



Spiritual Autobiography: Construals of “Self” & “Religion” RELI 333-001 – Fall 2021

instructor: *Prof. Garry Sparks*
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class days/times: *M&W 1:30pm-2:45pm*
class room: *Planetary Hall 126*

online office hours: *T&Th 3:00pm - 5:00pm*
(or by appointment when available)

Course Description

Who and *how* does one say that they are, compared to *what* (and what not), and *why*? This course will explore the critical and creative construction of the identity of “self,” how the constructive understanding has historically shifted, and how it is specifically understood as an engagement with (or in contrast to) “others” (religious, cultural, political, socio-economic, familial, sexual, etc.) and larger themes often related to religion, such as freedom, survival, memory, power, love, justice, etc. Over the course of the semester students will read and discuss classic as well as more recent religious autobiographies, especially for America as engaged with senses of a wider world. Furthermore, students will consider how the genre(s), approaches, styles, and even focus of autobiography have shifted and diversified throughout history as well as—toward the end of the course with Robert Caro’s *Working*—what may be required to craft them well.

Learning Objectives and Goals

Students who complete this course will:

- be introduced to the brief history and diversity of “autobiography” and the various genres, styles, form (including film and other visual media), motivating influences and agendas, and contexts by which writing about the “self” has changed down to the present day;
- critically identify and assess how a sense of “self” (vs. one’s selves) may be understood to be constituted by:
 - larger themes and values engaged with by an authorial “self,”
 - encounters (productive and destructive) with religious (as well as familial, cultural, linguistic, socio-economic, sexual, historical, or even perceived ontological) “others,”
 - the various processes described (e.g., conversion, struggle, creative composition, inscription, etc.) by which a “self” is then reflected upon and conveyed to others,
- closely read, contextualize, and critically analyze an exemplary set of historical, classical, and significantly contemporary autobiographies that are diverse with respect to
 - genre and agenda,
 - religious and vocational identities,
 - socio-historical contexts of composition,
- analytically examine common (religious) themes, tropes, and motifs that critical self-reflection tends to wrestle with regardless of media (e.g., script or film), and
- engage in exercises of one’s own autobiographical imagining.

Methods of Instruction

The core of this course will primarily consist of close readings of religious (variously defined) autobiographies (broadly understood). You will be expected to have read thoroughly (including more than once) and reflected upon all texts assigned every week prior to class sessions. No outside reading or research is required for this course but rather you are required to invest heavily on the assigned texts and those you will craft.

Each class may consist of lectures germane to the topic of the texts but not necessarily always on the texts themselves. Lectures, though, will be accompanied by discussing and exploring together the claims made in the assigned texts, larger themes especially related to the construction of a sense of self identity, the (historical and varied) genres of autobiography, what resources they draw upon if not also further reflect, what specific assumptions as well as their motivations or the agendas (political, social, philosophical, theological, psychological, etc.) they aim to make, etc.

A note regarding the readings: the “suggested” readings for this course are designed to: (1) provide necessary background information; and (2) allow you to further explore particular aspects and contexts of a specific text and/or autobiography in general to not only aid your understanding of the assigned readings but also the crafting of your own class assignments.

Therefore, pay close attention between the assigned (**required**) readings and any subsequent suggested (non-required) readings listed below. Furthermore, for many of the assigned texts there are various editions if not also English translations. While you are welcome to also read other translations along with those assigned (i.e., for comparative interests) you must acquire, read, and bring to class only those editions and translations that have been assigned (for example, do NOT either intentionally or accidentally bring to class any other edition of Augustine’s *Confessions* than that by Chadwick (Oxford University Press) even if it is a copy that you have read before and love). You are welcome to seek out used copies (found through on-line sites like www.bookfinder.com or www.powells.com), but please do so with enough time to complete the readings and assignments before class – absence from participation in class will not be accepted due to book delivery delays.

