

Programme Specification

Master of Arts in Writing Historical Fiction

<i>School:</i>	Humanities
<i>Subject area:</i>	Creative Writing
<i>Entry from academic year:</i>	2020-21
<i>in the month(s) of:</i>	September
<i>Awarding institution:</i>	York St John University
<i>Teaching institution:</i>	York St John University
<i>Delivery location:</i>	York St John University
<i>Programme/s accredited by:</i>	Not applicable
<i>Exit awards:</i>	Postgraduate Certificate Writing Historical Fiction Postgraduate Diploma Writing Historical Fiction
<i>UCAS code / GTTR / other:</i>	Not applicable
<i>Joint Honours combinations:</i>	Not applicable
<i>QAA subject benchmark statement(s):</i>	See the QAA Benchmark document on Creative Writing for reference (these do not extend in Creative Writing to any specifics for MA level and are therefore a guide only)
<i>Mode/s of study:</i>	Postgraduate periods of study ¹ for part-time
<i>Language of study:</i>	English
<i>Paired with foundation year</i>	No
<i>Study abroad opportunities:</i>	No
<i>Placement year opportunity:</i>	No

Introduction and special features

The MA in Writing Historical Fiction is part of the vibrant and exciting undergraduate and postgraduate provision in the York Centre for Writing. In this MA you will be exposed to and write Historical Fiction via the examination forms of fiction and historical research methods. As part of this process you will also develop a range of key skills in critical reflection and creative practice. The programme is designed to allow you the opportunity to develop the kinds of historical fiction writing that interest you.

You will gain an insight into Historical Fiction writing as an academic subject, interrogating the function and form of historical writing in reflecting cultural, political and environmental contexts. You will also have the opportunity to deepen employability skills through the production of industry focussed writing, a module analysing industry contexts, and to meet industry professionals in the final residential module. (NB: There will be additional travel and accommodation costs for the residential).

As well as the group sessions (online) and directed exercises you will work with tutors on a one-to-one basis.

¹ The standard period of study will apply unless otherwise stated

You will gain:

- Enhanced and developed strategies for creative practice in writing historical fiction.
- An introduction to a number of contemporary creative texts in historical fiction drama and related forms.
- Critical skills in relation to both the reading and generation of new historical fiction.
- Critical awareness of the contexts for the production of creative texts (political, psychological, environmental).
- A sense of belonging to a writing community (virtual and physical) via the York Centre for Writing.
- Opportunity to meet practitioners via the residential/summer school.

Key benefits of the MA Writing Historical Fiction:

- Seven permanent members of staff, all practising, published, award-winning writers in a range of forms and genres including: creative non-fiction; fiction (short stories/novels); script (radio, screen, stage), contemporary poetry. Staff also have a range of critical interests including climate change, motherhood, body politics, northern writing, music, experimental poetry, history, science.
- Flexible online study.
- Modules which allow you to develop work which interests you.
- Modules which develop creative and critical skills, but also develop employability skills in terms of writing for Historical Fiction.
- A focus on the relationship between critical thinking and creative writing.
- Experience of developing and applying skills in archival research at the start of the programme of study.
- Opportunity to work with practitioners on a production of your work in the final term of study at a summer school.
- Opportunity to attend an additional weekend residential writing retreat.
- York is internationally known as a significant historical centre. There are a number of archives and museums that the York Centre for Writing work with on UG and PG projects, including the Castle Museum and the Bar Convent. This activity will be extended to the London campus and the opportunity for research in the capital.
- The York Centre for Writing. The centre acts as a hub for a number of exciting writing events, projects and publications in collaboration with Valley Press, The [York Literature Festival](#), and other community partners. In the past we have welcomed authors such as Kathleen Jamie, Sarah Hall, Michel Faber, Daljit Nagra and Margaret Atwood, who have inspired students and members of the local community alike.
- The Centre curates two print publications, [Beyond the Walls](#), our student anthology, and [The York Literary Review](#), our international creative writing journal, both published by [Valley Press](#) and providing commissioning, editing and publishing experience to undergraduate and postgraduate students. We also manage the [Northern Independent Press Collection](#), supporting independent presses based in the North of England.

