

Edward Thomas and the English Countryside

Start date 16 February 2018

End date 18 February 2018

Venue Madingley Hall
Madingley
Cambridge

Tutor Jem Poster

Course code 1718NRX042

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 or telephone 01223 746262

Tutor biography

Professor Jem Poster

Emeritus Professor of Creative Writing, Aberystwyth University; Affiliated Lecturer, University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education.

Jem Poster worked as an archaeologist, surveying and excavating a range of sites on behalf of the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments, before taking up an administrative post with Cambridge University's Institute of Continuing Education in 1987. From 1993 to 2003 he was University Lecturer in Literature with Oxford University's Department for Continuing Education and a fellow of Kellogg College. From 2003 to 2012 he was Professor of Creative Writing at Aberystwyth University, and is now Emeritus Professor. He is the author of two novels, *Courting Shadows* (2002) and *Rifling Paradise* (2006), as well as a collection of poetry, *Brought to Light* (2001), and has recently completed volume 3 of the six-volume Oxford University Press *Edward Thomas: Prose Writings* (forthcoming April 2018). He has won prizes in major poetry competitions including first prize in both the Cardiff International Poetry Competition in 1995 and the Peterloo Poets Open Poetry Competition in 2001.

He has been Chair of the editorial board of Wales's leading literary journal, *New Welsh Review*, and is currently Programme Advisor to the Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education's MSt in Creative Writing and Director of its International Summer Programme in Creative Writing; he is an Affiliated Lecturer of the Institute. He is Director of Academic Programmes for the Financial Times Oxford Literary Festival and in 2014 spent four months as Writer in Residence at Arizona State University.

Course programme

Friday

Please plan to arrive between 16:30 and 18:30. You can meet other course members in the bar which opens at 18:15. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

19:00	Dinner
20:30 – 22:00	Introduction; in the footsteps of Richard Jefferies and George Borrow
22:00	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Saturday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	<i>The Heart of England</i>
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	<i>The South Country</i>
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	<i>The Country</i>
18:00 – 18:30	Free
18:30	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	<i>The Ickniel Way</i>
21:30	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Sunday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	<i>In Pursuit of Spring</i>
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Poems; conclusion
12:45	Lunch

The course will disperse after lunch

Course syllabus

Aims:

1. to explore the relationships between Thomas's work and its wider context;
2. to analyse the works under review;
3. to gain a clearer sense of the writer's achievement.

Content:

Widely regarded as one of the finest poets of the twentieth century, Edward Thomas was also a gifted prose writer, with a sharp eye for the detail of the natural world. In this course we shall focus primarily, though not exclusively, on the prose, following in Thomas's footsteps as he travels the English countryside and examining with him the rural landscapes and ancient ways of life that were already under threat in his lifetime.

We shall focus on a group of relevant prose works – *The Heart of England*, *The South Country*, *The Country*, *The Ickniel Way*, *In Pursuit of Spring* – and a small number of poems. It would be useful to read as many of the books as you can in advance, but not essential: the passages to be discussed in detail will be sent out a month in advance of the course to all those who have enrolled on it.

Presentation of the course:

The course will take the form of a series of seminars, in which group discussion will be actively encouraged; the majority of these discussions will focus on the texts themselves, which will be analysed in detail.

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

1. place the writer in his wider context and understand more clearly the implications and meaning of his work;
2. gain greater confidence in their approach to the analysis of literary texts in general.

Reading and resources list

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.

Author	Title	Publisher and date
Thomas, R. George	Edward Thomas: A Portrait	Oxford, 1978
Wilson, Jean Moorcroft	Edward Thomas: From Adlestrop to Arras	Bloomsbury, 2015

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: 21 September 2017