

Undergraduate Certificate in Creative Writing: Creative Non-Fiction – Cohort 2

2021 - 2022

Course code: 2122CCR103

COURSE GUIDE



Welcome to the **Undergraduate Certificate in Creative Writing: Creative Non-Fiction**, a University of Cambridge award offered by the Institute of Continuing Education (ICE). The Certificate is taught and awarded at FHEQ level 4 (i.e. first-year undergraduate level) and attracts 60 credits. The award is completed in one academic year. For further information about academic credit please see our website: http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk/studying-with-us/information-for-students/qualifications-that-we-offer.

The course offers three termly units and a syllabus and reading and resource list for each of these units are included in this course guide.

The programme aims to:

- 1. introduce students to a wide range of different literary genres and styles in order to stimulate and develop their own creative writing skills;
- 2. provide opportunities for students to experiment with their own writing;
- 3. introduce students to the possibilities of transferring techniques between different genres;
- 4. build students' confidence by demystifying the art of writing and encouraging students to establish their own working routine;
- 5. encourage students to contextualise their writing within a variety of traditions and genres.

Transferable skills for further study and employability

- The capacity for independent thought and judgement
- The development of independent learning, study and time management skills
- The deployment of skills in critical reasoning
- The development of competence in using IT to support one's work
- The ability to work with others, productively and equitably
- The qualities necessary for employment requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility and the demonstration of high levels of motivation and personal commitment through part-time study

Study hours

The award of academic credit is a means of quantifying and recognising learning and within the UK, one credit notionally represents 10 hours of learning¹. Each of the units in this course attracts 20 credits so students should expect to need to study for approximately 200 hours in total to complete each unit successfully. However, it is recognised that students study at different paces and use a variety of approaches, so this is a recommendation, rather than a hard-and-fast calculation.

Teaching staff

Course Director

Derek Niemann

Derek Niemann is a freelance writer and editor specialising in writing about place, and life writing. His non-fiction books include *Birds in a Cage* (Short Books, 2011), a true story about Prisoner of War birdwatchers in World War II; *A Nazi in the Family* (Short Books, 2015), based on the SS grandfather he never knew; and *A Tale of Trees: The Battle to Save Britain's Ancient Woodland* (Short Books, 2016). He is a country diary columnist for the *Guardian* and is also a prolific feature writer for various magazines. Formerly he was

^{1 &#}x27;Academic credit in higher education in England – an introduction'. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2009

children's magazines editor for the RSPB (1998-2014) and has written wildlife books for both children and adults.

Tutors

The course will be taught by a team of experienced tutors with teaching and research interests in diverse areas of critical and creative work. The most up-to-date lecture list for each unit including any guest lecturers will be published in the course's Virtual Learning Environment. Tutors on this course will likely include:

Dr Louise Foxcroft read History at the University of Cambridge and published her PhD thesis as *The Making of Addiction: The "use and abuse" of opium in nineteenth-century Britain* (Ashgate, 2007). Her other books are: *Hot Flushes, Cold Science: A History of the Modern Menopause* (Granta, 2009), which won the Longman/*History Today* Book of the Year, 2009, and was commended by the Medical Journalists' Association, 2010; *Calories and Corsets: A History of Dieting over 2,000 Years* (Profile Books, 2012), shortlisted for a Food Writer's Guild prize, 2013; *Sexuality: All That Matters* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2014); *The Serpentine, Or, The Attractions of Water* (Honeybee Books, 2015); and *Gayer-Anderson: The Life and Afterlife of the Irish Pasha* (American University in Cairo Press, 2016). She has written for *The Times, Independent, Observer, Guardian, New Scientist, London Review of Books, New Humanist*, etc., and has appeared on TV, podcasts, and BBC Radio (including Inside Science, The Long View, Woman's Hour, Open Country, You & Yours, Am I Normal?). Louise was Royal Literary Fund Writing Fellow at Magdalene College, Cambridge, 2015-17.

