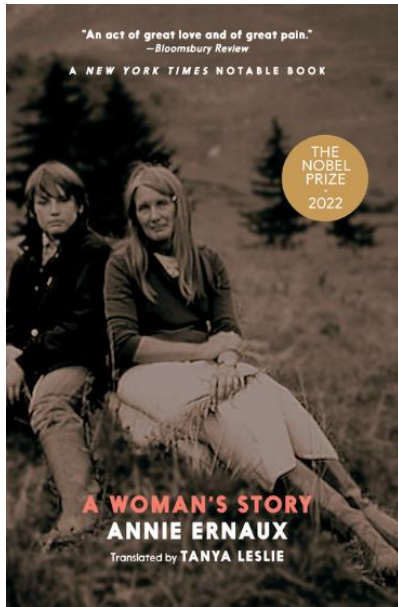


## Distinguished Teaching Humanist Spring 2024 Book Discussion

### “I will write to avenge my people”: Annie Ernaux and the Politics of Language



In her acceptance speech for the 2022 Nobel Prize in Literature, French author Annie Ernaux (b. 1940) states that at twenty-two she wrote in her diary: “I will write to avenge my people.” Having grown up in a small town in Normandy, she “proudly and naively believed that writing books, becoming a writer, as the last in a line of landless laborers, factory workers and shopkeepers, people despised for their manners, their accent, their lack of education, would be enough to redress the social injustice linked to social class at birth.”

This socio-political project can be read across her twenty books that are, as she posits, “somewhere between literature, sociology and history.” Covering topics such as her adolescent shame, passionate affairs, illegal abortion, day-to-day life, and mother and father, Ernaux always remains conscious of the link between her writing and its political agenda: “I have never stopped feeling the link between writing and injustice in the world, and I believe literature, like political action, can help change society, albeit differently. It can, in the long term, permeate readers’ imaginations, making them aware of realities they did not know, or causing them to see in a different way what they had always only seen in the same way. It permits readers to say (and first to themselves) what they had never said before. Literature is a slow, silent and secret revolution.”

In an exploration of Ernaux and her work, I welcome you to join me in a discussion of *A Woman’s Story* (100 pages), her 1988 book that, while tracing the life and death of her mother, deals with issues of history and origins, social class, the radical importance of an “ordinary life,” and the ways in which her identity was shaped through both a connection to – and separation from – her mother and her mother’s world.

If you would like to participate, let me know by emailing me, Nicholas Ealy, Distinguished Teaching Humanist at [ealy@hartford.edu](mailto:ealy@hartford.edu) by March 18. There is space for up to 15 participants, all of whom will receive a copy of *A Woman’s Story* to read in advance. The discussion will take place Wednesday, April 24 (12:45-2:00) in Auerbach 110.