



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

Institute of Continuing Education

Undergraduate Certificate in Creative Writing: Creative Non-Fiction

2018 – 2019

Course code: 1819CCR207

COURSE GUIDE

Welcome to the **Undergraduate Certificate in Creative Writing: Creative Non-Fiction (formerly Undergraduate Certificate in Creative Writing II)**, a University of Cambridge award offered by the Institute of Continuing Education (ICE). The Certificate is taught and awarded at FHEQ level 4 (i.e. first-year undergraduate level) and attracts 60 credits. The award is completed in one academic year. For further information about academic credit please see our website: <http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk/studying-with-us/information-for-students/qualifications-that-we-offer>.

The course offers three termly units and a syllabus and reading and resource list for each of these units are included in this course specification.

The programme aims to:

1. introduce students to a wide range of different literary genres and styles in order to stimulate and develop their own creative writing skills;
2. provide opportunities for students to experiment with their own writing;
3. introduce students to the possibilities of transferring techniques between different genres;
4. build students' confidence by demystifying the art of writing and encouraging students to establish their own working routine;
5. encourage students to contextualise their writing within a variety of traditions and genres.

Transferable skills for further study and employability

- The capacity for independent thought and judgement
- The development of independent learning, study and time management skills
- The deployment of skills in critical reasoning
- The development of competence in using IT to support one's work
- The ability to work with others, productively and equitably
- The qualities necessary for employment requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility and the demonstration of high levels of motivation and personal commitment through part-time study

Study hours

The award of academic credit is a means of quantifying and recognising learning and within the UK, one credit notionally represents 10 hours of learning¹. Each of the units in this course attracts 20 credits so students should expect to need to study for approximately 200 hours in total to complete each unit successfully. However, it is recognised that students study at different paces and use a variety of approaches, so this is a recommendation, rather than a hard-and-fast calculation.

1 'Academic credit in higher education in England – an introduction'. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2009

Teaching staff

Course Director

Elizabeth Speller

Elizabeth Speller has a Cambridge MA and MPhil. Her work includes *The Return of Captain John Emmett* (Orange Book of the Month) and *At Break of Day* (CNY State One Read 2015). Her non-fiction includes *Following Hadrian* (Hodder/OUP) and a memoir, *The Sunlight on the Garden* (Granta). She was short-listed for the Forward Prize for Poetry in 2009 and provided the libretto for Michael Berkeley's work *Farewell*, written in memory of Sir Paul McCartney's wife Linda.

Journalism includes *The Independent*, the *Financial Times*, the *TLS*, and *Vogue*. She has taught at Cambridge, Bristol and Birmingham Universities and the U3A and her local poetry and novel workshops draw participants from diverse backgrounds and a range of experience. She was Royal Literary Fund Fellow at the University of Warwick and is currently completing a further novel for Virago.

Tutors

Derek Niemann

Derek Niemann is a freelance writer and editor specialising in natural history. His third non-fiction book *A Tale of Trees: The battle to save Britain's ancient woodland* was published in November 2016 (Short Books). Derek's two previous titles were *Birds in a Cage* (Short Books, 2011), a true story about Prisoner of War birdwatchers in World War II, and *A Nazi in the Family* (Short Books, 2015), based on the SS grandfather he never knew. He is a country diary columnist for the Guardian and also writes for BBC Wildlife. Formerly he was children's magazines editor for the RSPB (1998-2014) and wrote a number of books for children.

Miranda Doyle

Miranda Doyle has a distinction from Goldsmiths College's MA in Creative and Life Writing. Her work includes *A Book of Untruths* which was published by Faber & Faber in 2017. She was nominated for the Trinity College Commoner's Fellowship in the Creative Arts and selected for The Royal Literary funded *Writers' Pool*. She has been awarded support through Arts Council England's Escalator Scheme.

