This class intends to complicate the nationalist premise in the study of autobiography, that stories of exemplary selves are expressive of a particular national temperament. Under this premise, for example, Benjamin Franklin's Autobiography is read as a typical American story with its dual impulse of self-perfection and social mobility. But such a premise may beg the question about life stories that do not share Franklin's pattern of fulfillment: shall these be considered un-American? It is the objective of this class to read such "marginal" or "ethnic" autobiographical narratives and examine the ways with which they register and reconstitute the "central" and "mainstream" notions of American-ness. What are the words within the quotation marks mean? The thematic focus of the individual and the nation will be explored along with problems of the autobiographical form, such as the gap between the "I" of language and the first-person "self," and between representation and invention.

**Required Texts:**
- Douglas, *Narrative*
- Washington, *Up from Slavery*
- Rodriguez, *Hunger of Memory*
- Hoffman, *Lost in Translation*
- Liu, *The Accidental Asian*

**Policy Statement:**
- **Reading:** Everyone is expected to finish the assigned readings prior to the class.
- **Papers and Due Dates:** Two 5pp critical essays. Your grade will depend on the quality of your ideas, organization, and prose style. All papers must be typed and double-spaced with sufficient margins. **You are responsible for retaining a photocopy of the paper you submit.** In **Paper 1, due M 10-9,** you are to compare Douglass' *Narrative* with Washington's *Up* by focusing on the issue of slavery. You should examine the authors' different attitudes towards slavery and explain the reasons of their divergence, using textual evidence to make your case. For **Paper 2, due M 11-13,** you are to write on the question of English acquisition and its effects on the autobiographical subject’s thinking and feeling, in this case, by drawing on Rodriguez's *Hunger of Memory* and Hoffman’s *Lost in Translation.* Illustrate the difference and similarity of the two by carefully attending to the texts, and organize your thoughts with a clear argument.

**In both cases, you need to generate a thesis of your own, and turn in the hard copy of your essay by the beginning of the class hour. All late papers will receive an "F."** Exception in cases of serious medical incapacity. I will prepare you for the assignment in class, and address your individual concerns regarding the paper during my office hrs.

**Semester Grades:** The scaled numerical sum of all essays, exams and quizzes will determine your final grade. I reserve the right, though, to take into account absenteeism. 2 critical essays (1st, 10%; 2nd, 20%) mid-term (20%) and final (30%). Indefinite number of quizzes (20%). 95-100=A+; 85-95=A; 75-84=B; 68-74=C; 60-67=D; below 60=F
Plagiarism (i.e. the misrepresentation of another person’s ideas or words as your own): **automatic flunk of the course.**

Exams: A Mid-term M 10-16 and a final examination. No rescheduling or make-up exams except for serious medical incapacity. Cheating in exams will result in "F" for the exam portion of the grade. The professor reserves the right to keep both the mid-term and final exams for his file after reviewing them with the students.

Accommodations for Disability: If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this class, please provide me with a letter from Disability Services, verifying your disability and stating needed accommodations.

Academic Courtesy: I have several requests pertaining to this category. Students who feel unable to honor these should enroll in some other courses.

I reserve the right to adjust the syllabus when necessary.

**Syllabus**

M 9-25  Introduction  
W 9-27  Douglass, *Narrative*: pp. 3-16; 83-96; 133-46  
F 9-29  Douglass, *Narrative*: pp.16-65  
M 10-2  Douglass, *Narrative*: pp.65-80; 116-30  
W 10-4  Douglass, *Narrative*: pp. 146-83  
F 10-6  (Washington, *Up from Slavery*: vii-xxii and pp. 1-36) class cancelled; students should complete reading on their own  
M 10-9  Washington, *Up from Slavery*: pp. 37-77; **First Paper Due**  
M 10-16  **Midterm Exam**  
F 10-20  Rodriguez, *Hunger of Memory*: pp. 41-110  
M 10-23  Rodriguez, *Hunger of Memory*: pp. 111-139  
F 10-27  **Review of Paper and Midterm**  
M 10-30  Hoffman, *Lost in Translation*: pp. 3-95  
F 11-3  Hoffman, *Lost in Translation*: pp. 127-64  
F 11-10  **Reading and Paper Writing**  
M 11-13  **Second Paper Due: Presentation and Discussion**  
W 11-15  Liu, *The Accidental Asian*: 3-32  
F 11-17  Liu, *The Accidental Asian*: 33-56  
M 11-20  Liu, *The Accidental Asian*: 57-84  
W 11-22  Liu, *The Accidental Asian*: 85-144  

**Thanksgiving Holidays**

W 11-29  Liu, *The Accidental Asian*: 175-203  
F 12-1  **Term review**