

Certificate in Fiction Writing

Awarded by West Dean. 1 year, part-time course

Tutors
Beth Miller and Laura Wilkinson



Programme Specification

The Certificate in Fiction Writing course is delivered in three weekend course units spread across the year, self-directed study and a final submission of 5,000 words of fiction.

This course seeks to bring together the key elements of writing fiction into one continuing programme and to support the development of skills in characterisation, voice, plot and structure, and points of craft.

Each weekend unit will be based in the inspirational environment of West Dean College's historic rooms. Each morning will be devoted to informal lectures, group discussions of key texts and themes, and writing exercises. In the afternoons, you will have time to work on your own writing, as well as the opportunity to take up an individual tutorial. Writers can submit 500 words in advance, for feedback during the tutorial. The course is aimed at writers who wish to commit to an extended programme of study without having to make a significant time commitment.

The course also offers a potential pathway to those interested in applying for the College's Higher Education programmes in Writing and Publishing.

Aims

An introduction

To introduce you to the key skills and knowledge that underpin fiction writing and the development of the novel. These will include the organisational skills required for plotting, character development and narrative technique. It will also introduce you to constructive and focused critical reflection of your work and support the development of rewriting/drafting skills.

Skills Development

The course will offer a stimulating and varied learning environment to enable writers to develop their skills around characterisation, point of view and narrative drive. Writing exercises, along with discussion and textual analysis, will be the key modes of learning.

The course will facilitate constructive critical thinking/reflection and cover redrafting, narrative drive and the development of voice.

Essay/Final Writing

On completion of the course, you will submit the first 5,000 words of a piece you have developed on the programme.



Submission date for 5,000 words: 17 July 2026 (two months following the final unit).

Feedback from the programme tutors: the following month by 17 August 2026.

Course tutors

Laura Wilkinson has published seven novels for adults (two under a pseudonym). They are *That Night In New York*, *Crossing the Line*, *Skin Deep*, *Redemption Song* and *The Family Line*. *Crossing the Line* was a Welsh Books Council book of the month and *Skin Deep* was longlisted for the Booker Prize. Her latest, *That Night In New York*, is a love story set in two of the most iconic cities in the world and follows agony aunt and resolute singleton Steph and lonely architect Harry who first meet in a city-wide blackout. Alongside writing, she tutors on the Creative Writing MA at West Dean, for the CWP in Brighton and works as an editor, mentor and book coach. She has a passion for fashion, ginger hair and anything that glitters.

Beth Miller is the author of six novels, including the bestselling *The Missing Letters of Mrs Bright* (2020). Her most recent novel, *The Woman Who Came Back to Life* (2022), will be published in seven languages. Her seventh novel will be coming out in August 2025. She has also published two non-fiction books. She teaches creative writing at various places, including for Arvon and for West Dean College on the Creative Writing MA and MFA. She works as a writing mentor and book coach for writers at all stages, particularly at the submission stage. She has a PhD in Psychology.

Programme overview

This course is designed for writers who want an extended and cohesive course on fiction writing, delivered by successful authors and teachers. The course delivery mirrors that of the MA programme in Creative Writing and Publishing offered at the College. It offers a deeper and broader raft of teaching, designed to enable you to take on a piece of longer fiction. At the end of the third unit, you will be asked to submit the first 5,000 words of a work in progress for feedback from the tutors.

Unit 1: Character and Point of View

Tutor: Laura Wilkinson | 24-26 October 2025

Unit 1 will include:

- Ideas generation, testing ideas and thinking like a writer (Friday evening)
- Building character
- Point of view

Unit 2: Plot and Place

Tutor: Beth Miller | 6-8 February 2026

Unit 2 will include:

- Structure and plot
- Sense of place (and time)



- Narrative drive

Unit 3: Writing Your Book

Tutors: Beth Miller and Laura Wilkinson | 15-17 May 2026

Unit 3 will include:

- Show, don't tell
- Dialogue
- A writing workshop in which you will get feedback on your work from your colleagues and tutor

Completion

On successful completion, you will receive a Certificate of Completion and be offered an interview for the MA in Creative Writing and Publishing, should you want to continue your studies and project. The MA is set up to facilitate the production of a completed novel.

Entry requirements

- A firm commitment to attending all three units
- Some experience of writing
- An interest in and awareness of the fiction writing genre

For standard Terms and Conditions, please refer to our online Short Course brochure. Specific Terms and Conditions include a commitment to attend all three weekend course dates listed, as no alternative course date can be offered for any that you are unable to attend. Therefore, no refund can be made for the course fee for any weekend you are unable to attend.

Please bring

Your usual writing equipment, notebook and pen and/or laptop

Course fees

The course fees are payable in advance of study.

Course fee: £1,102 (non-residential, payable in one instalment covering all three units - payable by 12 September 2025 (or on booking if after this date).

Accommodation is available at an extra cost at our Sussex campus. Find out more about our accommodation options and costs on our website.