Administrative staff

Head of Academic Centre Administration: Katherine Roddwell, Institute of Continuing Education, University of Cambridge, Madingley Hall, Madingley, Cambridge, CB23 8AQ, 01223 746223, katherine.roddwell@ice.cam.ac.uk

Academic Centre Administrator: Lisa Hitch, Institute of Continuing Education, University of Cambridge, Madingley Hall, Madingley, Cambridge, CB23 8AQ, 01223 746212, lisa.hitch@ice.cam.ac.uk

Venue

Madingley Hall is an historic Tudor mansion on the outskirts of Cambridge with one of the finest gardens in the region and will be the venue for your classes unless otherwise specified.

The Hall is situated in the village of Madingley, three miles west of Cambridge with easy access from the M11 and the A14. Full directions are given on our website at www.ice.cam.ac.uk/directions.

Workshops are held at Madingley Hall, which has a variety of teaching rooms ranging from the newly refurbished Courtyard Suite to rooms in the historic Hall. Workshops may be scheduled in different teaching rooms each term.

Contact details of ICE

Institute of Continuing Education
University of Cambridge

Madingley Hall
Madingley
Cambridge
CB23 8AQ
T: 01223 746222
www.ice.cam.ac.uk
ug-awards@ice.cam.ac.uk

Please also refer to the 'information for students' section on our website <http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk/studying-with-us/information-for-students> and the 18/19 Student Handbook for further information and guidance relating to all aspects of the course including study skills, assignments, assessment and moderation. The Course Information and Help and Guidance section of the ICE VLE will also contain valuable information specific to your course.

Information correct as at 25 May 2018

Syllabus for first unit
Michaelmas term 2018

Introduction to creative non-fiction

Start date	9 October 2018	End date	18 December 2018
Day	Tuesday	Time	7.15pm – 9.15pm
Venue	Madingley Hall, Madingley, Cambridge, CB23 8AQ		
Tutor	Elizabeth Speller	No of meetings	10 evening classes plus 2 Saturday day-schools (27 October and 1 December 2018)

Aims

- To make the students aware of the literary tools available to the writer of non-fiction;
- To develop the student's awareness of the range and styles used in non-fiction;
- To increase the students' confidence in writing non-fiction.

Content

Many of the most engrossing and entertaining forms of non-fiction borrow techniques such as description, drama and characterisation from fiction. In addition, the writer of non-fiction is also likely to have to turn their hand to research and to be able to use facts to enhance and drive forward their story.

This unit will discuss what makes non-fiction "creative" and the types of writing this might include. We will study a range of published work, such as writing about food, narrative history (history that tells a story), popular science, the essay, sports writing, writing about art, true crime and comic writing to see how authors have used different techniques to engage with their reader. We will discuss how to make the most of research and to ensure that you keep it in its place.

The unit will demystify the art of writing and, through practical exercises and close reading, encourage students to find their own voice. Students will experiment with their own writing and blend different elements from a variety of approaches to non-fiction.

Presentation of the unit

The unit will be taught through a series of informal seminars. Students will use close reading, discussion and practical exercises to explore different approaches to creative non-fiction. Each class is designed to expose the student to new ideas or techniques and to encourage them to experiment in a relaxed, supportive and friendly atmosphere. There will also be the chance to share work on the class's Virtual Learning Environment.

Provisional lecture list

Session	Date	Content
Lecture 1	9 October 2018	What make non-fiction creative?
Lecture 2	16 October 2018	Facts, facts, facts – how to find them and make them work for you
Lecture 3	23 October 2018	Structure: how to tell a true story
Saturday day-school	27 October 2018	Using your senses in non-fiction, including Guest Lecturer
<i>Half-term break</i>	<i>30 October 2018</i>	<i>No class</i>
Lecture 4	6 November 2018	Characterisation: bringing real people to life
Lecture 5	13 November 2018	How to vary the pace and inject tension
Lecture 6	20 November 2018	Looking for stories in the past
Lecture 7	27 November 2018	Looking for stories in science
Saturday day-school	1 December 2018	The use of comedy in non-fiction, including Guest Lecturer TBC
Lecture 8	4 December 2018	The art of the essay
Lecture 9	11 December 2018	Editing non-fiction, knowing your audience, dealing with inconsistencies and new material
Lecture 10	18 December 2018	Illustrations: as research, to improve your style, entice your reader or tell a story