Finally, since this course will entail close reading and exegesis of the assigned texts *you must read, mark up* (e.g., underline (but not highlight, preferably in pencil), annotate and index key themes and ideas in the margins, etc.) and bring to class hard copies of each session’s readings – consulting electronic versions of these texts on your **computer, smart phone, or equivalent device during class is not allowed**. In this respect, *please have all computers and phones turned off* (and not merely on “vibrate” as this is still distracting from your learning and to those around you) and put away prior to the start of class. In other words, no electronic devices (even for taking notes, which is actually just stenography) is allowed in class. Exceptions—including the need to audio record class lecture-discussions—will be made only with prior approval by the instructor; students requesting additional learning provisions should also consult GMU’s Office of Disability Services. If you have a documented learning disability or other condition that may affect academic performance you should:

1. make sure this documentation is on file with Office of Disability Services (SUB I, Rm. 4205; 993-2474; <http://ods.gmu.edu/students/>) to determine the accommodations you need; and
2. talk with me to discuss your accommodation needs.

Semester Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Please note that I (the instructor) reserve the right to change the syllabus during the term if and/or when need arises (e.g., to meet the learning outcomes of the course). You are responsible for checking for such changes (checking Bboard often) and updating your copy of the syllabus.

Week 1 – (Religious) “Auto” Biographies (beyond egocentric navel-gazing) Aug. 23 & 25

General introduction to the course, and to Augustine’s *Confessions*

- **read** and discuss:
Saint Augustine. Book I in *Confessions*. Translated by Henry Chadwick (New York: Oxford University Press, [1991] 2008), 1-23.
- suggested reading:
Marcus, Laura. “Introduction.” In *Autobiography: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 1-8.

Saint Augustine. *Confessions*. Translated by Henry Chadwick (New York: Oxford University Press, [1991] 2008), xi-xxxix.

Week 2 – Augustine’s *Confessions* Aug. 30 & Sept. 1

- **read** and discuss:
Saint Augustine. Books II-VI in *Confessions*. Translated by Henry Chadwick (New York: Oxford University Press, [1991] 2008), 23-110.
- suggested:
Marcus, Laura. “Confession, Conversion, Testimony.” In *Autobiography: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 9-28.

visit: Dumbarton Oaks Museum, [Byzantine Collection](#) (Washington, DC)

Week 3 – Augustine’s *Confessions*, cont’d Sept. 8

Note: No class on Mon., Sept. 6 (Labor Day).

- **read** and discuss:
Saint Augustine. Books VII-IX in *Confessions*. Translated by Henry Chadwick (New York: Oxford University Press, [1991] 2008), 111-178.

Week 4 – Augustine’s *Confessions*, cont’d Sept. 13 & 15

- **watch** movie: *Arrival* (2016):
 - *Confession/Arrival* Discussion Board assignment due *before* class on Mon., Sept. 13.
 - *Confession/Arrival* Discussion Board response due by 5pm Fri., Sept. 17.
- **read** and discuss:
Saint Augustine. Books X-XIII in *Confessions*. Translated by Henry Chadwick (New York: Oxford University Press, [1991] 2008), 179-305.
 - For Mon., Sept. 14 - Book X.
 - For Wed., Sept. 16 - Books XI-XIII.

Week 5 – Cabeza de Vaca’s *Relación*

Sept. 20 & 22

- **read** and discuss:
Cabeza de Vaca, Álvar Núñez. *The Narrative of Cabeza de Vaca*. Translated by Rolena Adorno and Patrick Charles Pautz (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 44-104.
- suggested:
Cabeza de Vaca, Álvar Núñez. *The Narrative of Cabeza de Vaca*. Translated by Rolena Adorno and Patrick Charles Pautz (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 1-41.
Marcus, Laura. “The Journeying Self.” In *Autobiography: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 29-38.
visit: [Kislak Collection](#), Library of Congress (Washington, DC)

Week 6 – Cabeza de Vaca’s *Relación*, cont’d.

Sept. 27 & 29

- **read** and discuss:
Cabeza de Vaca, Álvar Núñez. *The Narrative of Cabeza de Vaca*. Translated by Rolena Adorno and Patrick Charles Pautz (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 104-178.
- movie analysis paper option A1 due by Mon., Oct. 4:
 - either *Annie Hall* (1977),
 - or *Dead Man* (1995).