You will have the flexibility to pursue writing that you are passionate about and will be supported by the expertise of the staff team. This allows for a range of diverse backgrounds in terms of learning experiences, ethnic diversity, disability, gender and age; projects will be developed and tailored to your learning needs. The staff team of award-winning writers have an exciting and diverse approach to creative writing and are able to supervise a huge range of proposed projects. All staff members are actively publishing their writing and have won several awards between them for creative outputs. The team have expertise in speculative fiction, historical fiction, scriptwriting, screenwriting, adaptation, poetry, experimental poetry, hybrid forms, horror fiction, literary fiction, creative non-fiction (including memoir and true-crime), and are able to support writing in a number of genres. In addition, the Creative Writing team at YSJ has a strong focus on the relationship between critical theory and creative writing and the intersection of a number of theoretical perspectives with creative practice, including eco-criticism, psychoanalysis, biopolitics and regionality.

Members of the team have undertaken interdisciplinary and collaborative research exploring music, memory, medicine, uncanny landscapes and pollination.

MA Writing Historical Fiction is part of the York Centre for Writing and as such is at YSJ is further distinguished by:

- The integration of writing practice, critical appreciation of texts and employability skills.
- A focus on contemporary writing.
- Regular engagement with visiting speakers and writers.
- Partnerships with local publishers and writing festivals.
- Partnerships with national organisations.
- Research-led teaching.
- Diverse and inclusive syllabi.
- Opportunities for you to experience additional optional residentials (residentials are subsidised by the University but you may be asked to pay a small contribution).

Admissions criteria

You must meet the University's general entry criteria for [postgraduate](#) study. In addition, you must have:

- MA candidates have usually already excelled at BA study; we therefore normally require a BA degree at **2:1 grade or higher (or equivalent)**. We are open to considering previous degrees in the Humanities, Arts, Sciences and Social Sciences.
- MA candidates also need to submit a sample of creative writing of at least 1,000-2,000 words in order for staff to ascertain if the writing is of an appropriately high standard.

If your first language is not English, you need to take an IELTS test or an equivalent qualification accepted by the University (see <https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/international/how-to-apply/english-language-requirements/>).

If you do not have traditional qualifications, you may be eligible for entry on the basis of [Accredited Prior \(Experiential\) Learning \(APL/APEL\)](#). We also consider applications for entry with advanced standing.

Programme aim(s)

To provide:

- Advanced strategies for creative practice.
- Advanced research methodologies.
- An introduction to a number of contemporary creative examples of historical fiction texts and the tools to analyse and discuss those texts.
- Critical skills in relation to the reading and writing of original historical fiction.
- Critical awareness of the contexts for the production of creative texts (political, psychological, environmental).
- The development of advanced professional skills.
- A virtual and physical writing community through the York Centre for Writing.
- Opportunity to discuss your work with practitioners.

Programme learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of the programme students will be able to:

Level 7

- 7.1 Critically reflect on the nature of historical fiction and its production in relation to wider political, social and cultural contexts.
- 7.2 Produce a body of original creative writing that engages with the technicalities and creative strategies within contemporary historical fiction.
- 7.3 Develop employability skills through the effective communication of original ideas to appropriate audiences.
- 7.4 Employ genre techniques in relation to a comprehensive understanding of audience expectations.
- 7.5 Exhibit originality and independent scholarship in creating a collection or continuous piece of writing specific to form.

NB: See the [QAA Benchmark document on Creative Writing](#) for reference (these do not extend in Creative Writing to any specifics for MFA/MA level and are therefore a guide only).

Programme structure

Code	Level	Year	Term	Title	Credits	Module status	
						compulsory or optional to take C or O	non-compensatable or compensatable NC or X
CRW7016M	7	1	1	Research Methods in Writing Historical Fiction	30	C	NC
CRW7017M	7	1	2	Historical Fiction – Forms and Responses	30	C	NC
CRW7018M	7	1	3	Contemporary Issues in the Past	30	C	NC
CRW7019M	7	2	1	Experimentation and Innovation: Re-writing the Past	30	C	NC
CRW7020M	7	2	2&3	Historical Fiction: Major Project	60	C	NC

Structure and assessment:

The MA is offered on a part-time basis, with sessions delivered flexibly, with some scheduled online sessions. The first and final terms include a residential.

