



Queens' 2025 International Summer School Programme

Programme Topic: STORY (Creative Writing)	Academic Lead: Dr Scott McKendry	Date: 23 June – 3 July
Topic Summary Offers students the opportunity to work on a piece of their own prose writing across the week, introducing them to the skills required to read and write short stories, as well as elements of craft including the writer's voice, character development, point of view, structure and redrafting. Students form part of a supportive and engaged writing group led by experienced members of the Seamus Heaney Centre teaching team. Across the week, students will work on the first draft of a short story that will be workshopped by their peers, so openness to receiving feedback – and providing constructive feedback – and readiness to redraft in light of it will be a key aspect of the learning process. They will leave with the core of a short story, and the tools to complete it. They may complete the whole short story within the four days if they wish. They will present their work at a small reception on Thursday. Venue Seamus Heaney Centre for Poetry, 38–40 University Road, Belfast Staff Scott McKendry Dara McWade Stephen de Búrca Shannon Kutla Kelly		



Learning Outcomes

- Understand the fundamentals of short story writing: the writer's voice, character development, structure, redrafting, and receiving and giving feedback.
- Obtain the ability to generate, execute and conceptualise a unique short story, drawing on the tried processes and techniques of experienced writers.
- Acquire an understanding of the creative process as a medium for developing critical as well as intuitive thinking and problem-solving.
- Appreciate the literary, cultural, and historical contexts within which writers write, including the influence of past and present writers and writing.
- Comprehend the significance of contextualising your own and others' narrative work in literary, social, and cultural terms.
- Gain confidence in engaging critically and creatively with others, whether peers or established practitioners.



WEEK 1

Time	Session/Activity	Academic Lead	Location
Monday 23 June – <i>The Blank Page</i>			
9.30am – 10.30am	Lecture Students are introduced to STORY, the short story form, a history of the short story, the continuing tradition of the Irish short story, and inspirational examples from around the world. We also discuss the importance of the writer's voice, authenticity and its relevance to creative writing. <i>*Seminar Room 1 and 2 are the same room</i>	Dara McWade & Stephen de Búrca	Seamus Heaney Centre, Seminar Room 1*
10.30am – 10.45am	Break		
10.45am – 12.30pm	Seminar: 'Feeling into Words' Participants brainstorm on <i>ways into</i> writing, discussing the relationships between different mediums, artforms and genres, and how/why the world and the written word inspire would-be writers. Analysing a range of example texts, this seminar will emphasise the centrality of reading to writing. Here students will consider their own interests and drives, and their own voice.	Dara McWade – Group A Stephen de Búrca – Group B	Seminar Room 1 (SHC) Seminar Room 3 (SHC)
12.30pm – 1.30pm	Lunch		
1.30pm – 4pm	Writing Session 1.30 – 3pm: Content from the lecture and the seminar is employed in the development of a character for a short story. Students are encouraged to base their character on someone they have seen that day and to <i>consider what is important to them</i> when thinking about their character. They may either remain in the conducive writing environment of the seminar room or another space. Students write 100 words based on their character. 3 – 4pm: Students share their work with the others in their group, then read each other's work and make feedback notes ahead of the morning's workshop.	Dara McWade	Seminar Room 1 (SHC)



Tuesday 24 June – <i>Character, POV</i>			
9.30am – 11am	Workshop Discussion: How do we feedback to other writers? What do we consider? How do we do it? What is the writer's note? Students share their initial character ideas for their story and receive feedback and encouragement from established writers and their peers.	Dara McWade – Group A Stephen de Búrca – Group B	Seminar Room 1 (SHC) Seminar Room 3 (SHC)
11am – 11.15pm	Break		
11.15pm – 12.30pm	Lecture Students are encouraged to consider the character journey, needs and wants of their character, complexity of character and which POV suits them best.	Shannon Kutla Kelly	Seminar Room 1 (SHC)
12.30pm – 1.30pm	Lunch		
1.30pm – 4pm	Writing Session 1.30 – 3pm: Content from the lecture is employed. Students make notes on what their character wants and needs, and consider the world and time they live in. Students may re-write their original 100 words or write an additional 100 words. 3 – 4 pm: Students share the new work – with a writer's note detailing their thought process and questions – with the others in their group, then read each others' work and make feedback notes ahead of the morning's workshop.	Stephen de Búrca	Seminar Room 1 (SHC)



Wednesday 25 June – <i>Structure</i>			
9.30am – 11am	Workshop Students split into their two groups and discuss feedback on their work.	Dara McWade – Group A Stephen de Búrca – Group B	Seminar Room 1 (SHC) Seminar Room 3 (SHC)
11am – 11.15pm	Break		
11.15pm – 12.30pm	Lecture Exploration of how writers go about structuring their story for maximum effect – looking at the nuances between storyline, plot and narrative and structure tools, from simple to complex.	Dara McWade	Seminar Room 1 (SHC)
12.30pm – 1.30pm	Lunch		
1.30pm – 4pm	Writing Session 1.30 – 3pm: Content from the lecture is employed. Students make notes on ways to structure their story, e.g., the obstacles their character might face, or other points of conflict. Students may re-write their original work or develop it further by adding another 100 words. Sharing Session 3 – 4 pm: Students share their new creative work – with a writer's note detailing their thought process and questions – with the others in their group, then read each others' work and make feedback notes ahead of the morning's workshop.	Dara McWade	Seminar Room 1 (SHC)



