A Stasi officer in 1983 East Germany monitors supposed “enemies of the State”

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**Office Hours:** By appointment during the summers; and prior to and following class.  
**Telephone:** (617) 552-3895 (email preferred)  
**Schedule:** Monday/Wednesday, 6:00 to 9:15 PM  
**Room:** Devlin 010

**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**  
FILM 224401 Biography and Autobiography into Film  
The course will be structured around the genres of biography and autobiography and the ways in which the written genre is transformed and reinterpreted through film. Through
analysis and close reading of texts, students will have the opportunities to reflect upon the effectiveness of understanding personal narratives and connecting the individual experience to a larger cultural/historical context. As society moves to a more visual approach for understanding the challenges in life, studying adaptation from the written word to the visual expression can be useful in increasing awareness of the human condition and learning about the self. In addition to assigned readings and films, students will be provided with an extensive filmography of adaptations as resources for their papers. The course will cover a selection of classic and contemporary works of literature/film, with a focus on analysis of the genre of autobiography and biography through modern interpretations.

June 22-July 29, MW, 6:00-9:15 pm.
John Michalczyk and Susan Michalczyk

Course Objectives
1. 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.
2. The student will learn the art of adaptation from text to screen.
3. The student will also become proficient in film analysis, studying elements of plot, characterization and cinematography.

Further Objectives
1. The student will also demonstrate knowledge across cultural settings and will learn the impact of culture, gender, race, and age as demonstrated in various biographies and autobiographies and in adaptation to film.
2. The student will demonstrate ethical knowledge as it pertains to the lives of the persons viewed in the film adaptations.

Grading
Students will be graded on both CONTENT and STYLE for the two required essays based on film viewings outside of class. A final exam will conclude the course. In addition a STUDENT INPUT FORM will be filled out to indicate what additional work the student has completed outside class for the course.

WCAS Grading System
The undergraduate grading system consists of twelve categories:  A (4.00), A- (3.67), excellent; B+ (3.33), B (3.00), B- (2.67), good; C+ (2.33), C (2.00), C- (1.67), satisfactory; D+ (1.33), D (1.00), D- (.67), passing but unsatisfactory; F (.00), failure; I (.00), incomplete; F (.00), course dropped without notifying office; W (.00), official withdrawal from course. The graduate grading system is A (4.00), A- (3.67), Excellent; B+ (3.33), B (3.00), good; B- (2.67), C (2.00), passing but not for degree credit; F (.00), failure.

Grade Reports. All students are required to log into the web through Agora to access their semester grades. Students must utilize their BC username and password to log on. If your username or password is not known the HELP Desk located in the Campus Technology Resource Center (CTRC) in O’Neill Library will issue a new one. The CTRC requires a valid picture ID (a BC ID, driver’s license or passport) to obtain your password.
Texts: Selections available through on-line reserves (and we encourage students to read more of each book/assignment)
Roger Ebert, Life Itself
Veronica Franco, Poems and Selected Letters (ed/trans Jones/Rosenthal)
Andre Dubus, Selections: Meditations from a Moveable Chair: Dancing After Hours
T.S. Elliot, The Wasteland
Virginia Woolf, A Room of One’s Own, Mrs. Dalloway
Klaus Mann, Mephisto
Lillian Hellman, Pentimento
Paragraph 175 (German law against homosexuals)
Stasiland: Stories from Behind the Berlin Wall
Italo Calvino, “American Diary 1959-1960”
Nelson Mandela documents

Recommended: (on-line library reserves)

James Olney
“Conditions and Limits of Autobiography” Georges Gusdorf, pp28-48
“The Style of Autobiography” Jean Starobinski, pp73-83
“Some Principles of Autobiography” William Howarth, pp84-114
“Confessions and Autobiography” Stephen Spender, pp115-122
“Eye for I: Making and Unmaking Autobiography in Film” Elizabeth Bruss, pp296-320

“A Theory of Autobiography”, pp3-50
“Synthesis”, pp317-332

-Memory and Narrative: The Weave of Life-Writing, University of Chicago Press, 1998
Ch. 1: Memory and the Narrative Imperative, pp1-83
Ch. 3: Not I, pp229-269
Postlude: pp405-422

Jill Ker Conway
-When Memory Speaks: Reflections on Autobiography, Alfred A. Knopf, 199
Ch. 1: “Memory’s Plots”
Ch. 2: “The Romantic Heroine”
Ch. 6: “Assertive Women”

Augustine -Confessions: Book X

Important Policies
http://www.bc.edu/content/bc/schools/advstudies/guide/academicinteg.html

Written Work
Graduate and undergraduate students are expected to prepare professional, polished written work. Written materials must be typed in the format required by your instructor. Strive for a thorough, yet concise style. Cite literature appropriately, using APA, MLA, CLA format per instructors decision. Develop your thoughts fully, clearly, logically and specifically. Proofread all materials to ensure the use of proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling. You are encouraged to make use of campus resources for refining writing skills as needed [http://www.bc.edu/libraries/help/tutoring.html].
Scholarship and Academic Integrity
It is expected that students will produce original work and cite references appropriately. Failure to reference properly is plagiarism. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not necessarily limited to, plagiarism, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, cheating on examinations or assignments, and submitting the same paper or substantially similar papers 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.

