry as autobiography**

<b>1854</b>	<b><i>Walden</i> by Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)</b>	
<b>1860</b>	<i>The Mill on the Floss</i> by George Eliot (1819-1880)	
<b>1864</b>	<i>Apologia pro vita sua</i> by John Henry Newman (1801-1890)	
<b>1860s–1880s</b>	Autobiographical Letters and Poems by Emily Dickinson (1830–1986).	<b>poetry as autobiography</b>
<b>1875</b>	"Old Times on the Mississippi" (articles in <i>Atlantic Monthly</i> ) by Mark Twain (1835-1910)	
<b>1879-80</b>	<i>Green Heinrich</i> by Gottfried Keller (1819-1890)	
<b>1900-1902</b>	<b><i>Zitkala–Sa's Autobiographical Essays</i> by Gertrude Bonnin (1876-1938)</b>	<b>Native American autobiography</b>
<b>1903</b>	<i>The Story of My Life</i> by Helen Keller (1880-1968)	
<b>1907</b>	<b><i>The Education of Henry Adams</i> by Henry Brooks Adams (1838–1918).</b> <i>Father and Son</i> by Edmund Gosse (1849-1928)	
<b>1912 (1927)</b>	<i>The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man</i> by James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938)	
<b>1915/6</b>	<i>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</i> by James Joyce (1882-1941)	
<b>1917</b>	Institution of the Pulitzer Prize for Biography or Autobiography	
<b>1929</b>	<i>A Room of One's Own</i> by Virginia Woolf (1882-1941)	
<b>1920</b>	<b><i>The Americanization of Edward Bok</i> by Edward Bok (1863–1930)</b>	<b>immigrant autobiography</b>
<b>1924</b>	"Drenched in Light" or "Isis" by Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960)	<b>a fictional childhood self</b>
<b>1929</b>	<i>Goodbye to All That</i> by Robert Graves (1895-1985)	
<b>1932</b>	<i>Black Elk Speaks</i> , as told to John D. Neihardt	
<b>1933</b>	<i>The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas</i> by Gertrude Stein (1874-1946)	
<b>1937</b>	<i>Black Boy</i> by Richard Wright (1908-1960)	
<b>1942</b>	<i>Four Quartets</i> by T.S. Eliot (1888-1965)	<b>poetry as autobiography</b>
	<i>Dust Tracks on a Road</i> by Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960)	
<b>1960 (1964)</b>	<i>A Moveable Feast</i> by Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961)	<b>expatriate autobiography</b>
<b>1963</b>	<i>The Bell Jar</i> by Sylvia Plath (1932-1963)	<b>autobiographical fiction</b>
<b>1964, 1965</b>	<i>The Autobiography of Malcolm X</i> (1925-1965) as told to Alex Haley	
<b>1965</b>	<i>La Bâtarde</i> by Violette Leduc (1907-1972)	
	<i>Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter</i> by Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986)	
<b>1970</b>	<i>I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</i> by Maya Angelou (1928-2014)	
<b>1976</b>	<i>The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts</i> by Maxine Hong Kingston (b. 1940)	
<b>1982</b>	<i>Hunger for Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez</i> by Richard Rodriguez (b. 1944)	
		<b>essays as autobiography</b>
<b>1996</b>	<i>Angela's Ashes</i> by Frank McCourt (b. 1930)	
<b>2005</b>	<i>The Year of Magical Thinking</i> by Joan Didion (b. 1934)	
<b>2010</b>	<i>Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives</i> (2nd edition) by Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson.	
<b>2015</b>	<i>The Literature of the Iranian Diaspora: Meaning and Identity since the Iranian Revolution</i> by Sanaz Fotuhi.	
<b>2016</b>	“The American Experience as Told through Autobiographies Course Syllabus” (Dropbox, 200+p) by Michael Craig Hillmann.	