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## Me, Myself, I: an introduction to writing memoir

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<b>Credit / award</b>	Non-accredited		
<b>Start date</b>	18 April 2017	<b>End date</b>	23 May 2017
<b>Day and time</b>	Tuesdays, 2-4 p.m.	<b>No of meetings</b>	5
<b>Venue</b>	Madingley Hall Madingley Cambridge		
<b>Tutor</b>	Midge Gillies	<b>Course code</b>	1617NWR002

**Director of Programmes** Emma Jennings

**For further information on this course, please contact**

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

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### Tutor biography

Midge Gillies is the author of eight non-fiction books, including biographies of the pioneering pilot, Amy Johnson and the Edwardian music hall star Marie Lloyd. In *The Barbed-Wire University* (Aurum Press, 2011) she explores what it was really like to be an Allied Prisoner of War in the Second World War and in *Army Wives* (Aurum Press, 2016) she looks at the role of the military spouse from Crimea to the present day. She is co-author, with Sally Cline, of *The Arvon Book of Literary Non-Fiction* (Bloomsbury in 2012). She studied history at Girton College and has written for a range of national, international and regional newspapers and magazines. She spent three years as Royal Literary Fund Fellow at Magdalene College, Cambridge and is the Institute's Academic Director for Creative Writing.

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## Course syllabus

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### Aims

1. To develop an appreciation of some of the literary tools available to the memoirist;
2. To identify some of the different ways of structuring a memoir;
3. To evaluate some of the research sources available to the writer of a memoir.

### Content:

Memoir is no longer the preserve of the rich and famous. We can all write about our life or our family history but what makes the reader want to read our story – especially when there are so many demands on his or her time? In this course we will explore what makes a good beginning, how to guide the reader through our story with surprising descriptions and a compelling structure. We will look at the role of research and how to maintain the momentum once the course is over.

Session 1 (18 April 2017): *Hooking your reader's interest.*

What makes a good beginning and how can you ensure your reader stays engaged beyond the first paragraph?

Session 2: (25 April 2017): *Where to take your reader next.*

What's the best order in which to tell a true story? What part do humour and drama play?

Session 3: (2 May 2017): *Description: how to make it fresh and engaging.*

How can you bring a person or place to life? How much should you leave to the reader's imagination?

Session 4: (9 May 2017): *Research.*

How to pep up your memory and use other sources to tell a true story without ruining your writing style.

Session 5: (23 May 2017): *Keeping the momentum going.*

Editing and how to reach the finishing line. Who makes a good editor and who should you avoid?

### Presentation of the course:

This course will encourage you to start writing regularly or to continue with a project you have already begun. Each session will consist of guided discussion, group exercises and the chance to experiment with your writing in a safe and constructive environment.

The tutor will set weekly writing prompts and students will be encouraged to share their responses to these on the VLE. These are optional exercises but are a useful way to ease the student into a regular writing routine.

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

1. Show an awareness of the ways in which a writer may describe a place or person;
2. Demonstrate a knowledge of the part research may play in writing a memoir;
3. Show knowledge of the different ways of structuring a memoir.

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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.

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<b>Author</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Publisher and date</b>
Bowen, James	<i>A Street Cat Named Bob</i>	Hodder, 2016
Dahl, Roald	<i>Boy and Going Solo</i>	Various
Sage, Lorna	<i>Bad Blood: A Memoir</i>	Fourth Estate, 2001
Slater, Nigel	<i>Toast: The Story of a Boy's Hunger</i>	Harper Perennial, 2004

**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:* 09 March 2017