Comprehensive Creative Writing Course Synopsis

Module 1 – Introduction
How to approach this course – how to make the most of your tutor – how to study. The basic equipment required – useful software for writers.

Module 2 – Making a Writer Out Of You
Where to write – when to write – time management: travel time, planning your writing sessions, identify your weaknesses, can you buy time?, use your lunch break – undertake a time audit. Thinking and observing like a writer: stream of consciousness, using all five senses, having a questioning mind, reading widely. Finding ideas – overcoming writer’s block: go for a walk, be a multi-project writer, don’t finish the sen..., do something completely different, meet up with other writers. Being organised and keeping records: submission records, financial records, bank accounts. The personal qualities you need: observation, a questioning mind, self-discipline, motivation, perseverance, determination, patience, organisational skills, resilience, confidence – coping with rejection: having lots of writing projects on the go, putting it into perspective, rejection is not failure, the many reasons for rejection.

Module 3 – Readers’ Letters and Fillers

Module 4 – Generating Ideas for Articles
Where to find ideas: hobbies, employment, holidays and travel, pets and animals, personal experience – other idea generators: overheard conversations, anniversaries, other magazine articles, local/national news, chatting to people/interviews. Identifying multiple ideas from one idea: twist the idea to fit the readership, example. Undertaking research – research sources: libraries, public record offices, press offices/PR agencies, personal contacts, museums – researching on the Internet.

Module 5 – Market Analysis
Looking for freelance opportunities: contact details, identifying the right editor to contact – publication guidelines – analysing a market’s readership: advertisements, articles, letter pages, problem pages, other useful clues – analysing a market’s articles and styles: word count, style, person, other stylistic issues – the consecutive issue exercise – analysing a market’s competition – market analysis checklist.

Module 6 – How to Present Your Typescript
Paragraphing styles: block-v-indented paragraphing – layout of your printed typescript: margins, text alignment, fonts, double spacing, sentence spacing – headers and footers – cover sheets: contact details, title, word count, byline, rights information, example – pseudonyms – word counts – photographs – layout of your emailed typescript: as an attachment, pasted into the body of the email, subject headers. Covering letters and emails: example, saes, solicited-v-unsolicited submissions.
Module 7 – Structuring Your Article for Different Markets

Article or feature? – topicality – production schedules.

Section 1: Structuring your Article – outlining an article, example – titles – opening paragraphs: the startling fact, dialogue, the topical hook, action, scene setting – the main body of the text – identifying common article structures: numbers, a-z, time and chronology, the accumulator, questions and answers, quotations and proverbs – the closing paragraph: the summary, the question, the quote, go back to the start – quotes – fact files, box outs, sidebars and further information panels – revision – example article.


Module 8 – Essential Legal and Business Aspects

Section 1: The Legal Aspects of Writing – copyright: retain it!, what it doesn’t cover – plagiarism: quotes, quotes for review, quoting lyrics – trademarks – libel: libel defences: justification, fair comment, privilege – other things to avoid – useful organisations.


Module 9 – Travel Writing


Module 10 – Profit from Your Photography

Module 11 – Writing Reviews
The reviewer’s role and responsibilities – live performances – books – CDs, films, computer games and apps – restaurant and food outlets – motoring – internet review sites – the golden rule.

Module 12 – Journalism
The qualities a journalist must possess – vital equipment – making a break into journalism – submitting your copy – putting the story together: keep it simple, the six vital questions, tell it straight, explain everything don’t waffle – story structure: get the intro right, elaboration, less important information – what to avoid: facts not opinions, always attribute, avoid hype, don’t get out of your depth – follow ups – interviews – tip offs: getting paid.

Module 13 – Writing for the Internet
The difference between web copy and print copy: the journalist’s pyramid, short paras, simple sentences, avoid gimmicks, hyperlink hell – search engine optimisation: keywords, abbreviations, correct spelling, punctuation and grammar, think sub-headings, new information, use clear links. Finding work online – common pitfalls to avoid: payment by clicks, bidding options, free samples, no experience necessary, never pay for work – identifying legitimate opportunities – ezines – blogging: blogging for publicity, setting up a blog, blogging tips – social networking: facebook, twitter, linked in, google plus – networking for information.

Module 14 – The Planning and Preparation of Non-fiction Books
Section 1: The Non-Fiction Book Market – identifying potential book material: using your previously published work, travel and personal experience, biography, employment, hobbies. Finding suitable publishers: obtain a catalogue, check submission guidelines – consider a series: why publishers like a series – creating a proposal – the chapter breakdown and the first chapter – drafting your letter to the publisher: find a named person, be brief but specific, sell yourself – coping with rejection – the contract – considering self-publishing: vanity publishing, the cost, proofreading and copy editing, cover design, distribution and marketing.


Module 15 – Writing the Short Story
Module 16 – Genre Fiction

Module 17 – Preparing to Write a Novel

Module 18 – Story Ideas
Story ideas – is your idea strong enough? – plotting made simple: writing to a formula, drawing up a rough storyline – flashbacks – foreshadowing – subplots – coincidence – the difference between an outline and a synopsis: do you need an outline? – sample story outline (cry wolf) – developing the storyline into scenes – opening chapters: the aim of opening chapters, avoiding information dumps, selling the book to your reader – keeping up the pace in the middle section – satisfying endings.

Module 19 – Characterisation and Dialogue

Module 20 – Setting, Atmosphere and Revision

Module 21 – Selling Your Novel
Which publishing route is right for you? – traditional publishing: pros and cons – self-publishing – pros and cons – the traditional path – the six steps of the submission process: making sure your work is ready to submit, finding an agent or publisher, writing a synopsis, writing a query, preparing for rejection, starting your next novel – market research – agents: what does an agent do?, finding the right agent, approaching an agent, before you sign – publishers: approaching them, submitting your work, listen to your inner voice! – creating an attention-grabbing synopsis: layout, formatting – resubmitting after rejection – what happens when a publisher says yes? – large publishing houses and independent publishers.
Module 22 – Self-Publishing

Module 23 – Marketing

Module 24 – Promoting Yourself and Your Work Online
Blogging – establishing a platform – discovering your voice – marketing and networking – the mechanics – getting search engine listed – making your posts count – types of posts – what do your readers want from you? – spreading the word – networked blogs – the benefits of a website – pros and cons of free and paid website hosting – the importance of a good biography page – additional pages: samples of your work, to promote your interests, to show research conducted – opening chapters with sales links – links to reviews.

Module 25 – Writing Radio Drama

Module 26 – Writing for Television

Module 27 – Writing for the Stage