Miranda Doyle is part of the Life Writing Team at the University of Cambridge Creative Writing Centre based at Madingley Hall. She also teaches memoir and life writing at the Faber Academy, and creative writing as part of Hills Road's Sixth Form College Adult Education programme. She has a distinction in Creative and Life Writing from Goldsmiths University and led the Philosophy Department's Autobiography: Self and Truth module for five years at Anglia Ruskin University. Her fascination with the form is longstanding, motivating classes that seek to explore a writer's relationship with the page. Through her workshops she hopes to build a mutually supportive foundation for all her students through which they can develop meaningful relationships with one another, which will support them throughout their writing lives. Her memoir, *A Book of Untruths*, was published in June 2017 by Faber & Faber.

Lucinda Hawksley is the author of 15 books, including biographies of the artists Lizzie Siddal (André Deutsche, 2004), Princess Louise (Penguin, 2013) and Kate Perugini (Pen & Sword, 2018). Her other titles include *Elizabeth Revealed* (Scala Arts & Heritage Publishers, 2019), *Dickens and Christmas* (Pen & Sword, 2017), *The Writer Abroad* (British Library, 2017), *Charles Dickens and his Circle* (National Portrait Gallery, 2016), *Bitten by Witch Fever* (Thames & Hudson, 2016) and *March, Women, March: Voices of the Women's Movement* (André Deutsch, 2013). She is a lecturer for the National Portrait Gallery, the Arvon Foundation and IES London; as well as being patron of the Charles Dickens Museum in London and of the De Morgan Foundation. Lucinda is a former Fellow of the Newberry Library in Chicago and a Royal Literary Fund Writing Fellow. She is currently writing *Letters of Great Women* and *Dickens and Travel*.

Jeremy Seal

Jeremy Seal is a travel writer with a profound interest in Turkey. His books include *A Fez of the Heart* (1995), *The Snakebite Survivors' Club* (1999), *The Wreck at Sharpnose Point* (2001), *Santa: A Life* (2004) and *Meander* (2012). His latest book, provisionally titled *A Coup in Turkey* is due to be published in 2020.

He also contributes to a wide range of publications including the Sunday Times, Daily Telegraph and the Australian. He has taught creative writing courses for the Arvon Foundation and was a writing fellow for the Royal Literary Fund at the University of Bath from 2009-2011.

Jeremy has also worked in TV presenting, and runs cultural tours to Turkey.

Administrative staff

Head of Academic Centre Administration: Sarah Blakeney, Institute of Continuing Education, University of Cambridge, Madingley Hall, Madingley, Cambridge, CB23 8AQ, 01223 760865

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Institute of Continuing Education

The Institute of Continuing Education's administrative headquarters are at Madingley Hall, an elegant country house built in the 16th century and set in gardens of about seven acres, designed in the 18th century by Capability Brown. Please visit www.ice.cam.ac.uk and www.madingleyhall.co.uk for further information.

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Please also refer to the 'information for students' section on our website http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk/studying-with-us/information-for-students and the 20/21 Student Handbook for further information and guidance relating to all aspects of the course including study skills, assignments, assessment and moderation. The Course Information and Help and Guidance section of the ICE VLE will also contain valuable information specific to your course.

Information correct as at 22 June 2021

Syllabus for first unit Michaelmas term 2021

Introduction to creative non-fiction

Start date 13 October 2021 End date 8 December 2021

Day Wednesdays and Sundays **Time** Wednesdays 7.15 – 9.15pm

Venue Remote delivery

Tutors Dr Louise Foxcroft **No. of meetings** 9 evening classes plus 2 Sunday

day-schools (31 October and 21

November 2021)

Sundays 11am – 4pm (with break 1-2pm)

Aims

- To make the students aware of the literary tools available to the writer of non-fiction;
- To develop the student's awareness of the range and styles used in non-fiction;
- To increase the students' confidence in writing non-fiction.

Content

Many of the most engrossing and entertaining forms of non-fiction borrow techniques such as description, drama and characterisation from fiction. In addition, the writer of non-fiction is also likely to have to turn their hand to research and to be able to use facts to enhance and drive forward their story.

