SOPHSEM 2900-001 Spring Seminar 2020
Course Title: First Person First
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Course TOPIC:
All writing begins with a writer. The writer in the middle of time, the writer alone, the writer entering a history of writers, the writer-child, the writer-citizen, the writer as artist among artists. Maya Angelou wrote: A bird doesn’t sing because it has an answer. It sings because it has a song.” In short it has an “I Am.” Is-ness. Being-ness. Bigger than ego, and difficult to quantify. To own up to first person is not to claim supremacy and hierarchy, but to recognize life as a source, fountain, ecology. From which, through your senses, those receptors of attention, you enter in vibrant conversation. This is not a course in autobiography but you will explore your body, origins, processes, senses, dreams, Muses – in an iterative fashion. You will also explore the larger parameters of your existence: your family, neighborhood, neighbors, and current broader world. Pull the world near; taste-test it, grow synergy.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
The SOPHOMORE SEMINAR asks: what are the concerns that drive one’s creative practice? How does one set the terms for its future development? Through essential readings, studio projects, and writing, you will generate narratives about how and why you make art. In short, this is a semester of self-reflection.

Quotation:
“ [We have] the power of bringing visions into focus with our eyes shut, of bringing forms and colors from the line of black letters on a white page ... thinking in terms of images.”
--- Italo Calvino, author, Six Memos for the Next Millennium

Every week, assigned writing prompts will engage you in a range of art practices: from enhancing your senses to probing your relationship to the past, to nurturing your current passions and obsessions, thinking about how they affect your discipline. You are building a line of discourse with yourself about the work you are producing over the semester, a map of your imaginative process and image-making. And you are turning both to the world around you & to the readings for areas of influence and reaction, which you will note. Writers we’ll read (or listen to on podcasts) include Mary Oliver, Yusef Komunyakaa, Virginia Woolf, Anna Deveare Smith, Studs Terkel, Eula Biss, Alison Bechdel and more.

Generative Exercises include:
Upending the senses (listen to your eating, see darkness)
Transform (become one of the AIC’s museum creatures)
Map your neighborhood (investigate your community, name your path)
Write a prose piece, fictional or non-fictional (compose your own This I Write)