

Tallinn Summer School Creative Writing Course 2026

The programme may be subject to minor changes

Creative Writing in English 13th-18th July 2026

Title: The Architecture of Surprise: Writing Poems, Prose Poems and (Lyric) Essays

Tutor: Miriam Gamble

Daily Schedule

- 9.00-10.30 – Workshop
- Coffee Break
- 10.45-12.15 – Seminar Session 1
- Lunch Break
- 1.00-1.45 – Seminar Session 2

General Structure

While things may vary slightly on a daily basis, the general pattern of the course will be as follows: In the 9.00-10.30am session, we'll workshop creative work produced in response to the previous day's take-away assignment, while, in the seminar sessions, we'll blend discussion of creative examples and discursive pieces with in-class exercises; these latter will often involve groupwork / co-creation, and should be thought of as a space for play and experiment. While it may not be possible to workshop everybody's piece for every assignment, workshop time will be shared fairly between all participants.

There will be a manageable amount of set reading to undertake ahead of class on each day's topic; completing the reading in advance is a mandatory component of the course, as is engaging with the take-away assignments. You should also be prepared to share your writing with the tutor and other participants in the class, and to offer constructive responses to the creative work of others. We'll talk through the principles of constructive feedback on the first day of the course.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Monday 13th July: Day 1

Beginnings, Endings & Arcs: Structuring the Free Verse Poem

- The poem, and 'what really happened'
- Identifying 'throat-clearing'; finding the right start point
- The importance of endings, and how (not) to get them wrong
- Tangents, diversions, water-treading: mapping the road from A to B; identifying and eliminating wadding
- Line and stanza

Tuesday 14th July: Day 2

Perspective in Poetry

- The dominance of the lyric I, and other options: point of view; the frame through which the poem's view is filtered
- Angles of vision; levels of zoom
- Tone and address: varieties of second person
- Other characters in the room: Mary and Elizabeth Bennet

Wednesday 15th July: Day 3

A Pig in a Muddy Puddle: Prose Poetry

- Units of composition: the sentence and the verse paragraph
- If it doesn't have lines, is it a poem? Key features of lyric writing beyond the line
- The workings of the prose poem: the linear and the horizontal; progression and / versus immersion
- Themes, subjects and scenarios: the kinds of places prose poems like to go for a dip

Thursday 16th July: Day 4

Lyric Essay 1: Who? Constructing a Voice

- Turning yourself into a character
- Tone; levels of intimacy / distance
- Perspective (point of view): the options
- Ethical responsibilities: 'creative' non-fiction and the 'truth'; writing real life vs using real life as the basis for fictional characters and situations

Friday 17th July: Day 5

Lyric Essay 2: How? Structuring a Lyric Essay

- Creative non-fiction and the tools of fiction: e.g. dramatizing and narrating (the role of scene); managing and signalling temporal and narrative movement
- Telling about (autobiographical) and looking at (topical / thematic)
- Telling the story straight: the pros and cons of linearity
- Discovering the story: the textures of the episodic: nodes, juxtaposition, switchbacks and synaptic leaps
- Conducting and incorporating research when, as a poetry person, you're perhaps not used to doing any

Saturday 18th July: Day 6

Wrap-up and Presentations

- Workshop on the previous day's assignment: structuring the lyric essay
- Presentations of work produced during the course of the week: an opportunity to introduce and present your own work to the class. Timetabling depends on the number of participants.