This unit will discuss what makes non-fiction "creative" and the types of writing this might include. We will study a range of published work, such as writing about food, narrative history (history that tells a story), popular science, the essay, sports writing, writing about art, true crime and comic writing to see how authors have used different techniques to engage with their reader. We will discuss how to make the most of research and to ensure that you keep it in its place.

The unit will demystify the art of writing and, through practical exercises and close reading, encourage students to find their own voice. Students will experiment with their own writing and blend different elements from a variety of approaches to non-fiction.

Presentation of the unit

This unit will be taught through a series of informal seminars. You will use close reading, discussion and practical writing exercises to explore different approaches to creative non-fiction. Each class is designed to expose you to new ideas or techniques and to encourage you to experiment in a relaxed, supportive and friendly atmosphere. There will also be the chance to share work on the class's password-protected Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

All teaching will be carried out remotely. We will "meet" via live video conferencing and our guest speakers will also join us by video. Our guest speakers will also join us by video,

usually from their home or office. There may be additional, pre-recorded presentations for you to watch between classes. All our tutors have experience of teaching remotely.

Provisional lecture list

Session	Date	Content
Lecture 1	13 October 2021	What makes non-fiction creative?
Lecture 2	20 October 2021	'Good prose is like a window pane': clarity, brevity, voice, flow and structure
Lecture 3	27 October 2021	Facts, facts, facts: what are they? Where to find them, what to do with them
Sunday day-school (11am-1pm, 2-4pm)	31 October 2021	Looking for ideas in history and science
Lecture 4	3 November 2021	Writing is such sweet sorrow: what to do if you get stuck; how to vary the pace and inject tension; when to cut and when to stop!
Lecture 5	10 November 2021	Writing narrative history
Lecture 6	17 November 2021	The art of the essay. Humour, wit and satire in non-fiction
Sunday day-school (11am-1pm, 2-4pm)	21 November 2021	Characterisation, dialogue, and bringing real people to life
Lecture 7	24 November 2021	Illustrations: as research, to entice your reader or tell a story
Lecture 8	1 December 2021	Editing and revising
Lecture 9	8 December 2021	Writing the perfect synopsis and submission letter. What do agents want?

Learning Outcomes

As a result of the unit, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to show they can:

- (i) identify some of the key elements in how successful non-fiction is formed;
- show an understanding of how non-fiction can use techniques such as description and characterisation usually associated with fiction;
- (iii) develop an awareness of some of the ways of structuring a piece of non-fiction.

Student assessment

Students are encouraged to keep a reflective log. This will not be assessed but will help them to chart their own evaluation of each session and the progress they have made. In addition, students will be expected to submit one long (3,000-4,000 words) piece of non-fiction. Students must discuss and agree the title with the tutor beforehand to ensure it meets the learning outcomes of the unit. The submission must be an original piece of non-fiction. It could be, for example, an essay or a chapter from a book and might fall into one of the following categories:

- narrative history;
- writing about food;
- sports writing;
- · comic writing;
- · popular science writing;
- an essay.

Although it is recognised that the assignment may contain biographical *elements* or *some* description of place, the assignment must not *solely* be a piece of biographical writing or a piece about place or travel writing. This is to avoid duplication in following units about place and life writing.

Closing date for the submission of assignments: Wednesday 5 January 2022 by 12.00 noon GMT*

*Greenwich Mean Time

Reading and resource list

Reading is an important part of the course and of becoming a good writer. No one book is compulsory but students are urged to read as widely as possible.

Editor	Title	Publisher and date
Blackburn, Julia	Threads: The Delicate Life of John Craske	London: Vintage, 2017
Bywater, Michael	Lost Worlds: What Have We Lost and Where Did it Go?	London: Granta, 2005
Blythe, Ronald	Akenfield	London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2005
Capote, Truman	In Cold Blood	Penguin Classics, 2000
Cline, Sally & Gillies, Midge	Literary Non-Fiction: A Writers' & Artists' Companion (Writers' and Artists' Companions)	London: Bloomsbury, 2015
Criado Perez, Caroline	Invisible Women: Exposing Data Bias in a World Designed for Men	.Vintage, 2019
Kay, Adam	This is Going to Hurt: Secret Diaries of a Junior Doctor	Picador, 2018

