This course will explore the central role that the genre of memoir has played for minoritarian writers, including women, LGBTQ people, and people of color, as well as the controversy the presence of their life stories in the public sphere has created about its effects on literature and on public life. We will read classic texts from the 1970s and 80s by Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Dorothy Allison, as well as contemporary literature. We will also use on-campus resources such as the Benson Libraries Anzaldúa collections and the PCL’s Black Queer and Poetry Collections. We will visit the Blanton Museum’s contemporary art collections to think about self-representation in visual as well as verbal terms. We will also look at memoir’s history in genres such as the slave narrative and Holocaust testimony and queer solo performance and how it has functioned to create alternatives to dominant histories and new public cultures.

The course will be an introduction not only to the genre of memoir and its role in arts and culture, but also to feminist and queer studies for students who would like to get some grounding in this area. We will also practice a variety of kinds of writing, and students will have opportunities to write personal essays as well as critical research essays. In keeping with the focus on self-articulation in personal narrative, we will also focus on creating a classroom space that allows students to tell their stories and to engage with each other across different backgrounds and points of view.

Readings:

Required books to purchase (available at UT Co-Op):
Alison Bechdel, Fun Home (Houghton Mifflin, 2006, 978-0618871711)
Claudia Rankine, Citizen (Graywolf, 2014, 978-1555976903)
Gloria Anzaldúa, Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza (Aunt Lute Books, 19xx, 978-1879960855)

Recommended books to purchase (selections from many of these will be available on Canvas as part of our readings):
Eula Biss, Notes From No Man’s Land: American Essays
Audre Lorde, Sister Outsider
James Baldwin, Notes of a Native Son
David Wojnarowicz, Close to the Knives
Daisy Hernández, A Cup of Water Under My Bed
Zadie Smith, Changing My Mind: Occasional Essays and Feel Free
Eli Clare, Pride in Exile: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation and Brilliant Imperfection
Roxane Gay, Hunger and (ed.) Not That Bad
Eden Robinson, The Sasquatch at Home: Traditional Protocols and Modern Storytelling
Michelle Tea, Against Memoir
Justin Vivian Bond, Tango: My Childhood, Backward and in High Heels
Kate Bornstein, *Hello Cruel World: 101 Alternatives to Suicide for Teens, Freaks, and other Outlaws*
Cherrie Moraga, *Loving in the War Years and/or A Xicana Codex*
Sandra Cisneros, *A House of My Own: Stories from My Life*
Leanne Shapton, *Swimming Lessons*
Leslie Jamison, *The Empathy Exams*
Natasha Trethewey, *Beyond Katrina*
Edwidge Danticat, *Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work*
Arundhati Roy, *Capitalism: A Ghost Story*

**Grading:** (Note: +/- grading will be used)
Attendance, class participation (quality and quantity), discussion posts to Canvas each week, other in-class writing and Canvas posts, and required office hour visit -- 35% total
5 brief (500-word) writing exercises posted to Canvas – 35% total
One 5-6 page final essay, including peer review, class presentation, and final self-assessment – 30% total

**Writing Flag:** Writing Flag courses are designed to give students experience in writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive feedback from your instructor to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise an assignment, and to read and discuss your peers’ work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work.

**Cultural Diversity Flag:** Cultural Diversity courses are designed to increase your familiarity with the variety and richness of the American cultural experience. This class meets the requirement because it includes extensive discussion of writing by feminist and queer writers across a range of genders, sexualities, races, and locations, who are directly engaged with what it means to articulate diverse perspectives and address issues of social justice.
Part One: Introductions: Who and Where Are We?

Week One  August 30  Introductions
Audre Lorde, “The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action” (Canvas)
Eli Clare, “Stones in My Pockets, Stones in My Heart” (Canvas)

Assignment: Post a brief introduction to the Discussion section of Canvas

Week Two  Sept 4/6  Exploring our Group; Exploring the Campus
Tues: Lorde and Clare continued
Claudia Rankine, “The Condition of Black Life is One of Mourning” (2015), The New York Times. (Canvas)
Rebecca Solnit, “Cassandra Among the Creeps” (2014), Harper’s Magazine. (Canvas)

Other introductory readings (recommended):
David Wojnarowicz, “Postcards from America: X-Rays from Hell,” from Close to the Knives (Canvas)
Daisy Hernández, “The Bus Stop” (Canvas)
Zadie Smith, “Speaking in Tongues,” from Changing My Mind (Canvas)

Assignment: Statement of goals for the semester: include reading, writing, discussion, and personal goals. Post to Canvas.

