

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT BERKELEY
OSHER LIFELONG LEARNING INSTITUTE

**FIVE PERSONAL PIECES:
EXPERIMENTING WITH AUTOBIOGRAPHY (Part 1)**

Winter Term, January 25 – March 1, 2018
Thursday, 1:00 – 3:00 PM
University Hall, 41C

Instructor: Deborah Lichtman, Ph.D.
d.lichtman@berkeley.edu
www.writeinberkeley.com

To write autobiographically, you must first look at your life, recognizing which events and people pull you to write about them. You can then compose vivid pieces of writing. This course will help you do so by examining the literary techniques used by memoir writers. You'll try your hand at sketches of people and places, scenes with action and dialogue, and passages of description and reflection. By the end of the term, you'll have a portfolio of five personal pieces that can stand alone or be woven into a longer project. You might also leave with new insights into your life experience. You may continue your work next term in the second part of this course.

Schedule (subject to revision):

Week 1 – Images, Facts, and Memories (Introduction)

Week 2 – People (Characterization)

Week 3 – Places (Setting)

Week 4 – Actions (Scene, Summary, and Dialogue)

Week 5 – Thoughts (Exposition and Reflection)

Week 6 – Synthesis (Putting the Pieces Together)

Here's what will happen in class each week:

- Informal lectures on craft, enriched by your contributions to discussion.
- Close reading of brief excerpts by published authors – not to judge them but to learn technique.
- In-class writing exercises to help you apply the techniques that we study.
- Time devoted to sharing your impromptu work in small groups or pairs.
- Optional writing assignments to pursue at home.

Please bring to each class meeting:

- A notebook for class handouts. As you collect the handouts, keep bringing them to each class.
- The writing that you've done each week.

If you'd like written feedback from me, please type your sketch, number your pages, use 12-point font or larger, and double-space your text. Limit each submission to four pages (1000 words). You can use your computer to count your words. I can accept submissions through our fifth class meeting. Please hand them in as hard copies.

Reading Further

Writing the Memoir – Judith Barrington

Your Life as Story – Tristine Rainer

Writing Life Stories – Bill Roorbach