Week 7 – Spiegelman’s *Maus I*

Oct. 4 & 6

- **read** and discuss:
Spiegelman, Art. *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale, I: My Father Bleeds History* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986).
- suggested:
Marcus, Laura. “Autobiographical Consciousness.” In *Autobiography: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 39-52.
Marcus, Laura. “Autobiography and Psychoanalysis.” In *Autobiography: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 53-65.
visit: [National Holocaust Museum](#) (Washington, DC)

Week 8 – Spiegelman’s *Maus II*

Oct. 12 & 13

Note: Mon. (10/11) classes meet instead on Tues. (10/12) due to Fall Break.

- **read** and discuss:
Spiegelman, Art. *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale, II: And Here My Troubles Began* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986).
- movie analysis paper option A2 due by Fri., Oct. 18: *Amadeus* (1984).

Week 9 – Malcolm X’s *Autobiography, as told to...*

Oct. 18 & 20

- **read** and discuss:
Malcom X. *The Autobiography of Malcom X*. Edited by Alex Haley (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999 [1964]), 1-110.
- suggested:
Marcus, Laura. “Family Histories and the Autobiography of Childhood.” In *Autobiography: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 66-78.
Handler, M. S. “Introduction.” In *The Autobiography of Malcom X*, xxv-xxx.
visit: [National Museum of African American History and Culture](#) (Washington, DC)
or the [Frederick Douglass National Historic Site](#) (Washington, DC)

Week 10 – Malcolm X’s *Autobiography, as told to...*, cont’d.

Oct. 25 & 27

- **read** and discuss:
Malcom X. *The Autobiography of Malcom X*. Edited by Alex Haley (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999 [1964]), 111-214.
- suggested: see Week 10 but also
Marcus, Laura. “Public Selves.” In *Autobiography: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 79-89.

Week 11 – Malcolm X’s *Autobiography, as told to...*, cont’d.

Nov. 1 & 3

- **read** and discuss:
Malcom X. *The Autobiography of Malcom X*. Edited by Alex Haley (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999 [1964]), 215-324.

Week 12 – Malcolm X’s *Autobiography, as told to...*, cont’d.

Nov. 8 & 10

- **read** and discuss:
Malcom X. *The Autobiography of Malcom X*. Edited by Alex Haley (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999 [1964]), 325-389.
Haley, Alex. “Epilogue.” In *The Autobiography of Malcom X*, 390-463.
- suggested: see Weeks 10 and 11 but also
Davis, Ossie. “On Malcom X.” In *The Autobiography of Malcom X*, 464-466.
Shabazz, Attallah. “Foreword.” In *The Autobiography of Malcom X*, ix-xxiv.
- movie analysis paper option B1 due by class on Wed., Nov. 10:
 - either *Snowpiercer* (2013),
 - or *Do the Right Thing* (1989).

Week 13 – Harjo’s *Sunrise*

Nov. 15 & 17

- **read** and discuss:
Harjo, Joy. *An American Sunrise* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019).
- suggested:
Marcus, Laura. “Self-Portraiture, Photography, and Performance.” In *Autobiography: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 90-109.
visit: [National Museum of the American Indian](#) (Washington, DC)
and [Dumbarton Oaks Museum, Pre-Columbian Collection](#) (Washington, DC)
- movie analysis paper option B2 due by class on Wed., Nov. 17:
Netflix’s *Abstract: The Art of Design*, S02, E01: “Olafur Eliasson: The Design of Art.”

Week 14 – Caro’s *Working*

Nov. 22

Note: No class on Wed., Nov. 24 (Thanksgiving Recess).

- **read** and discuss:
Caro, Robert A. *Working: Researching, Interviewing, Writing* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2019), ix-108.
- suggested:
Marcus, Laura. “Autobiographies, Autobiographical Novels, and Autofictions.” In *Autobiography: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 110-122.
- museums selfie album option due by no later than Mon., Nov. 22.

Week 15 – Caro’s *Working*, cont’d.

