COURSE CONTENT & GOALS: The lives of writers and (other) artists continue to be of great interest. Such lives and the interest in these lives form the content of this course. Readers, critics, and scholars have for millennia studied the lives of writers and artists to understand and appreciate the creative output of these individuals. Until the twentieth century and New Criticism, which rejected the status quo interpretative use of biographical and historical data, study of writers’ lives was happily indulged in and, today, many are back in a post-New Criticism world but with a more nuanced use of biographical data. For this course,

1. we will study biographical sources on authors such as Homer, Sappho, Solon, Pindar, Aiskhylos, Sophokes, and Euripides, Sokrates, Aesop, Cicero, Vergil, Ovid, Seneca, Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Erasmus, Machiavelli, Rabelais, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Swift, Voltaire, Rousseau, Goethe, Byron, Cavafy, and others;
2. we will analyze the relationship(s) between the biographical traditions and the works of the writers,
3. and investigate the nature and development of the biographical traditions about these people;
4. we will evaluate the past and current role of these biographical works in the reading, interpretation, and cultural significance of the writers/artists under investigation;
5. we will synthesize our studies for a presentation and evaluation of the biographical tradition about a chosen writer/artist to be presented in oral and in written form.

TEXTS: Other readings will be made available on/via Blackboard or handed out in class.

WEEKLY PREPARATION (to achieve course goals):
1. Set aside a total of six hours per week.
2. Read, reread, take notes, and ponder the readings and the ideas of the week.
3. Come to class with texts, notes, questions, and ideas. I will start the average class with some introductory information and opinions but most of class will consist of questions and discussion in which we all are to be involved. Thorough, daily reading and notes made in advance of each class are essential for each class meeting to be a success.

WRITTEN & OTHER WORK:
1. Style Notecards. We will read a chapter of Williams’ Style each week (for Week 2 through 12, skipping Week 8). You are to distill the essence of Williams’ advice for each chapter onto a 3 x 5 notecard. We will spend the first twenty minutes of class comparing notecards and discussing Williams’ ideas. These notecards will be graded as complete or incomplete; notecards considered incomplete can be resubmitted the following week for 75% credit.
2. Weekly Ponderings & Responses. Since we are covering nearly three millennia of cultural activity throughout the world, though with emphasis, through Hamilton’s book and possibly our own experience, on European and American authors, it will illuminating to track your responses, reflections, and revelations; these will form part of our ongoing analysis of the role of biography in reading. So, for each class prepare, at least, an informal page of text that results from your readings and thoughts since the last class meeting. Graded as credit/no credit.
SCHEDULE (as of 1/22 [subject to revision])

T 1/22 Week 1: Terms, Sources, & Themes
READ: Syllabus

T 1/29 Week 2: Williams, Hamilton, and Homer, Part 1
READ: 1. Williams, Style, “Chapter 1, Causes”
   2. Hamilton, Biography, pp. 1–32

T 2/5 Week 3: Williams, Hamilton, and Homer, Part 2
READ: 1. Williams, Style, “Chapter 1, Causes”
   2. Hamilton, Biography, pp. 33–59
   3. Texts on Blackboard

T 2/12 Week 4: Williams, Hamilton, and Sappho
READ: 1. Williams, Style, “Chapter 2, Clarity”
   2. Hamilton, Biography, pp. 60–79
   4. Texts on Blackboard

T 2/19 Week 5: Williams, Hamilton, and Solon
READ: 1. Williams, Style, “Chapter 3, Cohesion”
   2. Hamilton, Biography, pp. 79–99
   4. Texts on Blackboard

T 2/26 Week 6: Williams, Hamilton, and Cicero
READ: 1. Williams, Style, “Chapter 4, Emphasis”
   2. Hamilton, Biography, pp. 100–128
   3. Texts on Blackboard

T 3/4 Week 7: Williams, Hamilton, and Vergil
READ: 1. Williams, Style, “Chapter 5, Coherence 1”
   2. Hamilton, Biography, pp. 129–167
   3. Texts on Blackboard

Week 8: SATURDAY at the Explor SDSU Open House
Saturday 3/15, 10:00–2:00

T 3/18 Week 9: Williams, Hamilton, and Dante
READ: 1. Williams, Style, “Chapter 6, Coherence 2”
   2. Hamilton, Biography, pp. 186–212 (Yes, skip Ch. 6.)
   3. Texts on Blackboard

T 3/25 Week 10: Williams, Hamilton, and Shakespeare
READ: 1. Williams, Style, “Chapter 7, Concision”
   2. Hamilton, Biography, pp. 213–241
   3. Texts on Blackboard

T 4/8 Week 11: Williams and A Life in Action
READ: 1. Williams, Style, “Chapter 8, Length”

T 4/15 Week 12: Williams, Hamilton, and Somebody
READ: 1. Williams, Style, “Chapter 9, Elegance”
   2. Hamilton, Biography, pp. 242–278
   3. Texts on Blackboard

T 4/22 Week 13: Williams and You
READ: 1. Williams, Style, “Chapter 10, Usage”
   2. Your selections

T 4/29 Week 14: All You
READ: 1. Your selections

T 5/6 Week 15: (Current) Conclusions
READ: 1. Hamilton, Biography, pp. 279–294
   2. TBA

FINAL Meeting: T 5/13 @ 4:00PM