Kramer, Mark & Call, Wendy	Telling True Stories	Plume Books, 2007
Orwell, George	Why I Write	Penguin Books - Great Ideas, 2004
Self, Will	Feeding Frenzy	Viking, 2001
Skloot, Rebecca	The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks	Pan, 2001

Syllabus for second unit Lent term 2022

Writing about place

Start date 5 January 2022 End date 2 March 2022

Day Wednesdays and Sundays **Time** Wednesdays 7.15 – 9.15pm

Venue Remote delivery

Tutors Derek Niemann and Jeremy **No. of meetings** 9 evening classes plus 2 Sunday

Seal day-schools (30 January and 13

February 2022)

Sundays 11am – 4pm

(with break 1-2pm)

Aims

- To introduce students to different approaches to writing about travel, nature and place;
- To foster an understanding of the literary tools available when writing about place;
- To help students to apply these tools when writing different forms of creative non-fiction.

Content

We will begin by discussing how and why different writers create a sense of place. We will look at the ways in which landscape can reveal stories or play a part in a wider narrative. Students will examine how encounters and companions can add depth and pace to nonfiction and the role played by a sense of quest. The group will look at how nature, in its many forms, can add to a description of place – whether in an urban or rural setting, in today's world or the in past.

We will discuss the tradition of the nature writer and the travel writer who – until recently – was usually male. Close reading of a variety of published work will help students to apply techniques to their own work – whether they want to write about an urban or rural landscape or to add a sense of place to a piece of narrative history, or other form of creative non-fiction.

The unit will look at the challenges of writing about natural beauty and how creating a sense of place can enhance most forms of creative non-fiction.

Presentation of the unit

This unit will be taught through a series of informal seminars. You will use close reading, discussion and practical writing exercises to explore different approaches to creative nonfiction. Each class is designed to expose you to new ideas or techniques and to encourage you to experiment in a relaxed, supportive and friendly atmosphere. There will also be the chance to share work on the class's password-protected Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

All teaching will be carried out remotely. We will "meet" via live video conferencing and our guest speakers will also join us by video. Our guest speakers will join us by video, usually

from their home or office. There may be additional, pre-recorded presentations for you to watch between classes. All our tutors have experience of teaching remotely.

Provisional lecture list

Session	Date	Content
Lecture 1	5 January 2022	How do writers create a sense of place?
Lecture 2	12 January 2022	Landscapes: what's the story?
Lecture 3	19 January 2022	Companions and characters along the way, including dialogue
Lecture 4	26 January 2022	Bringing landscapes of the past to life
Sunday day-school (11am-1pm, 2-4pm)	30 January 2022	Travel writing for publication
Lecture 5	2 February 2022	Travel Writing as a quest
Lecture 6	9 February 2022	Making nature come to life
Sunday day school (11am-1pm, 2-4pm)	13 February 2022	Gathering wild material
Lecture 7	16 February 2022	Environmental issues
Lecture 8	23 February 2022	Weather in writing
Lecture 9	2 March 2022	Mixing genres

Learning Outcomes

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

- (i) demonstrate knowledge of how writing about place may include elements from more than one discipline or genre;
- (ii) show an understanding of how authors writing about landscape, travel or nature can use tools such as characterisation, dialogue or description;
- (iii) develop an awareness of some of the ways of structuring a piece of writing about travel, nature or place.

Student assessment

Students are encouraged to keep a reflective log. This will not be assessed but will help them to chart their own evaluation of each session and the progress they have made. In addition, students will be expected to submit one long (3,000-4,000 words) piece of nonfiction. Students must discuss and agree the title with the tutor beforehand to ensure it meets the learning outcomes of the unit. The submission must be an original piece of writing about travel, nature or place – or a combination of more than one genre.

Closing date for the submission of assignments: Wednesday 23 March 2022 by 12.00 noon GMT*

*Greenwich Mean Time

Reading and resource list

Reading is an important part of the course and of becoming a good writer. No one book is compulsory but students are urged to read as widely as possible. In addition, there are several good anthologies of writing about travel.