Learning Outcomes

As a result of the unit, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to show they can:

- (i) identify some of the key elements in how successful non-fiction is formed;
- (ii) show an understanding of how non-fiction can use techniques such as description and characterisation usually associated with fiction;
- (iii) develop an awareness of some of the ways of structuring a piece of non-fiction.

Student assessment

Students are encouraged to keep a reflective log. This will not be assessed but will help them to chart their own evaluation of each session and the progress they have made. In addition, students will be expected to submit one long (3,000-4,000 words) piece of non-fiction. **Students must discuss and agree the title with the tutor beforehand.** The

submission must be an original piece of non-fiction. It could be, for example, an essay or a chapter from a book and might fall into one of the following categories:

- narrative history;
- writing about food;
- sports writing;
- comic writing;
- popular science writing;
- an essay.

Although it is recognised that the assignment may contain biographical *elements* or *some* description of place, the assignment must not *solely* be a piece of biographical writing or a piece about place or travel writing. This is to avoid duplication in following units about place and life writing.

Closing date for the submission of assignments: Tuesday 15 January 2019 by 12.00 noon GMT*

*Greenwich Mean Time

Reading and resource list

Editor	Title	Publisher and date
Blackburn, J	<i>Threads: The Delicate Life of John Craske</i>	London: Vintage, 2017
Blythe, R	<i>Akenfield</i>	London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2005
Bywater, Michael	<i>Lost Worlds: What Have We Lost and Where Did it Go?</i>	London: Granta, 2005
Cline, S & Gillies, M	<i>Literary Non-Fiction: A Writers' & Artists' Companion (Writers' and Artists' Companions)</i>	London: Bloomsbury, 2015
Capote, Truman	<i>In Cold Blood</i>	Penguin Classics, 2000
Junger, Sebastian	<i>The Perfect Storm: A True Story of Man against the Sea</i>	Harper Perennial, 2006
King, Stephen	<i>On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft</i>	Hodder Paperbacks, 2012
Skloot, Rebecca	<i>The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks</i>	Pan, 2001
Slater, Nigel	<i>Toast: The Story of a Boy's Hunger</i>	Harper Perennial, 2004
Summerscale, K	<i>The Suspicions of Mr Whicher</i>	London: Bloomsbury, 2011

Worth, J	<i>Call The Midwife: A True Story Of The East End In The 1950s</i>	London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2012
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Syllabus for second unit
Lent term 2019

Writing about place

Start date	8 January 2019	End date	19 March 2019
Day	Tuesday	Time	7.15pm – 9.15pm
Venue	Madingley Hall, Madingley, Cambridge, CB23 8AQ		
Tutor	Derek Niemann	No of meetings	10 evening classes plus 2 Saturday day-schools (26 January and 9 March 2019)

Aims

- To introduce students to different approaches to writing about travel, nature and place;
- To foster an understanding of the literary tools available when writing about place;
- To help students to apply these tools when writing different forms of creative non-fiction.

Content

We will begin by discussing how and why different writers create a sense of place. We will look at the ways in which landscape can reveal stories or play a part in a wider narrative. Students will examine how encounters and companions can add depth and pace to non-fiction and the role played by a sense of quest. The group will look at how nature, in its many forms, can add to a description of place – whether in an urban or rural setting, in today's world or the in past.

We will discuss the tradition of the nature writer and the travel writer who – until recently – was usually male. Close reading of a variety of published work will help students to apply techniques to their own work – whether they want to write about an urban or rural landscape or to add a sense of place to a piece of narrative history, or other form of creative non-fiction.

The unit will look at the challenges of writing about natural beauty and how creating a sense of place can enhance most forms of creative non-fiction.

