

## SCOTTISH UNIVERSITIES INTERNATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL CREATIVE WRITING PROGRAMME

**Dates:** 10<sup>th</sup> July – 5<sup>th</sup> August 2017

**Times:** 9.30am – 5pm (variable schedule, plus evening excursions and events)

**Programme Administrator:** Lauren Pope ([suiss@ed.ac.uk](mailto:suiss@ed.ac.uk))

**Programme Directors:** Dr Hannah Tweed and Dr Calum Rodger ([suissdir@ed.ac.uk](mailto:suissdir@ed.ac.uk))

**Academic Units:** 20 SCOTCAT / 10 UC Quarter Units / 4 US Credits/ 10 ECTS

### Course Description:

This four-week course offers developing writers a supportive environment in which to further their writing skills in fiction, poetry, and drama. Students have a unique opportunity to develop their own critical analysis by attending a range of lectures from our concurrent Modernism and Scottish Literature courses, as well as author-led Masterclasses. The lectures will be pitched high, and lecturers are advised that all students will be familiar with the texts at the time of lecture. SUISS tutors, who are published writers and experienced teachers, lead the students in two- and three-hour group seminars and a series of individualised mentoring sessions.

In addition, our Creative Writing students will have the opportunity to attend private readings by well-known British authors, many of whom will be reading at the Edinburgh International Book Festival in August. Students have the opportunity to attend a range of additional events, which include film screenings, poetry performances, and ceilidhs (traditional Scottish dancing).

The Creative Writing programme offers:

- **11 Workshop Seminars:** SUISS tutors lead small group writing seminars catered to students' writing interests. Seminars are two hours long in the first week of term, and three hours long thereafter.
- **4 Author-led Masterclasses:** prominent contemporary British writers offer students an opportunity to engage in unique discussions and activities.
- **8 Lectures:** students attend select Modernism and Scottish Literature lectures to gain additional perspectives of critical analysis.
- **4 Individual Mentoring Sessions:** students receive 30 minutes of individualised mentoring sessions with a SUISS tutor per week.
- **1 Publishing Lecture:** a literary agent and publisher identifies key aspects of the publishing industry in an exclusive lecture for the students.
- **Editorial groups:** according to shared interests, students discuss their work with their peers in an informal, interactive environment.
- **Northern Light:** an opportunity to be published in our biennial publication, *Northern Light*. Our last issue was published in November 2015; the next is due to be published in 2017.

### Suggested Reading:

Core texts and lectures for the 2017 Creative Writing summer programme, on which the tuition will be based, are listed below in order of study.

- Selected Imagist poetry\*
- Katherine Mansfield, *Selected Stories* (Oxford World's Classics edition, 2008, ed. by Angela Smith)
- T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*
- Jean Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*

- Lewis Grassie Gibbon, *Sunset Song*
- John McGrath, *The Cheviot, the Stag, and the Black, Black Oil*
- Gregory Burke, *Black Watch*
- Edwin Morgan and Liz Lochhead, selected poems\*
- A.L. Kennedy and Janice Galloway, selected short stories\*

\*NB: Students are not required to purchase volumes of poetry or short stories – specific reading selections for these lectures and seminars will be circulated to all students in advance.

**Attendance:**

Attendance for all seminars, lectures, mentoring sessions, and masterclasses is mandatory.

**Contact Hours/Academic Credit:**

The SUISS credit scheme is based on a combination of contact teaching hours, independent study and formal assessment. SUISS students gain credit, therefore, by attending lectures, masterclasses, mentoring sessions and seminars, pursuing their studies in their own time, and completing written assessments. These courses are accredited through the University of Edinburgh Credit Awarding Body (SCQF) and can be transferred into the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and to North American universities. This credit can be sought at two levels:

- SCQF8 (equivalent to junior honours [1-3 years of study])
- SCQF10 (equivalent to senior honours [4 or more years of study])

This two-tier system allows SUISS students to pursue the same credit as any other student but at a level appropriate to the stage of their studies at their home institution.