Week Three  Sept 11/13
Tues: start Alison Bechdel, Fun Home (purchase book)
Thurs: Campus exploration (details TBA)

Writing Exercise 1: Report on Campus Exploration (due Sun Sept 16)

Part Two: Identities and Intersections

Week Four  Sept 16/20
Alison Bechdel, Fun Home

Week Five  Sept 25/27
James Baldwin, “Notes of a Native Son”
Audre Lorde, “Poetry Is Not A Luxury,” “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power,” and “The Master’s Tools will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” from Sister Outsider (Canvas)

Writing Exercise 2: Personal Essay on Intersectional Identities (due Sun Sept 30)

Week Six  Oct 2/4  Claudia Rankine, selections from Citizen  (purchase book)
Part Three: Bodies

Week Seven Oct 9/11
Eli Clare, from *Pride in Exile* and *Brilliant Imperfection* (Canvas)
Visit to the Blanton Museum (details TBA)

Writing Exercise 3: Reflections on Readings (due Sun Oct 14)

Week Eight Oct 16/18
Roxane Gay, from *Hunger* (Canvas)

Week Nine Oct 23/25
Tues: Kate Bornstein, from *Hello Cruel World* (Canvas)
Michelle Tea, from *Against Memoir* (Canvas) (Campus presentation on Fri Oct 26)
Justin Vivian Bond, from *Tango: My Childhood, Backwards and In High Heels* (Canvas)
Thurs: Guest presentation by Dr. Grayson Hunt (LGBTQ Studies Program Coordinator) on Transgender Feminisms

Writing Exercise 4: Report on Blanton Museum (due Sun Oct 28)

Part Four: Places

Week Ten Oct 30/Nov 1
Gloria Anzaldúa, selections from *Borderlands/La Frontera* (purchase book)
Thurs: Visit to the LLILAS/Benson Latin American Collections (details TBA)

Week Eleven Nov 6/8
Eula Biss, from *No Man’s Land: "No Man's Land)* (Canvas)

Writing Exercise 5: Personal/Research Essay on Place (due Sun Nov 11)

Week Twelve Nov 13/15
Eden Robinson, *The Sasquatch at Home: Traditional Protocols and Modern Storytelling* (Canvas)
Monique Truong, “Vietnam: Into Thin Air” (Canvas)

Final Paper Proposal due by Sun Nov 18 to Canvas

Part Five: Final Projects

Week Thirteen Nov 20 (Thanksgiving Week, no class on Nov 22)
Readings TBA

Week Fourteen Nov 27/29 Peer Editing
Readings TBA
Peer Editing in class
Work on Final Presentations

PEER EDITING: Rough drafts due Tues Nov 27 for Thurs Nov 29 editing session

Week Fifteen Dec 4/6
Final Paper Presentations and Wrap-Up
FINAL ESSAY DUE: Saturday Dec 8 by midnight
Assignments and Policies

A major goal of the assignments for this UGS First-Year Experience class is to prepare you for college-level study, including respectful discussion with others both orally and in writing, building research and writing skills, and work on longer multi-stage projects both independently and in collaboration with others. The regular posts to Canvas are a way to promote a vigorous culture of discussion, in which you learn to think by interacting in community with others. The more informal short writing exercises give you a chance to experiment with different research methods and genres of writing, including observational reports, personal essays, and archival research. As Canvas posts, your individual writings will contribute to a collective class archive that will allow us to learn from one another. The final essay will provide an opportunity to work on a longer project over a series of stages and in dialogue with others.

I. ATTENDANCE, PARTICIPATION, and DISCUSSION POSTS  (35% of final grade)

Discussion is central to this class and your contributions both oral and written will be crucial to shaping the direction of our inquiries. This class aims to develop your skills in knowing what you want to say and how to say it (or write it) effectively, and in listening and responding to others with generosity and respect. The culture of the live group discussion is a delicate ecology, and I hope you will take responsibility for nurturing it through both your comments in class and your discussion posts to Canvas (an important forum for those who have difficulty speaking in groups).

