
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	A log and a nature table – discovering wonders in the ordinary.
22:00	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Saturday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Finding your natural voice – how we can learn from writers past and present.
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Woods, water, wild flowers – an outdoor session to inspire everyone to have a go at writing their own country diary.
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	Animal sense – some of our senses are under-used. Can you boost your writing by honing your animal instincts?
18:00 – 18:30	Free
18:30	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	An owl's supper and a night adventure – we'll be dissecting owl pellets before going on a group exploration of the grounds after dark.
21:30	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Sunday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Literary devices – the practicalities of enhancing your natural powers of description.
10:30	Coffee

11:00 – 12:30 **Round up and review**

12:45 Lunch

The course will disperse after lunch

Course syllabus

Aims:

This course can serve as a gentle introduction to nature writing, or a chance to look at fresh approaches to the craft for more experienced writers. It is intended to stimulate observational skills and creative written communication.

Content:

This course will use a mixture of theory and practice. We will examine themes, techniques and styles used by a range of nature writers, with a particular emphasis on contemporary writing, in an attempt to answer the question – what makes a good story from the wild? What separates sublime writing from the ‘feather-footed through the plashy fen passes the questing vole’ prose lampooned by Evelyn Waugh?

In considering strengths and weaknesses, we will help build a foundation of ideas and approaches for practical sessions in which we find out what an owl had for dinner, and slip outdoors into the beautiful, stimulating grounds of Madingley Hall (weather permitting) to find source material for our own wild writing.

Course participants will be encouraged to capture impressions from their personal experiences, heightening their senses. They’ll be trying their hand at producing creative nature writing, then sharing their work with fellow students in light-hearted, mutually-supportive sessions.

Presentation of the course:

The course teaching will involve class discussion, practical writing exercises, practical natural history exercises, and field visits (in the grounds). There will also be tailor-made written material for participants to take away afterwards.

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

- Develop a greater understanding of the variety of approaches to creative nature writing. They will be able to make better-informed critical assessments of a whole range of texts, evaluating aspects such as the authorial voice and stylistic devices.
- Analyse different kinds of nature writing, discuss views and work together in team sessions and in open fora. They will come away from the day with a keener appreciation of wildlife.
- Develop an extra awareness of nature, based on their senses, and to communicate their findings in words. They will gain self-confidence from personal discoveries and shared understanding.

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
Jamie, Kathleen	<i>Findings</i>	(London: Sort of Books, (2005)
Liptrot, Amy	<i>The Outrun</i>	(London: Canongate, 2016)
Lewis-Stempel, John	<i>Meadowland</i>	(London: Doubleday, (2014)
Hoare, Philip	<i>Leviathan</i>	(London: Fourth Estate, 2008)
Cocker, Mark	<i>Crow country</i>	(London: Jonathan Cape, 2007)

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.

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