

**FTS 272 A: Senior Seminar**  
**Autobiography: Theory and Practice**

**Prof: Hilary Neroni**

**Spring 2006, Tues: class 3:30-6 (OMAnex 207), screening 6-8 (Lafayette 108)**

**Office hours: tues and thurs 1-2 or by apt; Phone: 6561356**

**Description:** This course investigates autobiographical documentaries, experimental, and fiction films. We will study the formal and cultural aspects of these films, and read works of film theory, psychoanalysis, and philosophy that addresses issues of autobiography and subjectivity. Students will either write a seminar paper or make a film addressing these issues. Prerequisite: FTS 7,8 or 9 and FTS 121.

**Reading:**

Rene Descartes's *Meditations on First Philosophy*

Jim Lane's *Autobiographical Documentary in America*

Jean-Paul Sartre's *Basic Writings*

Greg Bottoms's *Angelhead*

**Assignments:**

40% Final Project: (see handout) Due May 2<sup>nd</sup>. Students will choose to either write a final seminar paper or make a final seminar film that address and expands upon the topics discussed in class.

15% 1<sup>st</sup> presentation of project: (see handout) Due Feb. 14<sup>th</sup>. Students will present initial arguments and outlines of their project to the class for discussion.

15% 2<sup>nd</sup> presentation of project: (see handout) Due Apr 4<sup>th</sup>. Students will present their project, which should be as near a rough draft/rough cut as possible, for class discussion.

30% Reading responses/exam: Every other week questions will be given out regarding the reading and screenings. These three to four page responses will be due the following week and will not be accepted past their due date. These responses will take the place of the traditional exam.

**Part one: The new gaze: a theory of autobiography?**

**1) Jan 17: Intro**

Screening: Agnes Varda's *Les glaneurs et la glaneuse (The Gleaners and I, 2002, 82 min, DVD 1448)*

**2) Jan 24: Reading: Lane 3-32; McGowan's Intro; Neroni's conference paper**

Screening: Judith Helfand's *A Healthy Baby Girl* (1996, 57 min, VID 8588)

**Part Two: Theorizing the Subject**

**3) Jan 31: FTS job applicant talk: 3:30 at John Dewey Lounge**

Screening: Woody Allen's *Annie Hall* (1977) (suggested screening: Woody Allen's *Match Point*, which is currently playing at the Roxy)

**4) Feb 7: Reading: Rene Descartes's *Meditations on First Philosophy***

Screening: Scorsese's *Italianamerican* (1974, VIDR 289)

\*Reading questions due

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- 5) **Feb 14:** \*1<sup>st</sup> presentation of final project due  
Reading: Sartre Chapter One and Two; Lane 33-93  
Screening: Tom Joslin's *Silverlake Life* (1993, 99 min, DVD 2418)
- 6) **Feb 21:** Reading: Sartre Chapter Six; Lane 94-144  
Screening: Ross McElwee's *Sherman's March* (1986, 157 min)
- 7) **Feb 28:** Reading: Sartre Chapter Seven and Nine  
Screening: June Cross's *Secret Daughter* (1996)

**Part Three: Writing the Subject**

- 8) **Mar 7:** Town Meeting Day Recess
- 9) **Mar 14:** Reading: Bottoms' *Angelhead*  
Screening: TBA  
Professor Bottoms to visit from 5-6
- 10) **Mar 21:** Spring Recess

**Part Four: Filming the Subject**

- 11) **Mar 28:** Screen and discuss avant-garde shorts: Rhea Tijiri's *History and Memory* (1992)  
\*Hand in Responses to Sartre and Bottoms if you haven't already
- 12) **Apr 4:** \*2<sup>nd</sup> presentation of final project due (First 7 students)  
Reading: David James's "Stan Brackage" (29-57) and "Making Us More Radiant: Jonas Mekas" (100-119) (handouts)  
Screening: avant-garde shorts by Brackage, Sadie Benning
- 13) **Apr 11:** \*2<sup>nd</sup> presentation of final project due (Second 6 students)  
Reading: Michael Renov's "Lost, Lost, Lost" and "The Subject in History" and Julia Lesage's "Women's Fragmented Consciousness in Feminist Experimental Autobiographical Video" (Handouts)  
Screening: films by Ted Lyman
- 14) **Apr 18:** Reading: Freud's "Narcissism" essay (handout)  
Professor Lyman visits from 3:30-5:00  
Class discussion of reading: 5-7pm
- 15) **Apr 25:** \*Response to Reading Questions Due  
Reading: Joan Copjec's "Narcissism, Approached Obliquely" (handout)  
Screening: Neroni's *Family Plots* (40 min)
- 16) **May 2:** Screening of Final Film Projects.

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\*Final Papers Due

Final Exam: 4-7:45 (**May 5** OMAnex 207): Discussion of Final papers.  
\*Response to final projects.