Request for Accommodations
If you have a disability and will be requesting accommodations for this course, please register with either Dr. Kathy Duggan (dugganka@bc.edu), Associate Director, Connors Family Learning Center (learning disabilities or AHD) or Dean Paulette Durrett, (paulette.durrett@bc.edu), Assistant Dean for students with disabilities, (all other disabilities). Advance notice and appropriate documentation are required for accommodations.
http://www.bc.edu/content/bc/libraries/help/tutoring/specialservices.html.

Attendance
Class attendance is an important component of learning. Students are expected to attend all classes and to arrive by the beginning of and remain for the entire class period. When an occasion occurs that prevents a student from attending class, it is the student’s obligation to inform the instructor of the conflict before the class meets. The student is still expected to meet all assignment deadlines. If a student knows that he or she will be absent on a particular day, the student is responsible for seeing the instructor beforehand to obtain the assignments for that day. If a student misses a class, he or she is responsible for making up the work by obtaining a classmate's notes and handouts and turning in any assignments due. Furthermore, many instructors give points for participation in class. If you miss class, you cannot make up participation points associated with that class. Types of absences that are not typically excused include weddings, showers, vacations, birthday parties, graduations, etc. Additional assignments, penalties and correctives are at the discretion of the instructor. If circumstances necessitate excessive absence from class, the student should consider withdrawing from the class. In all cases, students are expected to accept the decision of the instructor regarding attendance policies specific to the class.

Consistent with our commitment of creating an academic community that is respectful of and welcoming to 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 the fulfillment of their academic obligations. It is the responsibility of students to review course syllabi as soon as they are distributed and to consult the faculty member promptly regarding any possible conflicts with observed religious holidays. If asked, the student should provide accurate information about the obligations entailed in the observance of that particular holiday. However, it is the responsibility of the student to complete any and all class requirements for days that are missed due to conflicts due to religious holidays. There may be circumstances that necessitate a departure from this policy. Feel free to contact the WCAS at 617-552-3900 for consultation.
Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the specified dates. Late assignments will be graded accordingly.
Course Assignments (readings, exercises and/or experiences)
In order to account for the 4 credit hours of this course, students will see one film outside
of class which will be on the reserve list at O’Neill Library circulation Desk. It is
expected that the students will not only read the required text for the class but also take
time to do some research on the topic. It is expected that the students should be spending
8 hours per week outside of class with the readings and film viewings prior to the class
sessions.

Syllabus

1. Monday, June 22
Introduction to Autobiography and Biography/Adaptation to Film
Text: Film critic Roger Ebert’s memoir: Life Itself (Ebert’s last days prior to his death are
documented by the director of Hoop Dreams)
Film: Life Itself (Steve Jacobs, dir.)

2. Wednesday, June 24
Text: poems and letters of Veronica Franco, 16th Century Venetian courtesan
Film: Dangerous Beauty (Marshall Herskovitz, dir.)
O’Neill Library Viewing: Love, Marilyn (Liz Garbus, dir.)

3. Monday, June 29
Paintings: Frida Kahlo (Mexican artist married to muralist Diego Rivera)
Text: Dubus’ Meditations from a Moveable Chair, “Dancing After Hours”
Film: Frida (Julie Taymor, dir.) with Salma Hayek

4. Wednesday, July 1
Text: Tom and Viv (Play by Michael Hastings), T.S. Elliot, The Wasteland
T.S. Elliot’s relationship with his first wife Vivienne Haigh-Wood Elliot
Film: Tom and Viv (Brian Gilbert, dir.)

****Assignment: First paper due**** July 6
An analysis of an adaptation from a biography/autobiography/memoir (4 pages)

5. Monday, July 6
Texts: A Room of One’s Own, Mrs. Dalloway
Virginia Wolff as an avant-garde woman writer in a male-dominated society
Film: The Hours (Steven Daldry, dir.)
O’Neill Library Viewing: The Life Before Her Eyes, Vadim Perelman, dir.)

6. Wednesday, July 8
Text: Klaus Mann’s novel Mephisto, life of Nazi theater director Gustaf Grundgens
Film: Mephisto (Istvan Szabo, dir.)

7. Monday, July 13
Text: Pentimento (Lillian Hellman), the story of an anti-Nazi resistant.
Film: Julia (Fred Zinnemman, dir.)
8. Wednesday, July 15
Text: Paragraph 175 (German law against homosexuals)
Film: Standing Window (La Finestra di fronte, Ferzan Özpetek, dir.)
Memories of a homosexual relationship during Nazi occupation of Italy.

****Assignment: Second Paper Due**** July 20

9. Monday, July 20
Text: Stasiland: Stories from Behind the Berlin Wall
Personal accounts of interacting with East German secret police, the Stasi.
Film: Lives of Others (Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, dir.)
The story of an East German Stasi officer in 1983.

10. Wednesday, July 22
Intro to the life of Jackie Robinson and racial integration into sports
Text: Calvino, “American Diary 1959-1960”
Film: 42 (Brian Helgeland, dir.)
O’Neill Library Viewing: Finding Forester with Sean Connery

11. Monday, July 27
Text: Nelson Mandela documents
Film: Invictus (Clint Eastwood, dir.)
The South African rugby team wins the World Cup with Mandela’s blessing.

12. Wednesday, July 29
Final Exam

Additional O’Neill Library Viewings: In the Bedroom (Dubus’ short story)
Catch Me if You Can (Imposter Frank Abagnale)
Fellini’s Amarcord
Nora Ephron, Silkwood