



## The poetry of the 1930s

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**Start date** 10 July 2020 **End date** 12 July 2020

**Venue** Madingley Hall  
Madingley  
Cambridge  
CB23 8AQ

**Tutor** Professor Jem Poster **Course code** 1920NRX055

**Director of ISP and LL** Sarah Ormrod

**For further information on this course, please contact the Lifelong Learning team** Zara Kuckelhaus, Fleur Kerrecoe  
[shortcourses@ice.cam.ac.uk](mailto:shortcourses@ice.cam.ac.uk) or 01223 764637

**To book** See: [www.ice.cam.ac.uk](http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk) or telephone 01223 746262

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### Tutor biography

Jem Poster worked as an archaeologist, surveying and excavating a range of sites on behalf of the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments, before taking up an administrative post with Cambridge University's Institute of Continuing Education in 1987. From 1993 to 2003 he was University Lecturer in Literature with Oxford University's Department for Continuing Education and a fellow of Kellogg College. From 2003 to 2012 he was Professor of Creative Writing at Aberystwyth University, and is now Emeritus Professor.

He is the author of two novels, *Courting Shadows* (Sceptre, 2002) and *Rifling Paradise* (Sceptre, 2006), as well as a collection of poetry, *Brought to Light* (Bloodaxe, 2001), and is editor of volume 3 of the six-volume Oxford University Press *Edward Thomas: Prose Writings* (OUP, 2018). He has won prizes in major poetry competitions including first prize in both the Cardiff International Poetry Competition in 1995 and the Peterloo Poets Open Poetry Competition in 2001. He has been Chair of the editorial board of Wales's leading literary journal, *New Welsh Review* and Programme Advisor to Cambridge University's MSt in Creative Writing.

He works extensively for Cambridge University's Institute of Continuing Education, most notably as Director of its Summer Programme in Creative Writing. He is Director of Academic Programmes for the Financial Times Oxford Literary Festival and a regular tutor in the Guardian Masterclass series. In 2014 he spent four months as Writer in Residence at Arizona State University.

## 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.

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|---------------|---|
| 19:00         | Dinner                                    |
| 20:30 – 22:00 | <b>Session 1: Introduction; the 1930s</b> |
| 22:00         | Terrace bar open for informal discussion  |

### Saturday

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|---------------|--|
| 07:30         | Breakfast                                    |
| 09:00 – 10:30 | <b>Session 2: W. H. Auden</b>                |
| 10:30         | Coffee                                       |
| 11:00 – 12:30 | <b>Session 3: W. H. Auden (continued)</b>    |
| 13:00         | Lunch  |
| 14:00 – 16:00 | Free   |
| 16:00         | Tea  |
| 16:30 – 18:00 | <b>Session 4: Louis MacNeice</b>             |
| 18:00         | Free   |
| 18:30         | Dinner                                       |
| 20:00 - 21:30 | <b>Session 5: Louis MacNeice (continued)</b> |
| 21:15         | Terrace bar open for informal discussion     |

### Sunday

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|---------------|--|
| 07:30         | Breakfast  |
| 09:00 – 10:30 | <b>Session 6 Stephen Spender</b>                                     |
| 10:30         | Coffee   |
| 11:00 – 12:30 | <b>Session 7 Other Voices (Grigson, Allott, Spencer); conclusion</b> |
| 12:45         | Lunch  |

**The course will disperse after lunch**

## **Course syllabus**

### **Aims:**

1. to explore the relationship between the poets' work and its wider context;
2. to analyse the poems under review;
3. to gain a clearer sense of the poets' achievement.

### **Content:**

The 1930s was a decade of extraordinary hopes and fears, of social unrest and political polarisation, and its poetry was deeply influenced by such matters. We shall begin with a broad account of the social and political context before moving on to examine in detail the work of a number of key figures in the development of British poetry during this turbulent decade: W. H. Auden, widely regarded as the most significant poet of his generation; Louis MacNeice, arguably the most appealing to later generations of readers; Stephen Spender, whose lyricism found its finest expression during the 1930s; and a trio of poets (Geoffrey Grigson, Kenneth Allott and Bernard Spencer) who, though less well known, all produced moving and memorable work during the decade.

For ease of reference we shall be using Robin Skelton's anthology, *Poetry of the Thirties*. It would be helpful to look at this in advance, paying particular attention to poems by the poets listed above.

**Please bring a copy to the course.**

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

The course will take the form of a series of seminars, in which group discussion will be actively encouraged; the majority of these discussions will focus on the texts themselves, which will be analysed in detail.

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

1. place the poets in their wider context and understand more clearly the implications and meaning of their work;
2. gain greater confidence in their approach to the analysis of literary texts in general.

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## Reading and resources list

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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
Skelton, Robin (ed.)	<i>Poetry of the 1930s</i>	Penguin, 2000
Hynes, Samuel	<i>The Auden Generation: Literature and Politics in England in the 1930s</i>	Pimlico, 1992

### Website addresses

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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, lunch and dinner will be provided as outlined in the timetable. 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:* 20 January 2020