Course description:
In this course, we will explore the genres of biography and autobiography in Tibetan religious and literary culture, with special emphasis on the latter. Though often considered a genre characteristic of—and exclusive to—Western modernity, autobiography has had a long and rich history in Tibet, spanning at least a thousand years. We will begin the course by reading some theoretical studies of autobiography and narrative. We will then consider some issues specific to Tibetan auto/biography and its historical development, and characteristics of the related genre of (Tibetan) Buddhist hagiography. The remainder of the quarter will be spent in reading and analyzing representative examples of these genres in translation, drawn from a variety of authors from the fifteenth through the nineteenth century.

Students will conceive, research, and write a 15–25pp. paper and will give a brief presentation on their work during the final class session.

PQ: Preferably some background in Tibetan or Buddhist studies.
Books available at Seminary Coop; articles on e-reserve/Chalk

Schedule of Class Meetings:

Part One: Interpretative Tools

Week One (6 January 2009): Introduction
Readings: none

Week Two (13 January 2009): Auto/biography and Cultural Criticism
Readings: Olney, “Autobiography and the Cultural Moment”
Gusdorf, “Conditions and Limits of Autobiography”
Weintraub, “Autobiography and Historical Consciousness”
Bruner, “The Narrative Construction of Reality”

Week Three (20 January 2009): Tibetan Auto/biography
Gyatso, Apparitions of the Self, Chapter 1, pp. 101–123
Gyatso, “Counting Crows’ Teeth: Tibetans and Their Diary-writing Practices”
Sanders, “Theorizing the Collaborative Self”

Week Four (27 January 2009): Auto/biography and Buddhist Hagiography
Readings: Robinson, “The Lives of Indian Buddhist Saints”
Templeman, “The Mirror of a Life”
Garratt, “Biography by Installment”
Mahāpadāna Sutta
Mahāvastu I, pp. 152–203; Mahāvastu II, pp. 1–45, 61–64
Upāyakausalya Mahāyānasūtra, pp. 51–70
Part Two: Readings

Readings:  *Life of Milarepa* (entire)
Roberts, “The Evolution of Milarepa’s Biography”

Week Six (10 February 2009): Four Autobiographies from 16th–18th century Dolpo

Week Seven (17 February 2009): Orgyan Chökyi (17th–18th cent), women, and autobiography
Readings:  Schaeffer, *Himalayan Hermitess* (entire)

Week Eight (24 February 2009): Jigmé Lingpa, the Eighteenth-century Treasure Revealer

Week Nine (3 March 2009): Autobiography in the 19th Century: Zhabs-dkar and a friend
Readings:  *The Life of Shabkar* (entire: or, at least the prose parts)
Guenther (trans.), “In Retrospect” (by rDza dpal-sprul)

Week Ten (10 March 2009): Discussion of projects
Readings:  none

**Final Papers will be due in my box in Swift 204 by noon on 11 March 2009**
Bibliography

I. Course Readings


II. Selected Sources for Further Reading and/or Paper Research


