

## Creative Writing Made Easy

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**Date** Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2020

**Venue** Virtual Classroom

**Tutor** Menna van Praag                      **Course code** 2021NDR225

**Director of Academic Centres** Dr Corinne Boz

**For further information on this course, please contact** Head of Academic Centre Administration, Sarah Blakeney  
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**To book** See: [www.ice.cam.ac.uk](http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk) or telephone 01223 746262

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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) and *The Patron Saint of Lost Souls* (2018). Her fantasy trilogy, *The Sisters Grimm*, is published by Transworld (UK) & HarperVoyager (US) and was called a "a compelling intensely poetic narrative of empowerment and self-realisation" by *The Guardian*. 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 and the School of Drama and the Creative Arts. She has been a guest tutor on the Creative Writing Certificate at Madingley Hall since 2013 and will be teaching the Certificate and Diploma in Creative Writing in 2021.

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## Course programme

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**Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> November**

**AM**

10:00 – 11.15     **Session 1: The Sentence Game: How to Stimulate Creativity**

11:45 – 13.00     **Session 2: The Five W's of Brilliant Beginnings**

**PM**

14:00 – 15.15     **Session 3: The Art of Writing With All the Senses**

15:30 – 16:45     **Session 4: The Art of Editing: When to Stop Working on It**

## **Course syllabus**

### **Aims:**

The course aims to equip students with:

- the practical skills to overcome procrastination and manage perfectionism
- 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:**

- identify and manage procrastination and perfectionism in their own writing
- recognise the importance of separating their creative and critical processes when writing
- demonstrate effective writing without preparation or thinking time

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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 \*

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Title	Author	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)

### Background: Sources

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### Additional information

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#### What you will need

The course is open to anyone, however it is taught via a virtual classroom. You will be able to see, hear and interact with your classmates and the tutor. In order to participate you will need to have a laptop, computer, tablet or other device equipped with a camera (webcam), speakers and a microphone.

Full instructions and support on the use of the software will be given on request.

#### Venue

This course takes place online using the teleconferencing software ZOOM.

If you have any queries about the software or accessing the course, please contact us by e-mailing [creativewriting@ice.cam.ac.uk](mailto:creativewriting@ice.cam.ac.uk).

**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:* 02 October 2020