Nov. 29 & Dec. 1

- **read** and discuss:
Caro, Robert A. *Working: Researching, Interviewing, Writing* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2019), 109-209.
- movie analysis paper option B3 due by class on Wed., Dec. 1:
 - either *Barton Fink* (1991),
 - **or** *The Ghost Writer* (2010).

Final Paper due by no later than 5:00pm on Wed., Dec. 8.

Methods of Evaluation (a.k.a. Grading)

The assignments for this course will consist of several shorter assignments from which you may choose and a final longer creative assignment. Graded work will be returned with comments aimed to help you improve further work (so please attend to the comments and not simply the grade). Grades are not posted on Blackboard; it is your responsibility to collect/save your graded work and to inquire about any comments that you do not understand.

- *Critical, reflective, civil, and respectful* **participation** in all class discussions will consist of **10%** of the course grade. Part of this participation grade will involve (1) in-class discussions and part of it will consist of (2) regular postings (minimum of 10) to the discussion forum on the course Bboard site. By no later than 8am prior to a class you must post at least a brief (a minimum of a few of sentences) response (critical insight(s) or question(s)) germane to the respective assigned reading(s) for that week's material. Such postings are NOT to be summaries of what was already discussed in class but rather your thoughts on sections of the readings prior to them being discussed in class (*ex post facto* postings (no pun intended) will not be counted). These postings should not be opinions about what you (dis)liked about the readings but rather some insight or judgment that you have culled from them. As the semester unfolds these twice-weekly postings may/should also include replies to your classmates' comments. Occasionally, prompts will direct your reading and focus the on-line dialogue. Bboard postings will be graded on the basis of: /-/ ("minus" for no-posting), /√/ ("check" for posting), and /√+/ ("check plus" for a particularly good posting); thus, there is a quantitative and qualitative dimension to your participation grade. Barring last minute emergencies, as a courtesy please notify the instructor prior to class time of an absence. While attendance is not graded it is obviously required for participation. **Lack of participation (both on Bboard and in-class discussions) will jeopardize your grade.**
- **Four short engagement assignments** will contribute to 60% (**15% each**) to the course grade. These will consist of:
 1. a critical comparison between Augustine's *Confessions* and the movie *Arrival* that will involve:
 - a. a **substantive original post** to the course Discussion board on this book and film, and
 - b. a later **reply** (at least one) to another original posting on this topic (note: neither your original posting nor any of your replies will also count as "participation" postings). Unlike your semi-weekly reading postings, your posting comparing *Confessions* and *Arrival* should be well-thought through, well written, and well argued (with textual evidence and reasoning).
 2. **3 (or 2, see below) short papers** comparing an assigned autobiography and suggested movie pairing. As with the assignment on *Confessions* and *Arrival*, these are not to be mere plot summaries, reports, or even opinionated reviews for these works but rather arguments about how these seemingly random pieces autobiographically wrestle with similar values, themes, issues, problems, etc. You are not expected to write a paper on all of the book/movie pairings in the syllabus but rather select 3 (or 2; other than *Confessions* and *Arrival*) of your choice.
 - At least one of your short papers must be from group A (i.e., on Cabeza de Vaca and/or Spiegelman) and at least one of your short papers must be from group B (i.e., on Malcom X, Harjo, and/or Caro).

