If literature’s primary purpose is to help humans understand and empathize with each other, then memoir more than deserves a preeminent place on our literary shelves. But how do we mine our own lived memories for moments that will not only make for page-turning reading, but also change minds, hearts and — even more importantly — perspectives? And how do we go about turning these specific events from our lives into intriguing, relatable, and cohesive chapters of writing?

This course will allow you to recognize the raw material in your own life and provide you with the authorial tools to alchemize this personal “base matter” into literary gold. Through reading and analyzing the ways in which memoirists such as, Azar Nafisi, Augusten Burroughs, Tara Westover, Tobias Wolff, Cheryl Strayed, and Kiese Laymon use humor, self-critical honesty, and epiphany, we’ll become acquainted with the techniques and approaches that make memoir so enlightening and even provocative. Weekly writing assignments will focus on helping students with page production, while reading discussions and exercises will explore specific craft topics. Depending on class size, we will workshop one to two sections of each student’s memoir-in-progress.

Class textbooks will include: *The Art of Memoir* by Mary Karr and *Educated* by Tara Westover.

**GRADING:**
Breakdown is as follows:
- 50% workshop excerpts
- 50% participation (weekly responses to published and peer work)

*Please Note:* If you require proof that you completed a Continuing Studies course for any reason (for example, employer reimbursement), you must choose either the Credit/No Credit or Letter Grade option. Courses taken for NGR (“No Grade Requested”) will not appear on official transcripts or grade reports.

**BRIEF SYLLABUS:**
- **Week 1:** Writing: The WHAT of your story
  Reading: Preface-Ch. 2 in Karr and Ch. 1-4 in Education
- **Week 2:** Writing: The WHY of your story
  Reading: Ch. 3-5 in Karr and Ch. 5-8 in Education
- **Week 3:** Writing: The WHO of your story and Workshop Responses
  Reading: Ch. 6-7 in Karr and Ch. 9-12 in Education
- **Week 4:** Writing: The HOW of your story and Workshop Responses
Preliminary Syllabus

Week 5: Writing: The WHICH of your story and Workshop Responses
  Reading: Ch. 11-13 in Karr and Ch. 17-20 in Education

Week 6: Writing: The WHERE and WHEN of your story and Workshop Responses
  Reading: Ch. 14-16 in Karr and Ch. 21-24 in Education

Week 7: Writing: The SCENE and the UNSCENE of your story and Workshop Responses
  Reading: Ch. 17-19 in Karr and Ch. 25-28 in Education

Week 8: Writing: The SEEN and the UNSEEN of your story and Workshop Responses
  Reading: Ch. 20-22 in Karr and Ch. 29-32 in Education

Week 9: Writing: The DOING of your story and Workshop Responses
  Reading: Ch. 23-24 in Karr and Ch. 33-36 in Education

Week 10: Writing: The RE-DOING of your story and Workshop Responses
  Reading: Ch. 37-40 in Education

Our Weekly Schedule:
TUESDAY: You should post your weekly Reading Discussion Points by Tuesday at 5pm (Pacific Time), although you may do so as early as you are ready.
THURSDAY: You should post your weekly Writing Exercises by Thursday at 5pm. But again, I encourage you to join in these "conversations" throughout the week.
FRIDAY: You should post your Workshop Responses by Friday at 5pm. I will send out an email to the class introducing the coming week and directing you to the new Forum threads, including your Discussion Points about the week's readings and your Weekly Writing Exercises.
SATURDAY: I will hold weekly office hours in the Zoom chat room at 11am (PST).

Workshop Rules and Requirements:
For the Weekly Writing Exercises of your group members, please use the following as a guide: give one positive assessment (something you like and why), give one comment on something you think is not working as well as it could (and why), one question about something that confused you or was unclear, and one suggestion for revision. You're shooting for a short to medium sized paragraph. Feel free to give more feedback than the above asks for if you'd like.

For the Workshop excerpts, please make your comments more detailed than on the short assignments. It is always a good idea to lead with praise. We are only human, and we are more likely to accept criticism once we have been assured that there were at least some positive aspects to our piece. Do not impose your own taste on the chapter you are reading. Think about whether or not the excerpt is working on its own terms. Here is the structure I recommend for your workshop comments: 1) Write a brief summary in which you explain what you think the story is trying to say. 2) Write a paragraph on the things you appreciated and enjoyed most about the story. Be specific. Provide examples of particular sentences/phrases/passages that were exemplary. 3) Write a paragraph on the
things you feel could be improved during revision. Focus on both large level concerns and small issues, as well. Again, be specific. 4) Ask any lingering questions you had when you finished the story.

GUIDELINES FOR READING DISCUSSIONS:
Good writers are good readers. Each week you will have a few Reading Discussion Points related to the background reading. Again, I will monitor and moderate the discussion, but this is a place for you to discuss and even politely debate ideas of literature with your peers. Hopefully, the reading will feed into your own work. It may inspire you, but even if you dislike it (this may be inevitable—tastes differ!), it will be good to know why you want to take a different path. For these discussions you are expected, at the minimum, to address the questions posted each week and respond to at least one of your classmate's postings (this could be a question, a different take on their reading, or even a further exploration about what they have said).