

Tallinn Summer School Creative Writing Course 2025

The programme may be subject to minor changes.

Creative Writing in English 14-18 July 2025

TITLE: Craft and Technique: Shaping Your Non-Fiction

TUTOR: Ian Thomson

DAILY SCHEDULE

09.00–10.30 – then break for tea/coffee

10.45–12.15 – then break for lunch

13.00–13.45*

* Day 5 (Friday) ends at 14.00

WORKSHOP STRUCTURE

- 1 Each day will begin with close reading of an extract. We look at how it's put together and crafted, so that you can use these "techniques" for your own writing practice. The extracts on the course are required reading.
- 2 After that I will present you with a guided writing exercise to be done in class, so that you can put into practice what we have discussed. You will have the opportunity to experiment and try new things.
- 3 There will be an opportunity for you to read out your work in the class and to receive and give feedback on each other's work. It is *essential* that you all provide feedback on each other's work. Seminars work best in a collegiate atmosphere where everyone is engaged.

Bring notebooks, pens, paper, your laptops if you like, coloured pens.

Monday 14 July: Day One – MEMOIR/TESTIMONY

"Every person has a story worth sharing, worth remembering" – Primo Levi

- Bearing witness to the human condition
- Writing of the human spirit
- Tenor and style in first-person account
- Undemonstrative prose. When (and when not) to use it.

Tuesday 15 July: Day Two – TRAVEL WRITING

"I wrote about the night bird cries, the sea sounds and the lonely barking, and I liked what I wrote in flashes; but something was wrong with it. There is always something wrong with writing. So I tore the paper up..." – Denton Welch

- Travel adventure, landscape writing
- From observation of the everyday to Greater Truths?
- Hybrid memoir and travelogue
- The importance of re-drafting/ re-writing.

Wednesday 16 July: Day Three – BIOGRAPHY

“I think of my work as catching souls. It is the best word I know for the unique and essential part of ourselves, our self-conscious and transcendent core” – Ann Wroe

- What makes a human life (memorable)?
- Capturing the essence of a person
- Bringing attentiveness to observation – details as a key to character
- Using language (similes, metaphors) to evoke individuality
- Note-keeping and composition process

Thursday 17 July: Day Four – AUTOBIOGRAPHY

“At a quarter to eleven on August 12, 2022, on a sunny Friday morning in upstate New York, I was attacked and almost killed by a young man with a knife...” – Salman Rushdie

- Writing defining dramatic moments and events in your life
- Telling detail / gripping detail.
- The recovery memoir – literary reportage.

Friday 18 July: Day Five – PRESENTATIONS and LAST THINGS

On this last day you’ll each be expected to introduce and present a piece of your own creative non-fiction to the class. The day will look something like this:

09.00–10.45 Presentations I*

11.00–12.45 Presentations II*

13.00–14.00 Rounding Up and Setting Off

*Half of the course participants in each session.