

## Creative writing: writing made easy

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**Date** Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2020 **Time** 10:00 – 16:45

**Venue** Maddingley Hall  
Maddingley  
Cambridge

**Tutor** Menna van Praag **Course code** 2021NDX225

**Director of Academic Centres** Dr Corinne Boz

**For further information on this course, please contact** The Creative Writing Team  
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**To book** See: [www.ice.cam.ac.uk](http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk) or telephone 01223 746 262

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### Tutor biography

Menna van Praag has lived in Cambridge all her life, except when she defected to Oxford to study Modern History at Balliol College. Her first novella - an autobiographical tale about a waitress who aspires to be a writer - *Men, Money & Chocolate* has been translated into 26 languages. Her magical realism novels are all set among the colleges, cafes and bookshops of Cambridge. All titles are published by Allison and Busby: *The House at the End of Hope Street* (2014), *The Dress Shop of Dreams* (2015), *The Witches of Cambridge* (2016), *The Lost Art of Letter Writing* (2017) & *The Patron Saint of Lost Souls* (2018). Menna is currently working on her upcoming fantasy trilogy, *The Sisters Grimm*. The first book in the series will be published in 2020 by Transworld (UK) & HarperVoyager (US). She tutors students in creative writing at writing retreats and teaches workshops at book festivals internationally, also working freelance for institutions such as Hay House publishers & the School of Drama & the Creative Arts. She has been a guest tutor on the Creative Writing Certificate at Maddingley Hall since 2013.

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## Course programme

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09:30	Terrace bar open for pre-course tea/coffee
10:00 – 11:15	<b>The Sentence Game</b>
11:15	Coffee
11:45 – 13:00	<b>Utilising literary criticism.</b>
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 15:15	<b>When to stop working on it.</b>
15:15	Tea
15:30 – 16:45	<b>Creating the writing life you want.</b>
16:45	Day-school ends

## **Course syllabus**

### **Aims:**

The course aims to equip students with:

- the practical skills to transcend procrastination and perfectionism in their own writing
- an understanding of the importance of separating their creative and critical processes when writing
- the ability to write effectively without preparation or thinking time

### **Content:**

It's a belief, perpetuated and disseminated among and by writers, that the process of writing excellent prose is torturous. Hence the quote, credited to Hemingway: "writing is easy. You simply sit down at the typewriter, open your veins, and bleed." Fortunately, many writers enjoy the writing process a good deal more than Hemingway did. In this day course you'll learn techniques that make writing fun, but not at the expense of high standards.

In this day school we'll begin by playing a writing game to unlock our creative flow. We'll also use practical exercises to help switch off the critical mind while engaging the creative brain. We'll discuss how to maintain a good balance between enjoyment of the writing process and effectiveness in telling a compelling story. We'll also share strategies for how to live a creative life while juggling real life responsibilities. As a result of the day school students should feel better equipped to write – anything from an email to a novel – with elegance and ease.

### **Presentation of the course:**

The course will include lectures, guided group discussions, activities based around text extracts and writing exercises. Classes are relaxed but focused. The atmosphere is supportive and designed to build confidence and develop skills through a combination of reading, discussions and practical exercises.

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

As a result of the course students should be able to:

- effectively transcend procrastination and perfectionism in their own writing
- know the importance of separating their creative and critical processes when writing
- write effectively without preparation or thinking time

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## Reading and resources list

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No preparatory reading is required. Extracts of texts will be provided in the class on the day. But, some knowledge of the following texts would enhance participants' experience of the course.

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Author	Title	Publisher and date
King, Stephen	<i>On Writing</i>	Hodder & Stoughton (2000)
Dillard, Annie	<i>The Writing Life</i>	Harper Perennial (1990)
Lamott, Anne	<i>Bird by Bird</i>	Anchor (1995)
Goldberg, Natalie	<i>Writing Down the Bones</i>	Shambhala (2005)
Cameron, Julia	<i>The Artist's Way</i>	Tarcher/Penguin (2007)

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## Additional information

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### 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](mailto: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:* 21 November 2019