

Queen's 2025 International Summer School Programme

Programme Topic: Creative Writing - Story

Academic Lead:
Dr Scott McKendry

Date: 23 – 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.

Staff

Dr Scott McKendry

Teaching Assistants: Dara McWade and Stephen de Búrca



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.



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.	TBC	TBC
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 + Stephen de Búrca	TBC
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 others' work and make feedback notes ahead of the morning's workshop.	Dara McWade	TBC

Tuesday 24 June – Character, POV			
9.30am – 11am	<p>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.</p>	Dara McWade + Stephen de Búrca	TBC
11am – 11.15pm	Break		
11.15pm – 12.30pm	<p>Lecture Students are encouraged to consider the character journey, needs and wants of their character, complexity of character and which POV suits them best.</p>	TBC	TBC
12.30pm – 1.30pm	Lunch		
1.30pm – 4pm	<p>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.</p>	Stephen de Búrca	TBC



Wednesday 25 June – Structure			
9.30am – 11am	Workshop Students split into their two groups and discuss feedback on their work.	Dara McWade + Stephen de Búrca	TBC
11am – 11.15pm	Break		
11.15pm – 12.30pm	Lecture Exploration of how writers go about structuring their story for maximum effect. Structure tools, from simple to complex, looking at the nuances between storyline, plot and narrative.	Dara McWade	TBC
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	TBC



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 + Stephen de Búrca	TBC
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	TBC
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	TBC
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.	Dr Scott McKendry	TBC



Friday 27 June 2025			
Time	Session/Activity	Academic Lead	Location
9.00am – 5.00pm	Field trip to North Coast Students will join their peers from other programmes on a trip to the North Coast, including a visit the ruins of the medieval Dunluce Castle and the famous Giant's Causeway World Heritage Site.		



Monday 30 June – <i>Setting and Imagery</i>			
9.30am – 11am	Field Trip Students visit the Ulster Museum, where they choose a subject for writing an ekphrastic passage.	TBC	TBC
11am – 11.15pm	Break		
11.15pm – 12.30pm	Lecture Students consider the effectiveness of the imagery they employ, how to invoke a sense of place, and develop a fully-formed world for their characters.	TBC	TBC
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.	TBC	TBC



Tuesday 1 July – <i>Dialogue & Subtext</i>			
9.30am – 11am	Field Trip A visit No Alibis bookstore, where students have a Q&A session with an established Belfast prose writer.	TBC	TBC
11am – 11.15pm	Break		
11.15pm – 12.30pm	Lecture Students encouraged to consider how to devise effective dialogue and deploy subtext.	TBC	TBC
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.	TBC	TBC



Wednesday 2 July – <i>Metaphor, Allegory, Ideology</i>			
9.30am – 11am	Workshop Students split into their two groups and discuss feedback on their work.	TBC	TBC
11am – 11.15pm	Break		
11.15pm – 12.30pm	Lecture 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.	TBC	TBC
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.	TBC	TBC
4 – 4.15pm	Break		
4.15pm – 6pm	Reading practice Students practise performing their late-draft or finished short stories with classmates at a reception.	TBC	TBC



Thursday 3 July – <i>Form, Stamina, and the Big Bad World</i>			
9.30am – 11am	Field Trip Students meet with an industry expert in the field of publishing.	TBC	TBC
11am – 11.15pm	Break		
11.15pm – 12.30pm	Lecture An introduction to longer genres of prose. Students are also offered practical advice on writing as a vocation and how to prepare their work for submission to magazines and other publications.	TBC	TBC
12.30am – 1.30pm	Lunch		
1.30pm – 3.30pm	Writing Session Students continue to work on their stories, building in time to redraft, and choose a short piece to read aloud.	TBC	TBC
3.30 – 4pm	Break		
4pm – 6pm	Performance Students perform their short stories at a reception.	TBC	TBC