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.