- Note: Like the assigned readings, these movies will not be viewed in class but it is expected that you will have viewed them prior to coming to class. Furthermore, not all of these movies are available at Fenwick Library; those that are have been placed on reserve for this course to be checked out. Those not held by Fenwick Library will need to be acquired independently (e.g., via a paid streaming service or other library). Finally, it is highly recommended that you watch your selected movies in groups (e.g., viewing parties) and discuss them together in light of the assigned readings.
- 3. Instead of a third movie analysis paper you may create a *selfie photo album* set in all of the museums listed with each of the assigned readings (e.g., Dumbarton Oaks, NMAI, NMAAHC, etc.). While more detailed separate instructions will be posted on Bboard, in general, this photo album will consist of a photo of yourself at each (and all) of the museums listed; each photo must also include something within the museum's collection that says something about, to, or even against you that you will briefly explain next to each photo (e.g., how do you understand your "self" in relation to that item?). Like viewing the movies, you are highly encouraged to visit these museums in small groups; you may include others in your selfie but be sure that it at least has you in it.
 - Note that while you may visit more than one in a day since they are mostly on the National Mall you cannot (and should not try) to visit them all in only 1-2 days; furthermore, also note that while free some museums (e.g., NMAAHC and National Holocaust Museum) may require that you obtain passes in advance; you should (double) check websites for days/hours or any special events that may affect accessibility. Simply showing up at a museum (e.g., selfies with the front door) does not count. In other words, if you opt for this assignment be sure to plan accordingly.
 - The exception to this requirement for a selfie taken within each museum is the National Holocaust Museum.
- **Your autobiography** will be the final assignment for this course (due by when the final exam is scheduled if not otherwise stated differently) worth **30%** of your final grade. While a separate prompt will be posted on Blackboard with more specifics, in general for this autobiography you will need to imagine your life toward its end (e.g., when you are 80 years old), consider what you wanted to have accomplished and what most likely may have accomplished (envisioned and unforeseen), possible successes and failures, etc.; furthermore, making the distinction between career and vocation, you will also need to discern a key value or theme (or tightly interrelated set of themes or values) that you envision as a touchstone throughout the course of your life. Since autobiography can take a variety of genres, tones, styles, points of view, etc., this is also to be a creative assignment.

Academic Integrity

“I was thrown out of NYU my freshman year for cheating on the metaphysics final... I looked within the soul of the boy sitting next to me.” – Woody Allen¹

“Academic honesty boils down to three simple but powerful principles:

- When you say you did the work yourself, you actually did it.
- When you rely on someone else’s work, you cite it. When you use their words, you quote them openly and accurately, and you cite them, too.
- When you present research materials, you present them fairly and truthfully. That’s true whether the research involves data, documents, or the writings of other scholars.”²

Violation of the academic honor code (i.e. plagiarism or cheating on any course assignment) will not be tolerated in any degree and will be referred to the Office on Academic Integrity.

The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. GMU has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited. All written work is to be your original thoughts on the assigned texts with references and occasional cites from that text. The format and style rules of all of your assignments should be typed and conform to the *MLA Handbook* or *Chicago Manual of Style* (including *Turabian*). A simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting.

While it is often quipped that “it is better to apologize afterwards than ask for permission before,” this does not hold in academia; please feel free to ask for clarification regarding any of the expectations for this course **before** due dates. For more information, see the [University Catalogue regarding the Honor Code](#). If you have questions about how to properly cite published work in your writing please consult the Writing Center or me during office hours.

Privacy Policy

Students must use their MasonLive email account (aka *@gmu.edu*) to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. Unless your e-mail to your instructor is from your MasonLive email account your instructor will not be able to reply.

Please see <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information.

¹ Charles Lipson, *Doing Honest Work in College: How to Prepare Citations, Avoid Plagiarism, and Achieve Real Academic Success* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 8.

² *Ibid.*, 3.

Policy on Expectations

All visual materials (such as charts, graphs, or pictures) used in lectures will be posted onto Bboard along with additional images and resource links. These are to be used for any missed classes as well as further exploration into the issues addressed as the course unfolds. However, lecture notes will not be posted; please secure notes for any missed classes from your cohort.

Finally, all written assignments prepared outside of class (e.g., the movie report and take-home final exam) should be:

- typed (no handwritten work will be accepted),
- in a 12 point (vs. 11 point or 10 point) and standard serif font (i.e. Garamond, Palatino, or Times New Roman vs. a sans serif font like Arial, Helvetica, or Gill Sans or a non-standard serif font like Papyrus or Cracked),
- double spaced (Note: if the default setting on a computer automatically inserts an additional half space after a paragraph you will need to change this before turning in your assignment),
- 1” margins all around,
- left aligned (not full justified),
- with your full name and page number in either the header or footer on every page.

These should be well-crafted and revised written pieces,

- free of typos and grammatical errors;
- use only inclusive language unless you are writing about something that is a gender-specific topic (i.e. Catholic priesthood);
- no contractions (i.e. “can’t,” “aren’t,” “won’t,” etc.) are inappropriate for professional and academic writing (unless part of a direct quote from another source);
- no use of the first-person singular pronoun (e.g., “I”) should be generally avoided with rare exceptions.