Presentation of the unit

The unit will be taught through a series of informal seminars. Students will use close reading, discussion and practical exercises to explore different approaches to creative non-fiction. Each class is designed to expose the student to new ideas or techniques and to encourage them to experiment in a relaxed, supportive and friendly atmosphere. There will also be the chance to share work on the class's Virtual Learning Environment.

Provisional lecture list

Session	Date	Content
Lecture 1	8 January 2019	How do writers create a sense of place?
Lecture 2	15 January 2019	Landscape: what's the story?
Lecture 3	22 January 2019	Companions and characters along the way, including dialogue
Saturday day-school	26 January 2019	Gail Simmons: Travel Writing for publication
Lecture 4	29 January 2019	Travel as quest
Lecture 5	5 February 2019	Urban versus rural landscapes
Lecture 6	12 February 2019	Bringing the landscape of the past to life
<i>Half-term break</i>	<i>19 February 2019</i>	<i>No class</i>
Lecture 7	26 February 2019	Making nature Come to life
Lecture 8	5 March 2019	Finding a Voice in Nature
Saturday day-school	9 March 2019	Guest speaker
Lecture 9	12 March 2019	Gathering Your Wild Materials
Lecture 10	19 March 2019	Mixing genres

Learning Outcomes

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

- (i) demonstrate knowledge of how writing about place may include elements from more than one discipline or genre;
- (ii) show an understanding of how authors writing about landscape, travel or nature can use tools such as characterisation, dialogue or description;
- (iii) develop an awareness of some of the ways of structuring a piece of writing about travel, nature or place.

Student assessment

Students are encouraged to keep a reflective log. This will not be assessed but will help them to chart their own evaluation of each session and the progress they have made. In addition, students will be expected to submit one long (3,000-4,000 words) piece of non-fiction. **Students must discuss and agree the title with the tutor beforehand.** The submission must be an original piece of writing about travel, nature or place – or a combination of more than one genre.

*Closing date for the submission of assignments: Tuesday 9 April 2019 by 12.00 BST**

*British Summer Time

Reading and resource list

Reading is an important part of the course and of becoming a good writer. No one book is compulsory but students are urged to read as widely as possible. In addition, there are several good anthologies of writing about travel.

Author	Title	Publisher and date
Ackroyd, P	<i>London: The Biography</i>	London: Vintage, 2001
Bunting, Madeleine	<i>Love of Country: A Hebridean Journey</i>	London: Granta, 2016
Cocker, Mark	<i>Crow Country</i>	London: Vintage, 2008
Dalrymple, William	<i>In Xanadu: a quest</i>	London: Flamingo, 1989
Jamie, Kathleen	<i>Findings</i>	London: Sort of Books, 2005
Harris, Alexandra	<i>Weatherland: Writers and artists under English skies</i>	London: Thames & Hudson, 2015
Hoare, Philip	<i>Leviathan, or the Whale</i>	London: Faber & Faber 2009
Laing, Olivia	<i>To the River</i>	Edinburgh: Canongate, 2016
Lewis-Stempel, John	<i>Meadowland: the Private Life of an English Field</i>	London: Penguin, 2014
Liptrot, A	<i>The Outrun</i>	Edinburgh: Canongate, 2016
Macdonald, Helen	<i>H is for Hawk</i>	London: Jonathan Cape, 2015
Macfarlane, Robert	<i>The Old Ways</i>	London: Penguin 2013
Wheeler, Sara	<i>Terra Incognita: Travels in Antarctica</i>	London: Vintage, 1997

Website:

The Guardian County Diary – www.theguardian.com/environment/issues/country-diary

Gail Simmons – www.travelscribe.co.uk

Syllabus for third unit Easter term 2019

Life Writing

Start date	23 April 2019	End date	2 July 2019
Day	Tuesday	Time	7.15pm – 9.15pm
Venue	Madingley Hall, Madingley, Cambridge, CB23 8AQ		
Tutor	Miranda Doyle	No of meetings	10 evening classes plus 2 Saturday day-schools (18 May and 15 June 2019)

Aims

- To understand what literature falls into the category life writing and the difference between biography, autobiography, memoir and autobiographical novel;
- To develop students' awareness of the range of styles and treatments that are most appropriate for different biographical subjects;
- To develop the skills in handling research and creating structures that support work in life writing;
- To consider the ethical issues in writing about the lives of others (or oneself).

