

ISSU9BE - 'Brief Encounters': An Introduction to Writing Short Stories

Course Description

This module has been designed to help students realise their creative potential by producing original and stimulating short fiction. Teaching will consist of specialist workshops conducted by an expert in the field. In addition to engaging with practical aspects of craft and technique, students will learn how to create believable, compelling characters and how to make them live (and die!) on the page. They will also have the opportunity to visit sites of historic importance and natural beauty to inspire their writing.

Objectives

To introduce students to the practical aspects of writing short fiction.

To stimulate the creative process.

To gain insight into aspects of literary craft and technique demanded by the writing of short fiction.

To enable students to write engaging short stories.

On completion of the course, students will be expected to have improved their writing technique as well as the scope and range of their writing.

Recommended Text

The Heath Introduction to Fiction ed. John Jacob Clayton Houghton Mifflin

This is a good introduction to short fiction, but do feel free to read short stories by good writers whenever and wherever you find them. All writers learn from other writers.

Assessment

Part 1 Write a short story of approximately 1,500* words.

Part 2 Write a commentary of approximately 500* words about the process of creating your fiction. You may, for example, discuss questions of character formation, narrative point of view, setting, and time frame. You should focus on giving insights into the creative process rather than a summary or evaluation of the story itself.

Both parts of the assignment are compulsory. 75% of your marks are allocated to your story and 25% to your commentary.

Workshop Outline

- Workshop 1 Getting Started - Character and Setting
- Workshop 2 Description – Bodies and Places
- Workshop 3 Narrative Point of View
- Workshop 4 How to Handle Time
- Workshop 5 ‘Our Lives Are Stories’ – Field Trip
- Workshop 6 Dialogue
- Workshop 7 How the Story Ends (or doesn’t)
- Workshop 8 Editing and Revision

The course will culminate in a ‘reading party’ featuring a guest appearance from a leading Scottish writer. All students on the course are required to attend this event, but since the equivalent of being required to enjoy yourself, it should not be a problem!