

The crafty art of fiction

Start date 10 July 2020

End date 12 July 2020

Venue Madingley Hall
Madingley
Cambridge
CB23 8AQ

Tutor Dr Sarah Burton

Course code 1920NRX056

Director of ISP and LL

Sarah Ormrod

**For further information on this
course, please contact the Lifelong
Learning team**

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To book

See: www.ice.cam.ac.uk or telephone 01223 746262

Tutor biography

Dr Sarah Burton's publications include two critically acclaimed biographies, *Impostors: Six Kinds of Liar* (Penguin, 2000) and *A Double Life: a Biography of Charles and Mary Lamb* (Penguin, 2003; shortlisted for the Mind Book of the Year award); a children's book, *The Miracle in Bethlehem: A Storyteller's Tale* (Floris, 2008); a page-to-stage guide, *How to Put on a Community Play* (Aurora, 2011); the humorous *Complete and Utter History of the World By Samuel Stewart, Aged 9* (Short Books, 2013) and several short stories.

She has just finished a novel and is currently working on a book about creative writing with Professor Jem Poster. Sarah was Course Director of the Creative Writing MSt at Cambridge University's Institute of Continuing Education 2013-2017 and she continues to teach day schools, weekends, online courses and summer programmes for ICE. She also runs the Creative Writing Retreats at Madingley Hall.

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	Session 1 - Imaginative freedom: prepare to explore and experiment
22:00	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Saturday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Session 2 – Plot: what’s the story?
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Session 3 – Character: who are these people (and why should we care)?
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	Session 4 – Dialogue
18:00	Free
18:30	Dinner
20:00 - 21:30	Session 5 – Narrative voice I: who is telling the story?
21:15	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Sunday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Session 6 – Narrative voice II: detail and description
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Session 7 – Beginnings and endings
12:45	Lunch

The course will disperse after lunch

Course syllabus

Aims:

The course aims to equip students with a working knowledge of:

- how plot and character are created and develop;
- the functions of dialogue;
- variations of narrative voice;
- how to shape a story.

Content:

We'll begin by discussing what we want from our writing and what we hope our writing may do for readers, while establishing a classroom culture of mutual support enabling confident participation.

On Saturday we'll be asking ourselves what our story is *about* and go on to discover ways of creating compelling and effective narratives. We'll consider what roles character and conflict play in plot development and consider the difference between the story as it unfolds to the reader and the mechanics of unseen plot. We'll then explore ways of breathing life into our characters and making them believable and interesting. We'll also consider ways of introducing characters to the reader; the relative merits of 'showing' and 'telling'; and the relationship between character and plot. We'll go on to discover how speech can be used both to reveal character and drive the plot forward. We'll look at how dialogue can enliven a narrative and how we can write dialogue that feels authentic. At the end of the day we'll discuss ways of developing a narrative voice appropriate to our story. We'll look at the pros and cons of first- and third-person narratives and at the broad range of voices even within these categories. We'll also discuss the use of multiple narrators and unreliable narrators.

On Sunday we'll pick up the theme of narrative voice, concentrating on how detail and description affect the reader reception of a narrative. In the final class we'll look at how beginnings and endings contribute to the shaping of a narrative.

Presentation of the course:

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 appropriate and deploy the skills necessary to:

- create and develop characters and plots;
- write effective dialogue;
- select and exploit an appropriate narrative voice.

Reading and resources list

No preparatory reading is required. At the end of the course the tutor will supply further reading suggestions based on interest arising from classes; it is hoped students will also share and recommend titles to the group.

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, 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 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: 04 March 2020