**FILM 224401  Biography and Autobiography into Film**  
**Summer Session**  
**Summer 2017  May 17 to June 21**   
**Monday/Wednesday 6:00-9:15pm**

**Instructors:** Prof. John Michalczyk  
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**Office Hours:** Before and after class and by appointment  

**Boston College Mission Statement**  
Strengthened by more than a century and a half of dedication to academic excellence, Boston College commits itself to the highest standards of teaching and research in undergraduate, graduate and professional programs and to the pursuit of a just society through its own accomplishments, the work of its faculty and staff, and the achievements of its graduates. It seeks both to advance its place among the nation's finest universities and to bring to the company of its distinguished peers and to contemporary society the richness of the Catholic intellectual ideal of a mutually illuminating relationship between religious faith and free intellectual inquiry.

Boston College draws inspiration for its academic societal mission from its distinctive religious tradition. As a Catholic and Jesuit university, it is rooted in a world view that encounters God in all creation and through all human activity, especially in the search for truth in every discipline, in the desire to learn, and in the call to live justly together. In this spirit, the University regards the contribution of different religious traditions and value systems as essential to the fullness of its intellectual life and to the continuous development of its distinctive intellectual heritage.

**Course Description**  
The course will be structured around close analysis of the narrative arc and its adaptation from written word to visual expression. This approach will offer the student opportunities to consider a range of interpretations of the biographical/autobiographical genre, as evolving narratives that record the experience of the individual within a cultural/historical framework. Beginning with Roger Ebert’s memoir, *Life Itself*, and its adaptation into film, the course will revolve around a selection of classic and contemporary films, literary works, film reviews and secondary sources. In addition to the books and films for class, students will be able to choose from an extensive list of book and film adaptations for their written assignments, including: *Julia* (Lillian Hellman/Pentimento), *Mephisto* (Nazi theater director Gustaf Grundgens), *Frida* (Frida Kahlo), *The Front* (blacklisted writers of the McCarthy era), *Amen, Julia, Amarcord* (Fellini), *Bright Star* (John Keats and Fanny Brawne), *The Hours* (Virginia Woolf), *Dangerous Beauty, Art and Craft* (Mark Landis, art forger), *The Life Before Her Eyes*, *A Man for All Seasons, My Left Foot, Tom and Viv, Hidden Figures, Moonlight, Standing Window.*
**Readings & Films (Required)**

- *Life Itself* (Roger Ebert) selections
- *42* (Jackie Robinson memoir and Rachel Robinson memoir, selections)
- “American Diary 1959-1960” (Italo Calvino)
- *Silkwood* (govt/media documentation, family letters on Karen Silkwood’s activism)
- *The Lives of Others* (*Stasiland: Stories from Behind the Berlin Wall*)
- *Catch Me If You Can: The True Story of a Real Fake* (Frank W. Abagnale)
- *Sunshine & Oranges* (Margaret Humphreys)
- *Love, Marilyn*
- *Invictus* (readings on South Africa/Mandela)
- *Frida* (Frida Kahlo) *Lives Worth Living* (documentary) *Meditations from a Moveable Chair* Andre Dubus, *Dancing After Hours* (selections)

**Canvas**
Canvas is the Learning Management System (LMS) at Boston College, designed to help faculty and students share ideas, collaborate on assignments, discuss course readings and materials, submit assignments, and much more - all online. As a Boston College student, you should familiarize yourself with this important tool. For more information and training resources for using Canvas, click [here](#).

In the case of any technical difficulties or concerns, please contact canvas@bc.edu or 617-552-HELP (4357) for immediate assistance.

**Course Objectives**
1. The student will learn methods of critical analysis (close reading/examination of texts).
2. The student will learn how actual incidents or events in a person’s life evolve to an aesthetic expression in a written work, be it a play or novel, and then emerges as a feature film.
3. By reading a selections from biographies and autobiographies the student will experience a variety of writing styles, literary techniques and a range of content which can be adapted and developed in written assignments.
4. The student will demonstrate knowledge and skill in understanding contemporary societal issues through film analysis learning the impact of culture, gender, and age as seen in adaptations of socio-political literary works such as of biographies and autobiographies.
5. The student will examine and reflect upon ethical issues in literary and cinematic works.

**Grading**
Class attendance and consistent participation (20%). Films to be viewed outside of class (list distributed at start of semester). One short paper, approx. 4-5 pages (25%), one quiz (20%) and one final exam (35%).

The undergraduate grading system for Woods College is as follows:

- A (4.00), A- (3.67)
- B+ (3.33), B (3.00), B- (2.67)
- C+ (2.33), C (2.00), C- (1.67)
- D+ (1.33), D (1.00), D- (.67)
- F (.00)
All students can access final grades through Agora after the grading deadline each semester. Students who complete course evaluations can access grades earlier, as they are posted.

