GSWS 306-4: Gender, Sexuality and Autobiographical Media: Writing and Performing Identity

**Professor:** Dr. Sasha Colby  
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**Office hours:** Tuesdays 16:20 – 17:20  
**Lecture:** Tuesdays 17:30 – 22:20; Harbour Centre 200

**Course Description:**
Ever thought about writing a play? Wondered what it would be like to dramatize the work of your favourite intellectual or historical figure? Considered how you could translate research into a living, breathing performance? In this one-time special offering for GSWS, students will study plays and films about writers and historical figures in order to learn the structures of drama that they themselves will use in researching and writing a play based in the autobiographical materials of a figure of their own choosing. In a respectful workshop environment led by Director of Graduate Liberal Studies, Sasha Colby, students will refine their plays and perform a scene from their own work at the end of term. No previous creative writing or acting experience is required and instruction on writing and performing will be provided. In addition to the creative component of the course, we will consider various theoretical aspects of performing from autobiographical texts including strategies of self-narration, the formation of fictive selves, and the performance of identity in everyday life. By the end of term, students will have had an immersive experience in both thinking about and embodying ideas of gender performance and various forms of self-staging.

**Educational Goals:**
- Analyze and engage with primary historical documents;
- Improve critical skills with regard to history, literature, politics, and the embodied lives thereof;
- Produce cultural work in conversation with the texts discussed in class.

**Prerequisite:** 30 units including three units in GSWS.

Julia Margaret Cameron, “A Baccante” (1867)  
Courtesy of Getty Museum Open Access
Course Texts and Courseware:
• Sarah Ruhl, *Dear Elizabeth* New York: Faber and Faber, 2014
• Theoretical readings available online

Film Screenings in class:
• Julie Taymor, dir. *Frida*
• James Ivory dir. *Surviving Picasso*

Course Evaluation and Assignments:
Author/Artist presentation 10%
Play-script 35%
Statement of Intent 20%
Staging 20%
Participation and reading 15%