Author	Title	Publisher and date
Bunting, Madeleine	Love of Country: A Hebridean Journey	London: Granta, 2016
Cocker, Mark	Crow Country	London: Vintage, 2008
Jamie, Kathleen	Findings	London: Sort of Books, 2005
Harris, Alexandra	Weatherland: Writers and artists under English skies	London: Thames & Hudson, 2015
Laing, Olivia	To the River	Edinburgh: Canongate, 2016
Lewis-Stempel, John	Meadowland: the Private Life of an English Field	London: Penguin, 2014
Liptrot, Amy	The Outrun	Edinburgh: Canongate, 2016
Macdonald, Helen	H is for Hawk	London: Jonathan Cape, 2015
Macfarlane, Robert	The Old Ways	London: Penguin 2013
Savoy, Lauret	Trace: Memory, History, Race, and the American Landscape	Basic Civitas Books, 20016

Websites:

Jeremy Seal - www.jeremyseal.com

www.thewillowherbreview.com

The Guardian Country Diary – www.theguardian.com/environment/issues/country-diary

Syllabus for third unit Easter term 2022

Life Writing

Start date 23 March 2022 End date 18 May 2022

Day Wednesdays and Sundays **Time** Wednesdays 7.15 – 9.15pm

Venue Remote delivery

Tutors Lucinda Hawksley and **No. of meetings** 8 evening classes plus 2 Sunday

Miranda Doyle day-schools (10 April and 8 May

2022)

Sundays 11am – 4pm (with break 1-2pm)

Aims

- To understand what literature falls into the category life writing and the difference between biography, autobiography, memoir and autobiographical novel;
- To develop students' awareness of the range of styles and treatments that are most appropriate for different biographical subjects;
- To develop the skills in handling research and creating structures that support work in life writing;
- To consider the ethical issues in writing about the lives of others (or oneself).

Content

Life Writing focuses on an individual (or occasionally more than one - a family, a couple, a partnership) and so character is to the fore. Nevertheless, to make that character come to life requires a strong sense of time and place, good descriptive powers and an eye for telling detail - inanimate objects may tell a reader a great deal about the person who possesses, inhabits, or comes across them.

For this reason, research needs to extend beyond the background of the chosen individual to their society and period. Several books within this field are micro-histories.

Perhaps the hardest part of Life Writing is getting the structure right, so that pace is maintained. Students will be encouraged to think what treatment might suit a given character. A formal biography of a famous person may have a useful timeline as its skeleton, but a writer still needs to be selective in order to maintain narrative interest. A memoir may allow a great deal of freedom in content, voice and structure, but the challenge there is to arrange material in a cohesive and imaginative way. Both require skills from fiction (description, tension, empathy) to make them compelling.

All Life Writing has inevitable gaps and the unit will provide opportunity for students to think about how they handle these to create a smooth narrative. By reading from the bibliography and discussing these and a variety of techniques and concepts in the class, students will be equipped to make decisions about a topic and the appropriate treatment to make the subject of their Life Writing project, and their subject's world, feel real.

The unit aims to give students the confidence to experiment with their own work and enjoy the rich possibilities of focusing on a single life.

Presentation of the unit

This unit will be taught through a series of informal seminars. You will use close reading, discussion and practical writing exercises to explore different approaches to creative nonfiction. Each class is designed to expose you to new ideas or techniques and to encourage you to experiment in a relaxed, supportive and friendly atmosphere. There will also be the chance to share work on the class's password-protected Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

All teaching will be carried out remotely. We will "meet" via live video conferencing and our guest speakers will also join us by video. Our guest speakers will also join us by video, usually from their home or office. There may be additional, pre-recorded presentations for you to watch between classes. All our tutors have experience of teaching remotely.