Content

Life Writing focuses on an individual (or occasionally more than one - a family, a couple, a partnership) and so character is to the fore. Nevertheless, to make that character come to life requires a strong sense of time and place, good descriptive powers and an eye for telling detail - inanimate objects may tell a reader a great deal about the person who possesses, inhabits, or comes across them.

For this reason, research needs to extend beyond the background of the chosen individual to their society and period. Several books within this field are micro-histories.

Perhaps the hardest part of Life Writing is getting the structure right, so that pace is maintained. Students will be encouraged to think what treatment might suit a given character. A formal biography of a famous person may have a useful timeline as its skeleton, but a writer still needs to be selective in order to maintain narrative interest. A memoir may allow a great deal of freedom in content, voice and structure, but the challenge there is to arrange material in a cohesive and imaginative way. Both require skills from fiction (description, tension, empathy) to make them compelling.

All Life Writing has inevitable gaps and the unit will provide opportunity for students to think about how they handle these to create a smooth narrative. By reading from the bibliography and discussing these and a variety of techniques and concepts in the class, students will be equipped to make decisions about a topic and the appropriate treatment to make the subject of their Life Writing project, and their subject's world, feel real.

The unit aims to give students the confidence to experiment with their own work and enjoy the rich possibilities of focusing on a single life.

Presentation of the unit

The unit will be taught through a series of informal seminars. Through critical reading, discussion and creative exercises we shall explore different approaches to Life Writing, from the formal biography to the most unconventional of memoirs. This field can seem challenging but within a relaxed supportive peer group students can experiment with a variety of techniques and find what works for them and the subject that interests them.

Provisional lecture list

Session	Date	Content
Lecture 1	23 April 2019	Whose Life is it Anyway? The history and evolution of Life Writing.
Lecture 2	30 April 2019	Where to start? Inspiration and way in.
Lecture 3	7 May 2019	Research, from family letter, diaries, court records, to the British Library, Census or on-line War Graves Commission
Lecture 4	14 May 2019	Characterisation. How to make real people even more so.
Saturday day-school	18 May 2019	Making the ordinary, extraordinary. Guest lecturer (TBC): Joanne Limburg, author of <i>The Woman Who Thought too Much: A Memoir</i>
Lecture 5	21 May 2019	Structure. Timelines, options and chronology.
<i>Half-term break</i>	<i>28 May 2019</i>	<i>No class</i>
Lecture 6	4 June 2019	Ethics, truth, changing conventions, secrets and revelation.
Lecture 7	11 June 2019	The power of objects: all things that can sit at the centre of a Life or Lives, from a house to a record collection, a photograph album or a work of art.
Saturday day-school	15 June 2019	What to do with difficult subjects. Guest lecturer TBC
Lecture 8	18 June 2019	Description.
Lecture 9	25 June 2019	Conflicts, gaps in evidence and dead ends.
Lecture 10	2 July 2019	Ephemera – where a Life comes off the page: photographs, love-letters, scribbles on the back of an envelope, letters of condolence.

Learning Outcomes

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

- (i) show an understanding of different approaches to writing about a historical or contemporary life;
- (ii) develop an awareness of suitable projects and treatments for an autobiographical or biographical piece of work, or the range of structural options in how to shape a memoir;
- (iii) identify how to start research on a life and what kind of research is likely to prove fruitful;
- (iv) show an understanding of the link between a life and its historical and social context.

