SS119 Creative Writing: Poetry, Fiction, & Memoir

6 ECTS/ 3 US Semester Credits

This course, given by an established writer is a workshop in the writing of poetry, fiction, and memoir. Students choose the genre they wish to emphasise, engaging in experimentation, writing and rewriting under the supervision of the director. Students will be given writing prompts at every workshop. The workshops involve reviewing, analysing and editing of work in an atmosphere of constructive criticism and mutual support. Module participants will take part in a number of literary events around Galway City, under the supervision of the course director, poet and critic Kevin Higgins, who is co-organiser of Over The Edge literary events.

COURSE OBJECTIVE:

Through various reading and writing exercises, this course will explore several aspects of poetry, fiction, and memoir writing from first steps to final polish. The course Director will use tried and tested techniques to get participants writing. He will also work with them on polishing their writing and bringing poems and stories to completion. Students’ work will be read and discussed in class and the entire class will be expected to engage in constructive criticism of and mutual support for each other’s poems and stories.

Participants will attend and participate in two events organised by Galway City’s literary events organisation Over The Edge, for which they will receive credit. Feedback will be given by the course Director on an ongoing basis and with the final grade. The final portfolio of each student’s writing will be graded on its imaginative skill, originality, and also on the progress s/he has made as a writer during this course.

COURSE OUTLINE:

Week 1
How do we begin a work of fiction or a poem?
How do we use autobiography in our writing?
The course Director will provide participants with accessible prompts to get them writing.

Week 2
How do we avoid cliché in our writing? How do we ‘make it new’?
The course Director will provide participants with accessible writing exercises to help them make new metaphors and similes from the world around us.

Week 3
How do we deal with controversial topics? Every writer has to deal with the issue of someone possibly being offended by something s/he has written, especially if autobiographical detail is used in the writing. The course director will give participants writing exercises which will aim to inoculate them against all such worries.

Week 4
How do we know when a poem or story is finished? Editing is the making, or breaking, of every writer. The course Director will workshop participants' writing with them, and will work to give them their own editing methods which they can take away from the course.

COURSE TEXTS:

Short Story
Mike McCormack  Getting it in the Head
Claire Keegan  Men and Women
Maeve Brennan  The Lie, The Devil in Us
Franz Kafka  Metamorphoses and other Stories

Novels
E.M Reapy  Red Dirt
Claire Kilroy  Tenderwire

Poetry
Neil Astley  Staying Alive – Real Poems for Unreal Times
Roddie Lumsden  Identity Parade – New British & Irish Poets
Kevin Higgins  Song of Songs 2.0 – New & Selected Poems
Satire
Jonathan Swift: *A Modest Proposal*

Literary magazine
Sean O’Reilly: *The Stinging Fly – issue 33 In The Wake of The Rising*
Skylight Poets: *Skylight 47*

Website
Dave Lordan: *The Bogman’s Cannon*

Anthology
Susan Millar DuMars: *Over The Edge – The First Ten Years*

Requirements for Credits

1. Attendance and participation at all the scheduled talks, workshops and readings.
2. Completion of a small collection of poems or a finished piece of fiction or memoir of roughly 5000 words.

COURSE PROFESSOR

Kevin Higgins is co-organiser of Over The Edge literary events in Galway. He has published four collections of poems: *The Boy With No Face* (2005), *Time Gentlemen, Please* (2008), *Frightening New Furniture* (2010), & *The Ghost In The Lobby* (2014). His poems also feature in *Identity Parade – New British and Irish Poets* (Bloodaxe, 2010) and in *The Hundred Years’ War: modern war poems* (Ed Neil Astley, Bloodaxe May 2014). Kevin is satirist-in-residence with the alternative literature website *The Bogman’s Cannon*. 2016 – The Selected Satires of Kevin Higgins was published by NuaScéalta in 2016. *Song of Songs 2:0 – New & Selected Poems* will be published by Salmon in Spring 2017. Kevin is a highly experienced workshop facilitator and several of his students have gone on to achieve publication success. He has facilitated poetry workshops at Galway Arts Centre and taught Creative Writing at Galway Technical Institute for the past eleven years. Kevin also teaches on the NUIG BA Creative Writing Connect programme. His poems have been praised by, among others, Tony Blair’s biographer John Rentoul, Observer columnist Nick Cohen, and Sunday Independent columnist Gene Kerrigan; and have been quoted in *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Independent*, and *The Daily Mirror*. *The Stinging Fly* magazine recently described Kevin as “likely the most widely read living poet in Ireland”.

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