

Creative writing: telling your family story

Start date	13 July 2019	End date	13 July 2019
Venue	Madingley Hall Madingley Cambridge		
Tutor	Derek Niemann	Course code	1819NDX044

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Tutor biography

Derek Niemann is a freelance writer and editor specialising in natural history. In 2012, he interrupted a career writing about bees and butterflies to begin researching and writing a family history story that was published in 2015 as *A Nazi in the Family* (Short Books), based on the SS grandfather he never knew. His most recent non-fiction book *A Tale of Trees: The battle to save Britain's ancient woodland* was published in October 2016 (Short Books). Derek's other non-fiction title was *Birds in a Cage* (Short Books, 2011), telling the story of four Prisoner of War birdwatchers in World War II. Derek is a country diary columnist for the Guardian, and edits the magazine of the Small Woods Association. Formerly he was children's magazines editor for the RSPB (1998-2014) and has written a number of wildlife books for children.

Course programme

09:30	Terrace bar open for pre-course tea/coffee
10:00 – 11:15	A creative approach to life writing You have a family history to write? There are so many imaginative ways to do it.
11:15	Coffee
11:45 – 13:00	The joys of research How you can use archives and documents to help make your story come alive.
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 15:15	A sense of place Every story happens somewhere. What are the tricks for turning locations into reality?
15:15	Tea
15:30 – 16:45	Bringing objects to life Our concluding session looks at how we can animate inanimate objects, with a particular emphasis on photographs.
16:45	Day-school ends

Course syllabus

Aims:

1. To explore a range of styles and techniques in life writing.
2. To develop participants' skills in researching and capturing life writing in words.
3. To increase participants' awareness and appreciation of the tools that go to producing life writing and resources that are available for them to mine the past.
4. To hone research skills in using official and unofficial records.

Content:

This course offers students fresh perspectives on producing creative writing tied to their own family story. We will be examining the work of a wide range of writers of different backgrounds and nationalities to find ideas and inspiration. Students will learn about resources available for researching their family story and their family's histories and how to make use of them. And the course will encourage participants to write about family history in engaging and creative ways, exploring the imaginative possibilities in documents, letters, everyday objects and places.

Presentation of the course:

This course will involve a mixture of class discussion and practical work.

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

1. Recognise the techniques in which life writers make their subject real for the reader.
2. Feel confident in researching and interpreting records, as well as investigating and drawing from archives.
3. Be able to identify other sources of material to follow up family history stories and, if they so wish, feel empowered to write up their own family history.
4. Begin to write up the family's story.

Reading and resources list

Listed below are texts that might be of interest should you wish to supplement your learning on the course. Any essential reading is marked with an asterisk *

Author	Title	Publisher and date
Cline, Sally and Angier, Carole	<i>Life writing: a writers' & artists' companion</i>	Bloomsbury (2013)
Edemariam, Aida	<i>The Wife's Tale</i>	4 th Estate (2018)
Morrison, Blake	<i>Things my mother never told me</i>	Chatto & Windus (2002)
Niemann, Derek	<i>A Nazi in the Family</i>	Short Books (2015)
Sands, Philippe	<i>East West Street</i>	Weidenfeld & Nicholson (2016)
Verzemnieks, Inara	<i>Among the Living and the Dead</i>	Pushkin Press (2018)

Additional information

Venue

Details of how to find Madingley Hall can be found on our website:
<http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk/who-we-are/how-to-find-the-institute>

Refreshments

Tea and coffee and lunch will be provided. If you have any specific dietary requirements or allergies and have not already advised us, please inform our Admissions Team on ice.admissions@ice.cam.ac.uk or +44 (0)1223 746262.

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: 23 January 2019