Course Description
Creative nonfiction and life writing—including the memoir, the personal essay, literary journalism, and "faction"—have become increasingly popular literary formats. Why? What do they do, say, reveal, or permit that have made them so resonant for contemporary audiences? What do they authorize? How, when, and where do they withhold? This course, “Later Twentieth Century US Literature: Constructing the 'I' in American Literature and Popular Culture,” will use forms of narrative self-construction in order to examine both American identity and its relationship to aesthetic innovation. By reading a cross-section of American authors who write on (or revise) shared topics and exploring the diverse autobiographical genres they produce, “Later Twentieth Century US Literature” seeks to gain insight into how individual subjectivity can be used to map cultural shift and aesthetic engagement. We will thus read nonfiction, fiction, and poetry, and watch a film. Rather than a course on creative nonfiction or life writing, this seminar will engage in a dialogue about how writers participate in larger conversations: with other writers and artists; with cultural systems and ideological frameworks; with family, legacy, and the self.