Credit for the **4-week course** is formalised as follows:

Contact Teaching Hours: **60**

Expected Independent Study Hours: **140**

Total Hours: **200**

SCOTCAT Credit Weighting: **20** points  
(1 SCOTCAT point = 10 hour workload)

**Assessment:**

The Creative Writing course is assessed according to a portfolio of work developed over the course of the school: **one long text, three coursework exercises**, and on the SCQF10 level, a **self-reflexive critique** of the work process.

**SCQF8 (1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> year undergraduates)**

3 workshop exercises – 30%

Final piece: 3,000 words of drama or prose, **or** 50 lines of poetry – 70%

The portfolio will be assessed in terms of the breadth, range and variety which the four submitted pieces demonstrate. The portfolio of work arising from the workshops will be assessed in terms of how successful the three pieces are in responding to the relevant stylistic exercises. Grades of A will be given for evidence of ingenuity or innovation, and other grades are relative to the author's success in completing the tasks.

Assessment will be based entirely on the success or otherwise of the piece in terms of its stylistic qualities. Content is only to be taken into consideration where the efficacy of its interaction with formal properties is concerned. Markers will be less concerned with what is said (how right, relevant, intelligent, sensitive,

entertaining etc. it might be judged to be), than how effectively it is said. This avoids attempting to ‘teach the unteachable’ and being arbiters of taste, in favour of the assessment of stylistic craft. (Obviously this in no way precludes students discussing the thematic content of their work with tutors in one-to-one meetings.)

### **SCQF10 (4<sup>th</sup> year undergraduate and above)**

3 workshop exercises – 30%

1,000 word self-reflexive critique – 10%

Final piece: 5,000 words of drama or prose **or** 80 lines of poetry – 60%

All of the criteria of SCQF8 apply in terms of the student’s portfolio. In addition, a clear demonstration of innovation, ingenuity and command of the stylistic forms employed is required. The critique will be graded on the efficacy of the comments made and analytical skills demonstrated.

The criterion for SCQF10 will incorporate a more strenuous judgement of the work against the criteria from SCQF8. This process will obviously also involve some assessment of the inherent quality of the content. In the interests of objectivity, however, judgement will be based purely on the marker’s knowledge of stylistic and theoretical standards in contemporary literature and have nothing to do with controversial notions like art, enjoyment, inspiration and genius.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

**SCQF8 (1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> year undergraduates).** The course will enable students to:

- explore and develop creative processes through writing
- define/determine individual goals as a writer
- become familiar with the conventions of craft (specific to genre) and develop an understanding of varied techniques of fiction, drama, non-fiction & poetry
- learn how to develop critical self-assessment, to critique and be critiqued constructively
- develop revising skills, not only of language but also of ideas
- prepare a portfolio of original texts (see assessment for word count) and learn to prepare it for submission to a publisher or competition

**SCQF10 (4<sup>th</sup> year undergraduate and above).** The course will enable students to:

- produce stories or poems or literary nonfiction or dramatic pieces that showcase an original voice and engage in an effective and rewarding conversation with the traditions of literature
- identify, conceptualise and define formal elements of craft in their chosen field (poetry or fiction) within the literary tradition, published works and within works by their peers
- remain open to criticism and respond effectively and creatively to feedback on their own creative work

- work from initial conception through multiple drafts to the final version of a creative piece within their chosen field (fiction or poetry)
- transfer editorial skills and creative abilities from one context to another
- analyse creative works within their chosen field (fiction or poetry) with a focus on craft effectiveness, and articulate the strengths and weaknesses in a piece of writing in a constructive manner

"Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try Again. Fail again. Fail better." Samuel Beckett

"The writer is one who, on embarking on a task, does not know what to do." Donald Barthelme

### Course Description

Is your writing 'boom or bust'? Do you ever struggle to get started or complete work? Stuck in a rut and want to stand out? Confused by conventions? This intensive four-week course aims to explore, embrace and endure the symbiotic powers of order and chaos inherent to the creative writing process to risk, improvise, problem-solve and surprise our way into 'failing better'.

