

## Having fun with writing

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**Start date** 11 May 2018**End date** 13 May 2018**Venue** Madingley Hall  
Madingley  
Cambridge**Tutor** Dr Sarah Burton**Course code** 1718NRX053**Interim Co-Directors of Public  
and Professional Programmes**

Dr Liz Morfoot

Dr Tom Monie

**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

Dr Sarah Burton's publications are diverse, including two critically acclaimed biographies, *Impostors: Six Kinds of Liar* (2000; translated into Korean, Japanese, Czech and Spanish) and *A Double Life: a Biography of Charles and Mary Lamb* (2003; shortlisted for the Mind Book of the Year award); a children's book, *The Miracle in Bethlehem: A Storyteller's Tale* (2008), and a page-to-stage guide, *How to Put on a Community Play* (2011). She also writes short stories and reviews fiction and non-fiction for *The Spectator* and other titles. Her spoof, *The Complete and Utter History of the World By Samuel Stewart, Aged 9*, was published by Short Books in 2013. She was Writer in Residence for the Hosking Houses Trust in 2009 and the publication of the historical novel which she began there, *H*, is currently being negotiated with Hodder. *H* was shortlisted for the Lucy Cavendish Fiction Prize 2013. Sarah has also written and produced seven community plays.

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## Course programme

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### 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	<b>Adding imagination to memory</b>
22:00	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

### Saturday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	<b>Getting to grips with genre</b>
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	<b>Creating three-dimensional characters</b>
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	<b>Seducing – and keeping – your reader</b>
18:00 – 18:30	Free
18:30	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	<b>Making dialogue speak</b>
21:30	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

### Sunday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	<b>Creating a satisfying plot</b>
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	<b>Common problems and useful tips</b>
12:45	Lunch

**The course will disperse after lunch**

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## Course syllabus

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### Aims:

- To take the stress and anxiety out of creative writing, emphasising the freedoms fiction provides
- To equip students with the basic literary strategies at their disposal and to view these as tools rather than rules

### Content:

Students will have the opportunity to see how they have the basis for creative writing in material from their own lives and how they use their own experiences as a reference for creating fiction. They will begin to see genre not as a straightjacket but as an opportunity to find the right mode for the right story. They will learn the most effective ways to let a reader get to know a character and how to make dialogue do a lot of the work. There will also be attention paid to how to recruit a reader – and keep them on side – by shaping plots which mean there is always something at stake for someone the reader cares about. They will go home with many useful tips on how to establish and maintain a writing habit, if this is their objective, and how to deal with problems which arise in their own writing.

### Presentation of the course:

Typical classes begin with a presentation by the tutor, group reading of a piece of writing, followed by class discussion before embarking on a writing exercise. There will also be group work. Classroom atmosphere is calm, good-natured, mutually supportive and generally tending towards building confidence and viewing creative writing as something that can delight the writer, as well as the reader.

### Outcomes:

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

- Approach their own writing with a renewed sense of confidence
- Apply the literary strategies they have experimented with in class, at home, to the advantage of their writing
- Rediscover writing as a pleasurable and constructive activity

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## Reading and resources list

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**No preparation for the course is required, however it may whet your appetite for broadening your reading. An excellent way of covering a lot of ground in terms of different genres and styles in bite-size chunks is to read excellent flash fiction. The quantity of flash fiction available is vast and the overall standard is not high; I'm therefore recommending two collections I use a lot in my own teaching and which provide abundant food for thought about what writing can be.**

Hazuka, Tom, Thomas, Denise, Thomas, James (eds), *Flash Fiction: 72 Very Short Stories* (New York: WW Norton, 1992).

Thomas, James, Shapard, Robert, Merrill, Christopher, *Flash Fiction International - Very Short Stories from Around the World*, (New York: W W Norton, 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:* 27 April 2018