Structure: (part time)

Year One		Year Two	
Term 1 – October-December	Research Methods in Writing Historical Fiction (Residential)	Term 4 – October-December	Experimentation and Innovation
Term 2 January - April	Historical Fiction – Forms and Responses	Term 5 January - April	Major Project
Term 3 – April - July	Contemporary Issues in the past	Term 6 – April - July	Major Project (Residential)

Learning, teaching and assessment

The programme has two interconnected teaching methods: virtual/online work and face-to-face teaching and learning facilitated via the residencies/summer school.

The central aim of the teaching is to support independent writing practice, the discussion and feedback on each other's writing, drafting and redrafting and discussion of classic and contemporary examples.

Professional writers on the team will facilitate group discussion and offer one to one virtual and face-to-face (where possible) meetings for discussing work in progress, giving advice about redrafting, sources of research, advice on genre, language, characterisation, setting, form, etc. (as appropriate to the individual project). In terms of the Reflective Commentary component and Presentation assessments, supervisors will advise on the appropriate critical/reflective angle and on the use of secondary sources, which might include historical, theoretical, scientific or experiential research. You will hone your editorial skills in supportive virtual workshopping and discussion environments, writing on a regular basis and producing work which can then be shared with their peers. Whilst research may include images, video etc. all portfolios consist of composed text.

In seeking to emulate current practice the programme will utilise established tools to enable students to effectively share material. You will have access to Moodle for documentation. Google Classroom will be used for the uploading and sharing of work and for engaging in extended 'chat' discussions of material for workshopping and contemporary texts. There will also be formal regular scheduled classes which take place using Google Hangouts, Skype or an application such as ooVoo which would allow you to engage in group discussion via a smartphone or tablet for no extra cost. One-to-one tutorials will take place via the same applications.

Assessment Criteria themselves are informed by the National Association of Writers in Education Benchmark guidance and the QAA benchmarks, but notions of 'publishable quality' inform both of these. In particular, NAWE are a group comprised of educators, published writers and those with experience of editing journals and creative publications. This is a community and network of writers. An understanding of this wider context is also provided by the teaching team who are all published practitioners and bring this knowledge to the process. Supervisors will discuss the appropriate routes to possible dissemination of a particular work; i.e.: which publisher or agent may be best placed to support your work.

You benefit from working on modules in sequence, developing conceptual and writing skills at each stage. Students will discuss the relationship between the creative and the critical, the relationship between convention and innovation and the relationship between writer and audience/reader. The modules seek to develop skills in the use of archive material and historical research methodologies to create a package of modules which allow for the development of an extended piece of historical fiction as a short novella or single film or TV drama.

In negotiation you will be able to submit aspects of your portfolios in other forms. For instance you may wish to include performed readings or include photographic or video presentations which include composed text but integrated images. Each portfolio request which stands outside the submission of conventionally presented written text will be negotiated with the module director to ensure parity and feasibility and where it is commensurate with form of research and writing being undertaken. This student centred approach takes in to account the logistics and opportunities available to you whilst working at distance.

The programme will open with a short residential which focuses on archive and museum based research as a precursor to The final module, undertaken at a summer school, is where students will work with practitioners in evaluating their work as it moves towards conclusion.

Progression and graduation requirements

The University's general [regulations](#) for postgraduate awards apply to this programme.

Any modules that must be passed for progression or award are indicated in the Programme Structure section as non-compensatable.

Internal and external reference points

This programme specification was formulated with reference to:

- [University Mission Statement](#) [see page two]
- [Strategic Plan 2015-20](#) [see page four]
- [QAA subject benchmark statement](#)
- [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#)

Date written / revised: 17/01/18

Programme originally approved: June 2019