**Deadlines and Late Work**
Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the specified dates. Late assignments will be graded accordingly. If a student needs to adjust the scheduled dates, please contact the professors to discuss change of dates.

**Course Assignments**
It is expected that 8 hours per week of your study time out will be spent on out of class assignments and exercises, including seeing films in preparation for class discussion of assigned texts. Weekly assignments and schedule listed below. Readings and assignments are to be completed for the assigned date, with sections of films shown during class. Please note that some weeks will require more time and some weeks less time but the average is approximately 8 hours per week over the semester.

**Course Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading/Assignments</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 17</td>
<td>Intro to Autobiography and Bio/Adaptation to Film</td>
<td><em>Life Itself</em> (Roger Ebert’s memoir) and film <em>Life Itself</em> (Steve Jacobs, dir.)</td>
<td>May 17</td>
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<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Karen Silkwood story, American scientist/activist</td>
<td>Film: <em>Silkwood</em></td>
<td>May 24</td>
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<td>Monday</td>
<td>Memorial Day: No class</td>
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<td>Wednesday</td>
<td><em>Stasiland: Stories from Behind the Berlin Wall</em></td>
<td>Film: <em>Lives of Others</em></td>
<td>May 31</td>
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<td>Monday</td>
<td>Reconciling personal identity Frank Abagnale</td>
<td>Film: <em>Catch Me if You Can</em></td>
<td>June 5</td>
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<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>reconciling past and present personal and professional roles). Memoir of Margaret Humphreys</td>
<td>Film: <em>Sunshine and Oranges</em></td>
<td>June 7</td>
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<td>Monday</td>
<td>Public/Private Identity. Overcoming stereotypes. Veronica Franco letters and poems</td>
<td>Film: <em>Love Marilyn</em></td>
<td>June 12</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Film</td>
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<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Nelson Mandela and conflict transformation</td>
<td><em>Invictus</em></td>
<td>June 14</td>
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<td>Monday</td>
<td>Art as memoir and as socio-political force. Andre Dubus short stories</td>
<td><em>Frida, Lives Worth Living</em></td>
<td>June 19</td>
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<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>FINAL EXAM</td>
<td>In-class exam: short answer/ID/essay</td>
<td>June 21</td>
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**Written Work**

Woods College students are expected to prepare professional, polished written work. Written materials must be typed and submitted in the format required by your instructor. Strive for a thorough yet concise style. Cite literature appropriately, using APA, MLA or CLA style per your instructor’s requirements. Develop your thoughts fully, clearly, logically and specifically. Proofread all materials to ensure the use of proper grammar, punctuation and spelling. For writing support, please contact the [Connors Family Learning Center](#).

**Attendance**

Attending class is an important component of learning. Students are expected to attend all class sessions. When circumstances prevent a student from attending class, the student is responsible for contacting the instructor before the class meets. Students who miss class are still expected to complete all assignments and meet all deadlines. Consistent class participation is expected. If you miss class, you cannot make up participation points associated with that class. Makeup work may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor. If circumstances necessitate excessive absence from class, the student should consider withdrawing from the class.

Consistent with BC’s commitment to creating a learning environment that is respectful of persons of differing backgrounds, we believe that every reasonable effort should be made to allow members of the university community to observe their religious holidays without jeopardizing their academic status. Students are responsible for reviewing course syllabi as soon as possible, and for communicating with the instructor promptly regarding any possible conflicts with observed religious holidays. Students are responsible for completing all class requirements for days missed due to conflicts with religious holidays.

**Accommodation and Accessibility**

Boston College is committed to providing accommodations to students, faculty, staff and visitors with disabilities. [Specific documentation from the appropriate office is required](#) for students seeking accommodation in Woods College courses. Advanced notice and formal registration with the appropriate office is required to facilitate this process. There are two separate offices at BC that coordinate services for students with disabilities:

- [The Connors Family Learning Center (CFLC)](#) coordinates services for students with LD and ADHD.
- [The Disabilities Services Office (DSO)](#) coordinates services for all other disabilities.
Scholarship and Academic Integrity
Students in Woods College courses must produce original work and cite references appropriately. Failure to cite references is plagiarism. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not necessarily limited to, plagiarism, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, cheating on exams or assignments, or submitting the same material or substantially similar material to meet the requirements of more than one course without seeking permission of all instructors concerned. Scholastic misconduct may also involve, but is not necessarily limited to, acts that violate the rights of other students, such as depriving another student of course materials or interfering with another student’s work. Please see the Boston College policy on academic integrity for more information.