Kingston

University

London

**Creative Writing**

**Summer School 2025**

**Module Guide**

**Course Code: SS1830**

**SUMMER 2025**

**Creative Writing**

**Course Code SS1830**

**Module tutor: Matt Cunningham**

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**MODULE AIMS**

1. To facilitate students in the practice of creative writing through a series of writing exercises and to introduce them to a set of creative heuristics or ‘tools’: skills and techniques appropriate to this practice.
2. To help students develop their critical reading of ‘creative’ texts such as short stories, plays and poems, and apply their analytical skills in order to improve the quality of their own writing.
3. To establish a communicative and supportive workshop environment in which students will share their work in progress, giving and receiving constructive criticism.
4. To begin to familiarise students with the contemporary practice of writing in London through visiting a selection of venues and sites.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

**On completion of the course students should:**

1. have read and discussed a selection of work by at least 5 different published writers and responded to this selection in workshop discussion and in writing in a reader-diary of 1000 words minimum, in which there is evidence of a developing critical methodology, integrating their various reading/writing experiences over the summer into their own writing projects;
2. be familiar with a variety of aspects of writer's craft and demonstrate this familiarity in the giving of careful feedback to peers during workshop, in the reader-diary, and in their own writing;
3. have created a portfolio of at least 1600 words of their own creative writing in addition to an author's note of at least 500 words, tracing the course of their own progress and changing perspectives during the month

**TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES**

The course is delivered through a multidisciplinary programme consisting of:

1. Formal lectures/workshop sessions - sometimes integrated with field activities;
2. Excursions/tours led by members of the Kingston Faculty or contracted professionals
3. independent writing sessions.

**TEACHING SESSIONS**

We will approach the learning, culture and practice of Creative Writing in London by engaging in a series of guided writing exercises, through attendance at performances and field trips, and through group discussions of assigned reading and students’ own writing. We will explore the practice of writing in London as it is played out during the current season through a series of trips to places vibrant with writers in the past and in the present.

Each session, students will present drafts of their work to the group workshop for discussion and revision advice. In each workshop students will engage in writing exercises in order to produce the raw material or beginning of a piece. This material will be shaped into a piece of writing (poem, short play or scene(s) from a longer piece of drama, short story or chapter of a longer piece of prose fiction), in the students' own time. Drafts of these pieces of work will be shared and discussed with the group in subsequent sessions, until a second, third or further draft is reached. Each workshop will involve: reading and discussing the assigned texts by poets and prose writers with reference to aspects of craft; engaging in a creative writing exercise; sharing work with the group for feedback.

Students will begin by looking at various ways of gathering ideas, images, characters, memories and words as creative writing material. As the course progresses the emphasis will shift as these pieces are read and brainstormed in class, and shaped and finished with feedback.

**Please bring writing implements with you to every session. These should include a ‘writing notebook’—a notebook of whatever kind you like best.**

**Date Time Place Lecture Lecturer**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Friday  4 July | 1400-1600 | Knights Park, Tower Block (KPTK) | Introduction to the module  Getting Started | Matt Cunningham |
| Tues  8 July | 0930  1230 | KPTK  Surbiton  Station | Writing Drama: The Elements of Scenes  **Trip: Tate to Tate** | Matt Cunningham |
| Thurs  10 July | 1000 | KPTK | New London  **Evening performance** | Matt Cunningham |
| Tues  15 July | 10 – 12  4pm - |  | Writing Drama: Scenes Workshop  **Matinee Performance** | Matt Cunningham |
| Thurs 17 July | 0930 | KPTK | Writing Poetry: Free and Formal Approaches | Matt Cunningham |
| Tues  22 July | 1000  7.30pm | KPTK | Writing Fiction: Flash Fiction, Prose Poems, and Making Every Word Count  **Evening performance** | Matt Cunningham |
| Thurs 24 July | 10am-12pm  2pm-  4pm | KPTK  Lyric Theatre | Fandoms and Fanfiction  **Matinee performance** | Matt Cunningham |
| Tues  29 July | 1000 | KPTK | Writing Fiction: Fiction Workshop  **Matinee performance** | Matt Cunningham |
| Thurs 31 August | 1000 | KPTK | Writing Workshop (2) | Matt Cunningham |