To achieve these please use the writing center, peer-reviewers, as well as discuss with me drafts of your assignments during office hours (I’m more than happy to do so). **Major points will be deducted from unprofessionally written assignments.**

To help understand what is meant by crafting a piece of argument-oriented writing and correctly documenting the literary evidence required in professional (including academic) genres, students should purchase and use the following *highly* recommended sources:

1. Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*;
- Gould, Jon B. *How to Succeed in College (While Really Trying): A Professor’s Inside Advice*;
- Lipson, Charles. *Doing Honest Work in College: How to Prepare Citations, Avoid Plagiarism, and Achieve Real Academic Success*; and
- Lipson, Charles. *Succeeding as an International Student in the United States and Canada*.

Whether or not you read these specific books and are familiar with what they cover, as a college student you are expected to know, understand, and agree with these standards and expectations.

Instructional Materials

Required Readings (including Bboard PDFs) other than Handouts & Media

Augustine of Hippo. *Confessions*. Translated by Henry Chadwick (New York: Oxford University Press, [1991] 2008).

Cabeza de Vaca, Álvar Núñez. *The Narrative of Cabeza de Vaca*. Translated by Rolena Adorno and Patrick Charles Pautz (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003).

Caro, Robert A. *Working: Researching, Interviewing, Writing* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2019).

Harjo, Joy. *An American Sunrise* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019).

Malcom X. *The Autobiography of Malcom X as told to Alex Haley*. Edited by Alex Haley (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999 [1964]).

Spiegelman, Art. *Maus: A Survivor's Tale, I and II* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986).

Supplemental or Suggested Readings & Media

Marcus, Laura. *Autobiography: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).
Malcom X (1992).

Movie Options

Abstract: The Art of Design, S02, E01: "Olafur Eliasson: The Design of Art" (2019)

Amadeus (1984)

Annie Hall (1977)

Arrival (2016)

Barton Fink (1991)

Dead Man (1995)

Do the Right Thing (1989)

The Ghost Writer (2010)

Snowpiercer (2013)

Regarding Diversity

The academic study of religion includes the analytical (dissecting in various ways) and critical (bringing various criteria to bear) reflection on a diversity of religions and cultures including, in particular, their diverse order of values – including one’s own. The question, therefore, is not whether or not you (dis)believe, (dis)like, of (dis)agree any particular religion or even some aspect of it (let alone “religion” all together) but rather whether you understand “religion.” This requires thick description along with respectful engagement with a diversity of peoples, thought, and values.

To this end...

George Mason University promotes a living and learning environment for outstanding growth and productivity among its students, faculty and staff. Through its curriculum, programs, policies, procedures, services and resources, Mason strives to maintain a quality environment for work, study and personal growth.

An emphasis upon diversity and inclusion throughout the campus community is essential to achieve these goals. Diversity is broadly defined to include such characteristics as, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Diversity also entails different viewpoints, philosophies, and perspectives. Attention to these aspects of diversity will help promote a culture of inclusion and belonging, and an environment where diverse opinions, backgrounds and practices have the opportunity to be voiced, heard and respected.

The reflection of Mason’s commitment to diversity and inclusion goes beyond policies and procedures to focus on behavior at the individual, group and organizational level. The implementation of this commitment to diversity and inclusion is found in all settings, including individual work units and groups, student organizations and groups, and classroom settings; it is also found with the delivery of services and activities, including, but not limited to, curriculum, teaching, events, advising, research, service, and community outreach.

Acknowledging that the attainment of diversity and inclusion are dynamic and continuous processes, and that the larger societal setting has an evolving socio-cultural understanding of diversity and inclusion, Mason seeks to continuously improve its environment. To this end, the University promotes continuous monitoring and self-assessment regarding diversity. The aim is to incorporate diversity and inclusion within the philosophies and actions of the individual, group and organization, and to make improvements as needed.

Classmate Contacts:

<u>Name</u>	<u>E-mail</u>	<u>Phone</u>