Side by side, we will seek out the 'order' of writing – the craft and theory operating in instructive texts – then, we'll release our own creative 'chaos' to test out those rules through experimentation and



discussion. While we'll be inspired by the poetry, prose and drama on the reading list we'll also use a wide range of forms and deforms, art works, practises, questions and new ideas to help stimulate and challenge our writing practise.

### Methodology and Aims

This course will make us make it up together. Throughout, the emphasis will be on practice-based learning and 'paragogy' to create a supportive environment for self-directed learning. Together we'll share the discoveries we make close reading, in writing challenges, by risking questions and by sharing feedback. By the end of this course students will not only have gained a new toolbox of critical and creative ideas, but should also have gained the resilience to replenish their practise with a community of writers. Following the ethos of [John Cage and Sister Corita Kent's '10 Rules'](#), most of all it is hoped that students make everything, try everything and find themselves awake to new possibilities.

### Seminar Structure

Seminars intend to follow this general schedule:

- (20 mins) A group discussion of writing theory and process, your thoughts and opinions
- (30 mins) Examination of text(s) in relation to those theories and to explore practical writing devices/techniques
- (45 mins) Writing exercises and sharing results
- (15 min) Break
- (10 min) "My favourite writer and me" presentation (starting week 2)
- (60 mins) Workshop / editing sessions (starting week 2)

## Reading List and Inspirations

While the preparatory reading list will follow the lecture schedule below we'll also supplement it with a wide range of other texts that will be provided as handouts and uploaded to Dropbox as we go:

- Selected Imagist poetry\*
- Katherine Mansfield, *Selected Stories* ('The Garden Party', 'Miss Brill', 'Marriage à la Mode', 'Bliss', 'How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped')
- T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*
- Jean Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*
- Lewis Grassie Gibbon, *Sunset Song*
- John McGrath, *The Cheviot, the Stag, and the Black, Black Oil* and Gregory Burke, *Black Watch*
- Edwin Morgan and Liz Lochhead, selected poems\*
- A.L. Kennedy and Janice Galloway, selected short stories\*

We'll also take inspiration from the many trips, readings, events and masterclasses scheduled:

### Week 1

Arthur's Seat Poetic Expedition  
Visit to Mansfield Traquair  
Author reading  
Author Masterclass  
Film Poetry screening and competition

### Week 2

Scottish Poetry Library Visit  
Little Sparta Visit  
Author Masterclass  
Author reading  
Student-led symposium

### Week 3

Publishing Lecture and Q&A session  
Reception at the Playfair Library  
Author reading  
Author Masterclass

### Week 4

Author Masterclass  
SUISS Creative Writing Open Mic Night  
Jupiter Artland Visit  
Author Reading  
Ceilidh and Burns Night

Otherwise, Edinburgh is an exceptionally vibrant city that boasts a flotilla of exhibitions, galleries, literary events, museums, buildings, libraries, bars, theatres and natural features for you to gain inspiration from. Getting out of the city is highly recommended. Scotland's unique highlands and islands are a must-see (even in the rain). Tutors are happy to share ideas in class!

You are also a direct source of inspiration:

- **From Week 2 onwards each student will be asked to give the group a 10 minute presentation on the techniques or style of their favourite author.**
- We'll set up a 'Inspiration Library' on Dropbox to add links to books, films, websites, interviews, artwork and other resources that keeps us working, from grammar tips to inspiring writer interviews (to get involved pass me your email address).
- Each student is encouraged to **keep a journal** for the duration of the course to reflect on their writing process, improve the verbalisation of their thoughts (free-writing 'pages' is a daily recommended practise) or just to use as a private space to collect quotes and ideas.

## Sample Seminar Schedule 2017

All additional material that is not on the reading list will be distributed in class and/or made available online.