**The lectures and fieldtrips described are indicative only. The University reserves the right to vary or revise the content at its discretion.**

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**ASSESSMENT**

**Portfolio and presentation: 100%**

This portfolio will include the following three items:

1. **Creative Writing submission**

*One-three* completed fiction pieces (at least one of which will have been begun in the lecture/workshop) totalling 2,500-3,000 words. You may choose among any of the pieces started through guided writing exercises in the workshop or started at home since the start date of the course.

OR

*Four-six* complete poems of 10-60 lines each and the drafts of those poems. You may choose among any of the pieces started through guided writing exercises in the workshop or pieces started at home since the start date of the course.

OR

*One* *or two* completed short play(s) totalling 20-30 pages in a professional-looking format (to be discussed with your tutor).

OR

An equivalent combination of prose/drama/poetry (subject to prior discussion with the tutor).

1. **Critical Analysis submission**

Four critical analyses of assigned texts/performances of no more than 300 words each. You may choose among any of the assigned reading from the reader or handouts in class, or from our group field trips.

1. **Author’s Note (500-1,000 words)**

A commentary on your creative writing over the course of the month, which should provide a personal, in depth, analytical account of the reading and writing experience and illustrate that you have engaged in the processes of self-directed learning by mapping this development over the summer session. You may draw on ideas generated in the reader diary.

**ATTENDANCE**

You are expected to attend all lecture sessions and group trips. Up to a maximum of 20% will be deducted from the final overall grade for non-excused absences from lectures and fieldtrips. This will be at the rate of 3% for each **unexcused** absence.

**READING LIST**

Required Reading

You should be reading every day. If you aren’t doing so already, please make a commitment to do so from the beginning of June through to the end of our sessions (and, I hope, beyond). Read anything that has been published. Work out for yourself what you like—and why you like it. Aim to expand the range of what you read.

Completely Non-Required Reading

If you’re stuck for inspiration, here are some books I’ve enjoyed recently:

*London Stories*, Jerry White (ed.): a selection of fiction and non-fiction centred on London, ranging from the 17th century to the present. Might get you in the mood for the wonderful city you’re about to visit.

*Confabulations* by John Berger. Beautiful thinking, beautiful writing—on art, language, life.

*The Dog’s Last Walk* by Howard Jacobson. Funny, provocative essays by a Man Booker Prize winner.

*Winter* by Ali Smith. Brilliant Scottish writer. A favourite of mine.

*Swing Time* by Zadie Smith, my other favourite Smith.

*Paul Bright’s Confessions of a Justified Sinner* by Pamela Carter and Untitled Projects. A play that isn’t a play about a playwright who wasn’t a playwright based on a true story that didn’t happen, with pictures.

*The KLF: Chaos, Magic and the Band Who Burned a Million Pounds* by John Higgs. Even if you’ve never heard of the short-lived, early-nineties Scottish rave band and art terrorists The KLF, this is an extraordinary—and very entertaining—read.

*God’s Gift to Women* by Don Paterson. Last Scot on the list—a brilliant, by turns difficult and easy as a spoon full of honey writer. Be warned: some swearing, some Scots dialect.

*Black Hole* by Charles Burns. Very weird, very moreish graphic novel. Adult content, extraordinary art and imagery.

*Sapiens* by Yuval Noah Harari. ‘A brief history of human kind.’ The book I’m reading just now—it’s mind-blowing.

But like I say, read whatever you like, just so long as you read.

Recommended Reading

And if you’d like some of that reading to get you started on your thinking for our course, you might look at …

*The Creative Writing Coursebook* edited by Julia Bell and Paul Magrs

*Writing Short Stories* by Courttia Newland and Tania Hershman

*Three Uses of the Knife* by David Mamet

*Into the Woods* by John Yorke

*Bird by Bird* by Anne Lamott

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