

Certificate in Life Writing

Programme Specification and Unit Descriptors

Awarded by West Dean
1 years, part-time



Programme Specification

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

The course aims to draw together a clearer understanding of the skills, knowledge and qualities that lend themselves to good life writing and is underpinned by a clear understanding of some of the forms and craft that enable the writer to produce high standard work.

Each weekend unit will be based in the inspirational environment of West Dean College's historic rooms. It is aimed at writers who wish to commit to an extended programme of study without having to make a significant time commitment and who will benefit from a cohesive course that offers focus on the key elements of successful life writing over the course of an academic year.

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

Aims

- Introduction
 - To introduce you to the key areas of Life Writing, including memoir, biography and autobiography, and to explore the similarities and differences. The course will also offer a brief overview of the history of life writing: from Plutarch and Vasari to Johnson, Woolf, Holroyd and Hermione Lee to present day.
 - It will encourage you to consider various aspects of being a life writer, including:
 - What right do I have to be a life writer? Whose life am I telling? Who 'owns' the story? Issues around invading others' lives. Sensitivities and how to deal with them.
 - Introduce the skills of research and shaping your story.
 - Introduce you to the idea of transformational writing; how we change and are changed by what we write and how we write it.
- Skills Development
 - The course will offer a stimulating and varied learning environment to enable writers to develop their skills around voice, style, tone, pacing and prose. Writing exercises will be used, along with discussion, textual analysis and a subject overview.
 - It will facilitate constructive critical thinking/reflection, editing and rewriting skills, contextual and critical studies.



Unit Descriptors

This course is designed for writers who want a thorough and cohesive course on Life Writing. It offers a deeper and broader raft of teaching, designed to enable you to take on a piece of longer writing. The focus is primarily on the development of the craft of writing in the context of Life Writing. At the end of the third unit, you will be expected to submit the first 5,000 words of a work in progress for feedback from the tutors.

Unit 1: What Is Life Writing?

- An introduction to Life Writing (history and possibility)
- Form, style and voice
- Whose life am I writing? Who 'owns' the story? Issues around invading others' lives. Sensitivities and how to deal with them
- Research
- Writing exercises

Unit 2: Writing and Transformation

- Working with memory, ideas of 'truth' in writing
- Using writing to 'find out' our story: sketching, journaling, morning pages
- How are we changed by what we write?
- Exploring what stories we want to tell
- Writing exercises

Unit 3: Your Story

- Where does your project sit in the market? Who is this for, and who is it trying to reach?
- Shaping your story: the fundamentals of good storytelling
- How to find an agent and a publisher
- Editing: how to make your prose sing
- Writing exercises

Final writing

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

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 wish to continue your studies and project. The MA is set up to facilitate the production of a completed novel but is exploring expanding its remit to facilitate Life Writing.

Please see the [website](#) for details on entry requirements, fees and how to apply.