Weekly Discussion Posts on Canvas
Every week, you will post a brief comment (100-150 words) to the relevant Discussion forum on Canvas. Each post should include a quotation from the readings (including page number citation); you are also encouraged to respond to one another’s posts. I will sometimes give a prompt for the following week, so please be alert for announcements about prompts in class (and on Canvas).

Your post must be up by midnight on Wednesdays (in response to class on Tuesday and in preparation for class on Thursday). However, I encourage you to post well before this deadline; those who consistently wait until the last minute may be penalized. I also reserve the right to request that you post in advance of our Tuesday classes if it will benefit our discussion.

Because the posts are designed to help you think about the reading and prepare for class, late posts will not be accepted. If you absolutely cannot post a question on time due to unusual circumstances, please talk to me in advance to arrange an alternative assignment. You will likely accumulate about 10-15 posts by the end of the semester, and each one will be worth about 4 points, or one letter grade, out of total of 100 points. Keeping up with the discussion posts is an easy way to ensure the best possible final grade!

Attendance
Please be sure to sign the attendance sheet each day and to note any reasons for absences. If you have more than three absences without a reasonable excuse, your final grade will drop by a full letter grade. Being excessively late will count as an absence.

You are responsible for remaining informed about material covered when you are absent or late. I strongly encourage you to get the emails of two other students in class and check with them rather than me for answers to your questions, as well as double-checking the syllabus and Canvas.
Office Hours Visit
One fifteen- to twenty-minute visit to my office hours is required during the first half of the semester. I will make specific appointments available for this purpose but you are also encouraged to visit my office hours. If you are enrolled in a class that meets during my office hours, we can schedule another time to meet. Please also be aware that my office is a gun-free zone; see more details about that below.

II. Short Research and Writing Exercises (35% of final grade)
You will be complete four to five short (500-word) writing exercises, which will be shared with the rest of the class via our Canvas site (except for the short paper on the readings). These will include:

1) a report on field trip observations around the campus
2) a personal essay on intersectional identities
3) reflections on the readings
4) a report on a visit to the Blanton Museum
5) a personal/research essay about place and location

See the accompanying handout for an overview of the assignments including deadlines; you will receive more detailed instructions as the semester proceeds. Generally, these assignments will be due on Sundays by 5 pm.

III. Final Essay (30% of final grade)
In the second half of the semester you will work towards a longer 5-6 page (1500-2000 word) research essay on a topic of your choosing. Your essay will build on the work we have done in the discussion posts and writing exercises and can combine some of the different forms in which we have worked: personal essay, research report, analysis of readings, etc. Each person will have a chance to develop a topic, a research method, and a writing genre that best suits their interests and skills, in keeping with the course’s focus on independent inquiry and expression.

Peer Editing and Class Presentation: As part of the writing and revision process, you will work in small groups to review drafts of each other’s essays. You will also work with your peer editing group to create a class presentation based on your final essay.

Final Reflection and Self-Assessment: Along with your final essay, you will also submit a brief (2-page) statement in which you reflect on your work in the class over the course of the semester. Your self-assessment should include reflections on the process of writing the final essay, the course content, your contributions to class discussion, and the impact of the course on your other studies and your life more generally.

The multiple stages of the assignment, such as the proposal and rough draft, are designed to help you learn how to develop skills in research and writing and how to plan longer projects in preparation for more advanced coursework at UT. You will also present your work in a final “writing salon” during the last week of class.

Due Date and Delivery: The final essay and self-assessment will be due to Canvas on Sat Dec 8. You will also need to submit in hard copy the draft that your peer group reviewed and their peer evaluation forms.

Your work on the final essay will include the following assignments (dates may vary slightly):
1. Proposal (Due to Canvas by **Sun Nov 18**)
2. Rough draft (Due in class to peer review group on Tues Nov 27)
3. Peer Review (In class on **Thurs Nov 29**)
4. Final Presentations (In class during the last week)
5. Final Reflections and Self-Assessment (Due with final essay on **Sat Dec 8**)

IV. Other Relevant Information about Classroom Culture

**Hard Copies of Readings and Notes:** Please, wherever possible, bring hard copies of the readings to class, whether books or printed copies of electronic pdfs. Write in your margins, and mark important quotations and page numbers. If you don’t print out copies of electronic materials, you should use a software program (such as Good Reader) that allows you to mark and annotate the pages, and you should be able to access the annotated versions during class. In the unusual event that you can’t bring the reading with you to class, bring your detailed notes on the reading, including important quotations or page numbers.

**Electronic Devices:** Your time in the classroom is an opportunity for live communication with other people who will benefit from your full attention. Please turn off your cell phone, and do not text during class or leave the class to text or make phone calls (unless it’s an emergency). You may use laptops and tablets to take notes and access online materials relevant to the class but please resist the urge to use it for other activities!

**Canvas:** We will use the class Canvas site extensively. Please get into the habit of checking the site frequently in order to read your classmates’ contributions and other relevant course materials. Please be sure that you check the email address linked to Canvas and/or make sure you forward UT emails to the address you regularly use.

**Email Etiquette:** I will do my best to respond to emails but I cannot always keep up with the volume of email that I receive from students. I will not generally answer questions that have already been answered on the syllabus, in class, or on handouts for assignments; I suggest you get the emails of two other students in class and check with them first for answers to your questions.

I am glad to get emails that explain in advance your absence from class or communicate other relevant information, but please make sure you also include the reason for your absence in writing on the attendance sign-in sheet. You can assume I have read emails about absences, even if I don’t respond to them, but you can always check with me after class to make sure I received an email.

I encourage you to develop professional and respectful strategies for email correspondence with professors. For a good set of guidelines, see the following (also posted on Canvas): [http://web.wellesley.edu/SocialComputing/Netiquette/netiquetteprofessor.html](http://web.wellesley.edu/SocialComputing/Netiquette/netiquetteprofessor.html)

**Undergraduate Writing Center**
I strongly encourage you to visit the Undergraduate Writing Center for free, individualized, expert help with writing on an appointment or drop-in basis. [http://uwc.utexas.edu/](http://uwc.utexas.edu/) PCL 2.330 471-6222

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**Other General Information and Resources**
Accommodations for Students with Special Needs
I will provide any and all accommodations and support services for students who have special needs identified by the Services for Students with Disabilities (471-6259). Please make an appointment with me as soon as possible so that the appropriate arrangements can be made.

I would also like everyone in the class to take collective responsibility for creating an inclusive and accessible classroom; to that end, please read the handout "Inclusive and Accessible Classrooms: A Student's Guide," which will also be available on Canvas.

Campus Carry
As we work to build a campus culture that must now legally allow concealed carry in classrooms and other areas of the campus, I ask that all students consider carefully the impact of guns on safety and accessibility in the classroom. The UT administration asks that concealed license holders remember that while they may be at ease carrying a handgun, many people on our campus are not familiar with handguns and are uncomfortable in their presence.

Please also be aware of the following more specific regulations:

*With the exception of concealed handguns, no weapons may be brought into the classroom.* This exclusion applies to knives, clubs, spears, machetes, metal knuckles, explosive or incendiary devices, and any other device designed to injure or kill people. Course participants with a license to carry a handgun must keep it concealed and on their person at all times. If a gun or any other weapon becomes visible, the person who sees the weapon should leave the classroom and call 911 so that law enforcement personnel can take appropriate action and restore an atmosphere conducive to learning.

*Handguns may not be brought to the classroom in backpacks, bags, or purses.* Students will be called upon at unpredictable times to move about the room, go to the front of the room to participate in a presentation, or otherwise be separated from their belongings. University policy and the implementation of the law would be violated by the separation of the gun owner from their weapon that would result from these required classroom activities.

*No weapons of any kind may be brought into my office.* Students will be given oral notice excluding handguns from the office before they meet with me. They will be required to sign a statement that they have received legally binding oral notification that guns are not permitted in the professor’s office.

Religious Holidays and other Excused Absences
By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

If you will miss class and/or assignments for UT business (such as athletic events), please notify me with appropriate documentation at least two weeks before the absence.

Academic Integrity
It is important that all the work you submit for the course be your own. Forms of academic dishonesty such as plagiarism or unauthorized collaboration will be grounds for failing the course. Please be sure that you are familiar with the university’s guidelines for academic integrity, which are available on the Office of the Dean of Students website:

http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php