Thursday 26 June – <i>What is 'Good Writing' Anyway?</i>			
9.30am – 11am	Workshop Students split into their two groups and discuss feedback on their work.	Dara McWade – Group A Stephen de Búrca – Group B	Seminar Room 1 (SHC) Seminar Room 3 (SHC)
11am – 11.15pm	Break		
11.15pm – 12.30pm	Lecture Students are encouraged to think about the elements of 'good writing', including keeping to and breaking with convention, precision, concision, editing and redrafting.	Stephen de Búrca	Seminar Room 1 (SHC)
12.30am – 1.30pm	Lunch		
1.30pm – 4pm	Writing Session Students continue to work on their stories, building in time to redraft, and choose a short piece to read aloud.	Stephen de Búrca	Seminar Room 1 (SHC)
4 – 4.15pm	Break		
4.15pm – 6pm	Reading Practice and Performance Students practise performing their late-draft or finished short stories with classmates at a reception.	All Staff	Wolfson Lecture Theatre (SHC)



WEEK 2

Monday 30 June – <i>Setting and Imagery</i>			
9.30am – 11.30am	Workshop and a Little Debrief Students reflect on their progress so far and share their thoughts about the experience of writing, whether they see themselves becoming serious writers, and what they would like to write in the future.	Dara McWade	Seminar Room 3 (SHC)
11.30am – 11.45am	Walk back to Heaney Centre		
11.45pm – 12.45pm	Lecture-Seminar on Setting and Imagery Students share their work and consider the effectiveness of the imagery they employ, how to invoke a sense of place, and develop a fully formed world for their characters.	Shannon Kutla Kelly	Seminar Room 3 (SHC)
12.45pm – 1.30pm	Lunch		
1.30pm – 4pm	Writing Session 1.30 – 3pm: Content from the seminar is employed. Sharing Session 3 – 6 pm: Students share their new creative work – with a writer's note detailing their thought process and questions – with the others in their group, then read each other's work and make feedback notes ahead of the morning's workshop.	Shannon Kutla Kelly	Seminar Room 3 (SHC)



Tuesday 1 July – <i>Dialogue & Subtext</i>			
9.30am – 11am	Field Trip Students get a chance to discuss the progress of their work with established writers on a short tour of literary landmarks (and potential literary landmarks) around the University area. This will begin with a visit to No Alibis bookstore to meet with established Belfast writers.	Scott McKendry & Shannon Kutla Kelly	Various locations. Meet at No Alibis Bookshop, Botanic Avenue
11am – 11.15pm	Break		
11.15pm – 12.30pm	Lecture-Seminar on Dialogue & Subtext Students encouraged to consider how to devise effective dialogue and deploy subtext.	Dara McWade	Seminar Room 3 (SHC)
12.30pm – 1.30pm	Lunch		
1.30pm – 4pm	Writing Session 1.30 – 3pm: Content from the lecture is employed. Sharing Session 3 – 4 pm: Students share their new creative work – with a writer's note detailing their thought process and questions – with the others in their group, then read each others' work and make feedback notes ahead of the morning's workshop.	Dara McWade	Seminar Room 3 (SHC)



Wednesday 2 July – <i>Metaphor, Allegory, Ideology</i>			
9.30am – 11am	Field Trip on Ekphrasis Students visit the Ulster Museum, where they choose a subject for writing an ekphrastic passage from among exhibits and artefacts. The session will begin with a short talk with background information on ekphrasis and instructions for retrieval.	Stephen de Búrca	Ulster Museum
11am – 11.15pm	Break		
11.15pm – 12.30pm	Lecture on Metaphor, Allegory, Ideology An exploration of the ways in which students' might embed a particular worldview or mode of thinking, how their work might be received by readers, and how taste, convention and meaning changes over time.	Stephen de Búrca	Seminar Room 3 (SHC)
12.30am – 1.30pm	Lunch		
1.30pm – 4pm	Writing Session Students continue to work on their stories, building in time to redraft, and choose a short piece to read aloud.	Stephen de Búrca	Seminar Room 3 (SHC)
4 – 4.15pm	Break		
4.15pm – 6pm	Reading practice Students practise performing their late-draft or finished short stories with classmates.	All Staff	Wolfson Lecture Theatre (SHC)



Thursday 3 July – Words into History

9.15am – 6pm	Field Trip Students take a coach to Co. Derry to visit the Seamus Heaney HomePlace in Bellaghy, and Springhill House in Moneymore. <i>The HomePlace is an arts and literary centre in the town of Bellaghy dedicated to celebrating the life and work of Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney. It features exhibitions, artifacts and events inspired by his poetry and the landscapes that shaped his writing.</i> <i>Springhill House is a preserved seventeenth-century plantation mansion managed by the National Trust. It features gardens, a renown period costume collection and many artefacts tied to the Lenox-Conynghams, an important Ascendency family. It's also known for its resident ghost, Olivia – a fact which only enhances (and surely makes literary) its historical allure.</i> Note: bus departs from Elms Village at <u>9.30am</u>	Dara McWade	Heaney HomePlace and Springhill House
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