How did various Europeans conceptualize their personal identities in the eighteenth century? How did they imagine and write about their life trajectories? Some historians have argued that modern European notions of “selfhood” and “individual identity” emerged in this era. To debate and explore these questions, we will read autobiographies, letters, and fictional accounts by diverse individuals from Europe and its colonies. These men and women come from widely different walks of life. We will read their words in conjunction with secondary sources which probe the nature of identity and the genre of life narratives.

The major purpose of the seminar is to offer students the opportunity to do a primary-source research paper on any issue to do with identity and sense of self in eighteenth-century Europe and the Atlantic World. Students can write on diverse topics, including issues not raised in our collective reading. Paper topics will probably focus on a single eighteenth-century individual (or possibly two individuals) who left behind sources that facilitate exploring the writer’s identity, self-presentation, and relationships to other people and issues of the time period. Possible sources include diaries or memoirs; personal letters; travelogues; novels or other literary sources in autobiographical format. During the first half of the course, we will do some background reading and sample a variety of primary sources. The second half of the course will be devoted to researching and writing your papers, and also discussing each other’s research projects.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Two most important requirements: 1/ lively participation in seminar discussion; and 2/ producing an original research paper (c. 20-25 pp.) on some historical aspect of eighteenth-century identity. Short assignments earlier in the semester will be oriented toward preparing you for this final paper. These short assignments include: a short 5-page paper analyzing primary material; a two-page proposal; a bibliography; an outline; an oral presentation of topics. Rough drafts of the final paper are due on April 16 and will be shared & discussed by groups of your fellow students. Final paper is due April 30.

READING: We will use a course packet of excerpts from primary and secondary sources. This course packet is available at the Copy Center at 6120 Sewell Hall (the Social Sciences Building). I have ordered only one book, the novel by Françoise de Graffigny, Letters from a Peruvian Woman. It will also be on 2-hour reserve at H. C. White.

CREDIT HOURS & WORK LOAD: The credit standard for this 3-credit course is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course’s learning activities (at
least 45 hours per credit or 9 hours per week), which include regularly scheduled meeting times (group seminar meetings of 115 minutes most weeks), reading, research, writing, individual consultations with the instructor, and other student work as described in the syllabus.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Develop research skills and the ability to read difficult, unfamiliar texts
Improve written and oral communication skills and hone critical thinking skills by exploring unexpected historical events and diverse human reactions
Assess, interpret, and integrate diverse primary sources for a major research project
Craft an original argument in dialogue with existing secondary work
Conceptualize and compose a lengthy research paper
Analyze and reflect on deep-rooted and varied human issues, still present today, such as:
  - How do individuals forge identities and construct a sense of self?
  - How do “authenticity” and “performance” interact when individuals present themselves?
  - How does writing interact with identity-construction?
  - Likewise, how do various categories of identity – such as gender, nationality, class, religion, status, etc. – inform individual behavior and life trajectory?
  - How does studying individuals shed light on broader social or cultural questions about a historical time and place?
Debate and make concrete & understandable various core interpretive concepts, such as “agency”, “identity”, “contingency”, “structure”, “ideology”, etc.
Gain greater understanding of the dynamics of eighteenth-century Europe, the Enlightenment, and colonization

PLAGIARISM

The UW Writing Center offers this definition of plagiarism from the Merriam Webster Dictionary: "to steal and pass off (the ideas and words of another) as one's own" or to "present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source." Plagiarized work constitutes a serious offense and will receive an F. Students must produce all of their own work without borrowing any sentences or sentence fragments from the web, books, or articles. All quotations should be put into quotation marks and cited. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it, here are two sources: http://www.plagiarism.org; and http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QuotingSources.html.

NOTE-TAKING STYLE

For the papers and bibliography, use the “Chicago-Turabian Style” as outlined on the UW Writing Center website: https://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/DocChicago.html. That website gives examples of how to cite various sources. You can use either endnotes or footnotes. Here is a basic footnote:


Here is the same text as a bibliography entry:
Week 1: (Jan. 22) INTRODUCTION

Week 2: (Jan. 29) AUTOBIOGRAPHY: ADVENTUROUS & PHILOSOPHICAL SELVES
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, from The Confessions in Enlightenment Thought: An Anthology of Sources, ed. Margaret L. King, 195-197

Week 3: (Feb. 5) INTERPRETING IDENTITY: COMING OF AGE, COURTSHIP, & RELIGION

Week 4: (Feb. 12) TRAVEL & THE OTHER
Emily Clark, ed., Voices from an Early American Convent: Marie Madelaine Hachard and the New Orleans Ursulines, 1727-1760, 36-63, 72-91
Elizabeth Justice, A Voyage to Russia (London, 1736), v-viii, 3-5, 12-18

*** SHORT PAPER DUE, Thursday, Feb. 14 by 5pm: 5-page document analysis

Week 5: (Feb. 19) INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS
No class. We will have individually scheduled meetings to discuss writing issues and possible topics.

Week 6: (Feb. 26) SLAVERY, DIASPORA, & IDENTITY

NOTE: you may want to intersperse reading part of the primary source by Equiano with reading the secondary-source debate between Carretta and Sweet.
Vincent Carretta, Equiano, the African: Biography of a Self-Made Man, xi-xix, 1-16
Vincent Carretta, "Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa: New Light on an Eighteenth-

Week 7: (March 5) A FICTIONAL SELF: WRITING, GENDER, & TRANSATLANTIC SELF
* Françoise de Graffigny, Letters from a Peruvian Woman, trans. David Kornacker, 1-174

Week 8: (March 12) INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS
*** 2 PAGE PROPOSAL = description of topic, key primary sources, and central questions, due at your meeting with me.

SPRING BREAK

Week 9: (March 26) WRITING A RESEARCH PAPER
Sample Student Paper: “The Making of Madame de Staël: The Daughter, the Scholar, the Mistress”, used anonymously with student’s permission
We will have a discussion with a Writing Lab Instructor.

*** BIBLIOGRAPHY of primary and secondary sources due Thursday, March 28.

Week 10: (April 2) INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS
*** OUTLINE due at your meeting with me.

Week 11: (April 9) ORAL PRESENTATIONS
Sample Student introductions

Week 12: (April 16) EXCHANGE OF DRAFTS
*** Rough drafts due at class.

Week 13: (April 23) DISCUSSION OF ROUGH DRAFTS & CONCLUSIONS
Reading = Drafts of 3 Fellow Students’ Research Papers & Sample Student conclusions.

***Peer Review of each other’s drafts

In addition to our meetings to discuss drafts early in the week, I will hold extensive office hours for individual meetings.

Week 14: (April 30) WRAP UP CLASS
*** Final Paper due on April 30.