



## **Course outline: What's Your Story? Writing the New Autobiography** **UW-Madison Continuing Studies**

### 1. The story only you can tell

A story needs a plot

Eliminate boring narrative, create stellar storylines

Map it out

Creating a chart of your life. Help with finding 6 key scenes that delineate your story

Find your voice

Exercises provide feedback.

### 2. How do you structure your story?

Why is structure so important?

Three-act story structure secrets: 9 essential elements of story structure

The inciting incident

Exercises provide feedback as you write key scenes.

### 3. Exploring the difference between emotional and factual truths

I remember

Tricks memory plays on you and how to handle that

Core emotional truths

Conveying emotional truths

Finding redemption

Exercises provide feedback on your writing

### 4. Take a walk on the wild side and other challenges of autobiographical writing

Rough roads

Walk on the wild side

Power of subtext

Risks to new autobiographical writers

Saying the Unsayable

Exercises help you tackle hard issues and things you fear saying.

## 5. Themes, scenes, and dialogue

Themes. The nature of themes in literature; what matters or not  
Scenes. Creating vivid action and emotion with good scene design  
A story is a story  
Managing shifts in time  
Why the New Autobiography  
Dialogue tips from the professionals  
Elevator Exercise

Exercises let you receive more feedback as you progress.

## 6. The tickle room and those pesky legal, emotional, and ethical concerns

Funny, like memory, is subjective  
Just a bit on revision  
Pesky legal and ethical concerns

Exercises allow you to explore using humor about moments in your life, embarrassing or not. Send in another 10 or 20 pages for feedback.