



Information pack

This document details the Creative Writing course presented by GetSmarter and Random House Struik.



Random House Struik and GetSmarter, a specialist online training company, are proud to present the **Random House Struik Creative Writing course**. This course meets the high and exacting standards of Random House Struik and GetSmarter and is compiled and facilitated by Ronald Irwin, a professional literary agent, editor and author.

About the course:

This 10-week online course, presented in English, will enable students to start and finish a creative piece of writing, including short stories and full-length novels. It looks at the major concerns writers face while working on an extended piece of fiction and offers an introduction on how they should present their work to editors and agents.

The course allows students to form part of an online writing community where students make friends with fellow writers, share work, contacts and ideas and review one another's creative writing pieces. In addition to this, students may submit their manuscripts and the best ones, chosen by the Course Convener, will be submitted to Random House Struik for consideration.

About GetSmarter:

GetSmarter is a specialist online training company that works together with top universities and industry experts to present professional short courses throughout South Africa.

About Random House Struik:

Random House Struik is the largest general trade publisher in southern Africa. The recent merger of South Africa's two most prominent book publishers, Random House and Struik Publishers, formed Random House Struik.

About the Course Convener:

Ron Irwin is an American professional literary agent, editor and author based in Cape Town, South Africa. He holds a Masters Degree in Literary Studies and a Masters in Creative Writing, both completed under the supervision of Nobel Prize-winning author Prof JM Coetzee. Ron is a creative writing lecturer at the University of Cape Town.

Course modules:

The following modules are covered during the course:

- Module 1: Planning the story
- Module 2: The importance of beginnings
- Module 3: Characters and characterisation
- Module 4: Plot vs. story
- Module 5: Dialogue
- Module 6: Point of view
- Module 7: Conflict
- Module 8: Tying it all up
- Module 9: Revision
- Module 10: Approaching publishers and agents with your finished work

*See Appendix A for a detailed overview of each module.

Who should attend:

This course in creative writing is designed for both current and aspiring writers. It is ideal for anyone who has dreamed of writing a novel or a short story, for accomplished writers of fiction who want to brush up on their skills, and for non-fiction writers who want to use dramatic storytelling techniques to make their work come alive. It is suitable for anyone who wants to bring more flair, drama, and passion into their work. Professional editors can also benefit from this course by learning the basic techniques of the creative craft of writing

Entry requirements:

Students must have a current email account, must have access to a computer, and must be able to read documents in Adobe PDF, create documents in Microsoft Word and access the internet. A matric certificate is recommended, but is not required.

Course delivery:

The course is conducted online through the **GetSmarter Learning** website. (<http://www.getsmarter.co.za/learning>)

Each module is divided into the following components:

- Course notes
- Video lectures
- Discussion forum
- Online multiple-choice quiz
- Module assignment
- Further reading and references

For the duration of the 10-week course, a new module is released to the student group each Monday. