

Andrew Hicks

### Inquiry Into American Autobiography

In this course, we will read several autobiographical works by American writers in order to consider the different ways in which writing about the self has been handled throughout American history. By considering several different genres of autobiography (such as the slave narrative and the religious or spiritual autobiography), we will inquire into the multiple cultural, historical, and personal issues that become integral to autobiographical writing. Students will be asked to consider these texts in terms of rhetoric, history, and genre, and more basically to consider them as attempts by authors to present themselves to a larger world. In addition to historical and cultural research, students will be asked to undertake their own autobiographical inquiry and consider the various ways in which they as writers could present themselves to readers.

Course texts will likely include *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, Zora Neale Hurston's *Dust Tracks on a Road*, Dennis Covington's *Salvation on Sand Mountain: Snake Handling and Redemption in Southern Appalachia*, and excerpts from writers such as Benjamin Franklin, James Agee, and Annie Dillard, and others.