

## Reading, Writing, Moving, Being: Literature and Creative Writing

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<b>Credit / award</b>	Non-accredited		
<b>Start date</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> May 2017	<b>End date</b>	12 <sup>th</sup> June 2017
<b>Day and time</b>	Mondays, 2.00pm - 4.00pm	<b>No of meetings</b>	5
<b>Venue</b>	Madingley Hall Madingley Cambridge		
<b>Tutors</b>	Dr Jenny Bavidge  Ms Midge Gillies	<b>Course code</b>	1617NWR004

**Director of Programmes** Emma Jennings  
**For further information on this course, please contact** Public Programme Coordinator, Clare Kerr  
[clare.kerr@ice.cam.ac.uk](mailto:clare.kerr@ice.cam.ac.uk) or 01223 746237

**To book** See: [www.ice.cam.ac.uk](http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk) or telephone 01223 746262

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### Tutor biography

Jenny Bavidge is University Senior Lecturer and Academic Director for English at ICE and a Fellow in English at Murray Edwards College, University of Cambridge. She is the President of the Literary London Society and a member of the English Faculty's Contemporaries group. Jenny teaches within a wide range of areas, including 19th and 20th-century American and British literature and has published on a variety of topics, including the literature of London, E. Nesbit, ecocriticism, rats, and balloons.

Midge Gillies has written nine non-fiction books, including biographies of Amy Johnson and Marie Lloyd. She is the author of *Writing Lives* (CUP, 2009) and co-author, with Sally Cline, of *Literary Non-Fiction: A Writers' & Artists' Companion* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2015). Her book about army wives from the Crimean War to the present day was published in August 2016. For three years she was Royal Literary Fund Fellow at Magdalene College, Cambridge and is currently Academic Director for Creative Writing at the University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education.

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## Course syllabus

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This course encourages students to encounter ideas about being and moving in literature, and then to draw this reading into their own creative work. Classes will combine focused group discussion of a range of literary texts and short lectures covering the literary and critical history of selected texts and concepts, leading into workshops and in-class exercises which will allow you to develop your writing skills. Each two-hour session will look at a different aspect of the representation of movement in literature past and present. Virginia Woolf's novel *Mrs Dalloway* will be an important reference point for the literature half of the class, as we analyse the different ways in which Woolf explores movement and consciousness. The second hour of each class, led by Midge Gillies, will offer an opportunity for you to experiment with your own creative response and writing.

### Aims:

The course aims to:

- create an enjoyable and supportive class atmosphere in which students are encouraged to explore ideas from literary history and beyond, and to inspire their own creativity;
- to introduce students to literary texts and ideas which will help them to develop their own writing;
- to encourage deep thinking and engagement with ideas about the body, movement and place, alongside gaining practical skills in creating and structuring good writing.

### Content:

#### Session 1 (8<sup>th</sup> May 2017): Being and Moving

In our first session we will discuss Virginia Woolf's novel *Mrs Dalloway* and its experiments in writing about subjective experience and consciousness. We will look at the way Woolf moves her characters around London and how she passes the story from one to another.

In the second session we will look at the ways in which a writer can move people from one place to another, change the point of view or move backwards or forwards in time.

**Reading Homework:** please continue looking at *Mrs Dalloway*.

**Writing Homework:** A writing prompt will be given in class.

#### Session 2: (15<sup>th</sup> May 2017): Walking and Writing: observing detail

This week, we will continue our reading of *Mrs Dalloway*, noting the importance of walking to the novel and its particular relationship to observation and writerly attention to detail. We will also look at some poetry by romantic poets including Wordsworth and Clare for whom walking was closely connected to creativity.

In the second session we will discuss the importance of detail and how *showing* rather than *telling* can enhance description. We will also consider the value of leaving the reader to fill in some of those details themselves.

**Reading homework:** two poems and a chapter of *The Old Ways* by Robert Macfarlane.

**Writing homework:** A writing prompt will be given in class.

**Session 3: (22<sup>nd</sup> May 2017): Contemporary Nature Writing: describing the natural world**

Our first hour will include a survey of the history of non-fiction nature writing. We will continue to look at poetry's framing of nature and will consider work by modern poets including Kathleen Jamie and Gary Snyder. We will also think about the current popularity of nature writing among 21<sup>st</sup> century readers.

The second session will look at the challenges of writing about the familiar in nature and of trying to describe something whose beauty appears to defy description.

**Reading homework:** short story 'The Man of the Crowd' (1840) by E A Poe

**Writing homework:** A writing prompt will be given in class.

**Session 4: (5<sup>th</sup> June 2017): Cities: urban detective work and dramatic encounters**

Our class this week will focus on the movement and encounters peculiar to cities. Does the urban detective observe in a different way from the rural naturalist? In our first hour we will look at Edgar Allan Poe's unsettling short story 'The Man of the Crowd' and consider the nature of detective writing in relation to urban places.

What are the special challenges and opportunities for the writer who sets their story in a city as opposed to the countryside? This week we will look at "urban noir": what it is and whether it offers useful techniques for writers from other genres.

**Reading homework:** Virginia Woolf's essay 'Street-haunting: A London Adventure'

**Writing homework:** A writing prompt will be given in class.

**Session 5: (12<sup>th</sup> June 2017): Coming home: rooms, objects, colour**

We will finish the course by coming back to Virginia Woolf and by including an essay she writes about walking in the city and a writer's relationship to her public and private environment. In her essay 'Street-haunting: A London Adventure' Woolf undertakes the same kind of walk and observation as students will have tried out on the course and we will think again about what Woolf has to say about the nature of the 'self' and self-expression.

One of the biggest challenges many writers grapple with is whether or not to use the first person – in fiction and non-fiction. This week we will explore the pros and cons of both.

**Writing homework:** A writing prompt will be given in class.

**Presentation of the course:**

Each class will involve a mix of informal lecture, discussion, close-reading and writing exercises. Students will be encouraged to undertake 'homework' writing exercises and to share their writing with the class via the VLE.

**As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:**

- show knowledge of the literary texts encountered on the course;
- be able to employ literary techniques within their own writing;
- develop a heightened awareness of the use of language, imagery, plotting and description in their own work and that of other writers.

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## Reading and resources list

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Listed below are a number of texts that might be of interest for future reference, but do not need to be bought (or consulted) for the course.

**\*\*\* Please try and read *Mrs Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf in its entirety before the course begins and please bring a copy to class. Any edition will do. Copies of the poems, short stories and other class reading will be made available on the VLE and/or in paper copies.**

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Author	Title	Publisher and date
Jamie, K	<i>Findings</i>	Sort of Books, 2005
Macfarlane, R	<i>The Old Ways</i>	Hamish Hamilton, 2012
Sheers, O	<i>A Poet's Guide to Britain</i>	Penguin, 2009
Solnit, R	<i>Wanderlust: A History of Walking</i>	Granta, 2000

**Note** Students of the Institute of Continuing Education are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current Institute course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

*Information correct as of:* 10 March 2017