Provisional lecture list

Session	Date	Content
Lecture 1	23 March 2022	Whose life is it anyway?
Lecture 2	30 March 2022	Where to start?
Lecture 3	6 April 2022	Research: methods, resources and how to begin your journey.
Sunday day school (11am-1pm, 2-4pm)	10 April 2022	Overcoming obstacles.
Lecture 4	13 April 2022	Characterisation. How to make real people even more so.
Lecture 5	27 April 2022	Structure.
Lecture 6	4 May 2022	Ephemera and objects
Sunday day school (11am-1pm, 2-4pm)	8 May 2022	Whose truth is real?
Lecture 7	11 May 2022	Making the ordinary, extraordinary
Lecture 8	18 May 2022	Roundup of course

Learning Outcomes

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

- (i) show an understanding of different approaches to writing about a historical or contemporary life:
- (ii) develop an awareness of suitable projects and treatments for an autobiographical or biographical piece of work, or the range of structural options in how to shape a memoir:

- (iii) identify how to start research on a life and what kind of research is likely to prove fruitful;
- (iv) show an understanding of the link between a life and its historical and social context.

Student assessment

Students are encouraged to keep a reflective log. This will not be assessed but will help them to chart their own evaluation of each session and the progress they have made. In addition, students will be expected to submit one long (3,000-4,000 words) piece of work. **Students must discuss and agree the title with the tutor beforehand to ensure it meets the learning outcomes of the unit.** The submission must be an original piece of life writing: this may be any piece in any style that falls within the category. It could be a formal biographical piece on a historical figure, a childhood memoir, a chapter from a memoir or biography or even an essay on the pleasures and problems of writing the life you want to pursue.

Closing date for the submission of assignments: Wednesday 8 June 2022 by 12.00 noon BST*

Reading and resource list

Reading is an important part of the course and of becoming a good writer. No one book is compulsory, but students are urged to read as widely as possible.

Author	Title	Publisher and date
Barnes, Julian	Levels of Life	London: Vintage, 2014
Colquhoun, Kate	Did She Kill Him?	New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2014
De Waal, Edmund	The Hare With Amber Eyes	London: Vintage, 2011
Doyle, Miranda	A Book of Untruths	London: Faber & Faber, 2017
Ephron, Nora*	Heartburn	London: Vintage, 2018
Gutkind, Lee*	You Can't Make This Stuff Up	Boston: Da Capo, 2012
Hawksley, Lucinda	March, Women, March: Voices of the Women's Movement	London: Andre Deutsch, 2013
Hawksley, Lucinda	The Mystery of Princess Louise	London: Vintage, 2014
Limburg, Joanne	The Woman Who Thought Too Much	London: Atlantic, 2011

^{*} British Summer Time

Machado, Carmen Maria	In the Dream House: A Memoir	London: Serpent's Tail, 2019
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^{*} Extract handouts will be provided.

TIMETABLE

Michaelmas 2021: Introduction to Crea	ativa Nan fiation
Lecture 1	13 October 2021
Lecture 2	
Lecture 3	20 October 2021
	27 October 2021
Sunday day-school	31 October 2021
Lecture 4	3 November 2021
Lecture 5	10 November 2021
Lecture 6	17 November 2021
Sunday day-school	21 November 2021
Lecture 7	24 November 2021
Lecture 8	1 December 2021
Lecture 9	8 December 2021
Lent 2022: Writing about place	
Lecture 1	5 January 2022
Lecture 2	12 January 2022
Lecture 3	19 January 2022
Lecture 4	26 January 2022
Sunday day-school	30 January 2022
Lecture 5	2 February 2022
Lecture 6	9 February 2022
Sunday day-school	13 February 2022
Lecture 7	16 February 2022
Lecture 8	23 February 2022
Lecture 9	2 March 2022
Easter 2022: Life Writing	

Lecture 1	23 March 2022
Lecture 2	30 March 2022
Lecture 3	6 April 2022
Sunday day-school	10 April 2022
Lecture 4	13 April 2022
Lecture 5	27 April 2022
Lecture 6	4 May 2022
Sunday day-school	8 May 2022
Lecture 7	11 May 2022
Lecture 8	18 May 2022

Assignment submission dates are normally 3 weeks after final teaching session of term.

Whilst every effort is made to avoid changes to this programme, published details may be altered without notice at any time. The Institute reserves the right to withdraw or amend any part of this programme without prior notice.

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