Student assessment

Students are encouraged to keep a reflective log. This will not be assessed but will help them to chart their own evaluation of each session and the progress they have made. In addition, students will be expected to submit one long (3,000-4,000 words) piece of work.

Students must discuss and agree the title with the tutor beforehand. The submission must be an original piece of life writing: this may be any piece in any style that falls within the category. It could be a formal biographical piece on a historical figure, a childhood memoir, a chapter from a memoir or biography or even an essay on the pleasures and problems of writing the life you want to pursue.

Closing date for the submission of assignments: **Tuesday 23 July 2019 by 12.00 noon BST***

* British Summer Time

Reading and resource list

Reading is an important part of the course and of becoming a good writer. No one book is compulsory but students are urged to read as widely as possible.

Author	Title	Publisher and date
Bennett, Alan	<i>The Lady in the Van</i>	Profile, 2015
Burnside, John	<i>I Put a Spell on You</i>	Vintage, 2015
Burroughs, Augusten	<i>Running with Scissors</i>	London: Atlantic, 2004
Carew, Keggie	<i>Dadland*</i>	London: Vintage, 2017
Duras, Marguerite	<i>The Lover</i>	London: Harper Perennial, 2012
Harding, Thomas	<i>The House By The Lake*</i>	William Heinemann, 2015
Hemingway, Ernest	<i>A Moveable Feast</i>	Arrow (new edition), 1994
Hughes, Katheryn	<i>Victorians Undone</i>	London: Fourth Estate, 2018

Laing, Olivia	<i>The Lonely City</i>	London: Canongate, 2017
Lee, Hermione	<i>Body Parts: Essays on Life-writing*</i>	Chatto and Windus, 2006
Levy, Deborah	<i>Things I don't Want to Know*</i>	London: Penguin, 2018
Moran, Caitlin	<i>How To Be A Woman</i>	Ebury Press, 2012
Summerscale, Kate	<i>Mrs Robinson's Disgrace: the Private Diary of a Victorian Lady</i>	Bloomsbury, 2013

* indicates essential reading

TIMETABLE

Michaelmas 2017: Introduction to Creative Non-fiction

Lecture 1	9 October 2018
Lecture 2	16 October 2018
Lecture 3	23 October 2018
Saturday day-school	27 October 2018
<i>Half-term break</i>	<i>30 October 2018</i>
Lecture 4	6 November 2018
Lecture 5	13 November 2018
Lecture 6	20 November 2018
Lecture 7	27 November 2018
Saturday day-school	1 December 2018
Lecture 8	4 December 2018
Lecture 9	11 December 2018
Lecture 10	18 December 2018

Lent 2018: Writing about place

Lecture 1	8 January 2019
Lecture 2	15 January 2019
Lecture 3	22 January 2019
Saturday day-school	26 January 2019
Lecture 4	29 January 2019
Lecture 5	5 February 2019
Lecture 6	12 February 2019
<i>Half-term break</i>	<i>19 February 2019</i>
Lecture 7	26 February 2019
Lecture 8	5 March 2019
Saturday day-school	9 March 2019
Lecture 9	12 March 2019
Lecture 10	19 March 2019

Easter 2018: Life Writing

Lecture 1	23 April 2019
Lecture 2	30 April 2019
Lecture 3	7 May 2019
Lecture 4	14 May 2019
Saturday day-school	18 May 2019
Lecture 5	21 May 2019
<i>Half-term break</i>	<i>28 May 2019</i>
Lecture 6	4 June 2019
Lecture 7	11 June 2019
Saturday day-school	15 June 2019
Lecture 8	18 June 2019
Lecture 9	25 June 2019
Lecture 10	2 July 2019

Assignment submission dates are normally 3 weeks after final teaching session of term.

Whilst every effort is made to avoid changes to this programme, published details may be altered without notice at any time. The Institute reserves the right to withdraw or amend any part of this programme without prior notice.

University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education, Madingley Hall, Cambridge, CB23 8AQTel 01223 746222
www.ice.cam.ac.uk