Topic	Text(s)	Consider
Intro 1: What we need to start writing?	Norman MacCaig 'After Four Sterile Months' Gregory Pardlo Lydia Davis 'Fear' Corrita Kent and John Cage Rules George Perec <i>The Infraordinary</i>  <b>Preparatory / Further reading:</b> Elements of Fiction handout; Training the Eye – Julia Bell; Real Imagining – Glaister; Sources of Fiction – Novakovich; Exploring home – David Almond	What makes us write or be unable to write? What are our writing habits? How do we find inspiration <i>ex nihilo</i> ('creation out of nothing')? How do we let ourselves 'fail better'? Liberating limits, ruling rules and breaking & entering the page
Intro 2: What we need to revise?	Edwin Morgan 'To A Pen', Philip Levine, 'The Simple Truth' Margaret Tait, 'Now' Giving Feedback handout Principles of Revision: underwriting and overwriting Katherine Mansfield, 'Pearl Button' (online) Object writing exercise  <b>Further Reading:</b> The Raptor – AL Kennedy; Reading a Poem – 20 strategies	How we read actively and creatively? How can we critique constructively? What is the value of creative critiquing? How can we edit effectively?
Fiction 1: Short Shorts and Flash Fiction, narrative structures and unstructures	Short fiction handout: James Kelman 'Acid', David Eagleman 'Sum' Virginia Woolf 'Blue and Green', James Robertson <i>365</i> and others Katherine Mansfield 'The Garden Party'  <b>Further reading:</b> Italo Calvino 'On Lightness'	'The Momentousness of the Moment' (Ali Smith): the concision strategies of short fiction & narrative structure  WORKSHOP
Poetry 1: Creative Close reading, Formal Verse and liberating limits	Tom Leonard and Marianne Moore (Poetry Vs Prose) Poetry Guessing Game A-Z Poems Surrealist Games Oulipo constraints  <b>Further reading:</b> Poetry Terms handout; *Metre Matters handout; Sonnet Worksheet; Surrealist Games; Oulipo worksheet	Poetry and Poetics: Creative Close reading  Small wonders: Poetry and Precision in Formal Verse  Release the beast: Oulipo and Surrealist methods  WORKSHOP

<p>Fiction 2: Openings, Settings and Description</p>	<p>Katherine Mansfield 'Bliss' Isherwood, <i>Goodbye to Berlin</i> Janice Galloway 'Jellyfish' Postcard prose</p> <p><b>Further reading:</b> Description – Novakovich; Setting- Novakovich; Setting Paul Mgrs</p>	<p>'Welcome to my World' POV, Observation, Settings and World Building 'Caress the details' openings, foreshadowing and symbolism</p> <p>WORKSHOP</p>
<p>Fiction 4: Character, voice and dialogue</p>	<p>Martin Amis <i>God's Dice</i> Muriel Spark <i>The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie</i> Isherwood, <i>Goodbye to Berlin</i> David Foster Wallace, 'Yet Another Example of the Porousness of Certain Borders (VI)'</p> <p><b>Further Reading:</b> Josip Novokavich – POV and Character; H��l��ne Cixous 'The Character of Character'</p>	<p>The kick of life: Contradictory Characters &amp; dynamic dialogue</p> <p>WORKSHOP</p>
<p>Poetry 2: Vers Libre, Imagism and Personism</p>	<p>T.S. Eliot 'The Waste Land' Imagism Manifesto and Poems Wallace Carlos Williams, Frank O'Hara, 'Having a Coke with you' <i>Personism</i>, Denise Riley, 'A Misremembered Lyric'</p> <p><b>Further Reading:</b> Lyn Hejinian 'The Rejection of Closure'</p>	<p>To Whom It May Concern: The Lyrical I and you</p> <p>WORKSHOP</p>
<p>Creative Non- Fiction: The Essay &amp; 'I'</p>	<p>Kathleen Jamie 'Light' Rebecca Solnit 'Open Door' Kei Miller 'Glasgow' Lydia Davis 'This Condition' Essay Forms handout: memoir, travel and meditative essay</p> <p><b>Further Reading:</b> Solnit 'Blue', 'Nearby Faraway' Anne Boyer 'How to move from Art to Poetry' Creative Art Writing</p>	<p>The Questioning 'I' and eye of essay and creative non-fiction</p> <p>The Essay and Hybridity</p> <p>WORKSHOP</p>
<p>Fiction 5: Telling tales</p>	<p>David Greig <i>The Strange Undoing of Prudencia Hart</i> Angela Carter Various Border ballads Borges 'Borges and I'</p> <p><b>Further Reading:</b> James Hogg, <i>Confessions of a Justified Sinner</i></p>	<p>Fairy tales, Ballads and folk tales: Superstition and community, questioning or confirming cultural norms.</p> <p>Post-structuralist fairy tales for the meta age</p> <p>WORKSHOP</p>
<p>Poetry 3: ZINE WORKSHOP</p>	<p>Dada &amp; Cut ups Concrete and Sound Poetry</p> <p><b>Further Reading:</b> Lydia Davis 'This Condition'</p>	<p>Hybridity: Poetry as Art, Essay, Story and Song</p> <p>WORKSHOP</p>

(bring glue, scissors and newspapers, magazines, flyers to cut up)	Anne Boyer 'How to move from Art to Poetry'	
Creative Non-Fiction 2: An Essay called 'You'	You Girl – Jamaica Kincaid Share one text you want to take back with you to home  <b>Further Reading:</b> Reviewing the inspiration library	WORKSHOP  Evaluations, reflections and Goodbye!

### Feedback

- Weekly 30 min 1:1 office hours - verbal review with comments sent afterwards.
  - Up to 45 lines of poetry, 1,500 words of prose or a question you want to discuss should be submitted in advance of each 1:1.
- Weekly Workshop – from week 2 onwards, a verbal review by the group with comments sent on afterwards
  - Up to 30 lines of poetry or 2,000 words should be submitted weekly.

### Workshop Guidance

If you are being reviewed at workshop:

- Please respect the deadlines above to give everyone a chance to read your work.
- When submitting MS Word Doc/Docx files, filenames should start with your name (e.g. Katy\_workshop\_week4.doc).
- Each submission will be discussed for approximately 20 minutes.
- Try to stay quiet and listen, take notes and try not to be offended.
- **Come prepared to ask one question and let the group discuss it for a further 10 mins.**
- Remember, we are all sharing work at an early stage in need of improvement. It should be the work not you that is being discussed.
- It is always your choice how much feedback you choose to take on board or not. Often *where* the comment occurs is just as important as what it says.

If you are reviewing others at workshop....

- **Read each week's submissions, make notes and print off in advance / bring device to read.**
- **Come with one strength / one question to ask.**
- Be specific in your remarks, point to the exact words you are referring to.
- Try to be honest but still thoughtful, constructive and encouraging. Engage with the text on its own terms even if it isn't the genre or style you like.
- Try not to give solutions or make judgements, but ask questions instead. Let the author decide the fix for themselves.
- Good critique improves your own editorial skills. Give comments in a way that you would find helpful too. Find solidarity with the challenge the author has set themselves.

We will spend some time in the introductory sessions looking at how to give and take constructive feedback. Here are some sample prompts:

- Overall impression – did you enjoy it? What did you particularly think worked? Which bits would you like more of or less of?
- Concept – what ideas or opinions does the writing discuss? How effectively does it discuss them?
- Language – is the language used suitable for the audience? How does the language feed in to the ideas? Is the language engaging?
- Structure – does the form add anything to the content? Are line/stanza breaks or paragraphs well executed? How could changes to structure affect meaning?
- Technicalities – are there any punctuation marks you'd change? Spelling or grammar errors? Factual errors? Is it clear or abstract? Do these things matter?

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact the Directors, Dr Hannah Tweed and Dr Calum Rodger, at [suisssdir@ed.ac.uk](mailto:suisssdir@ed.ac.uk).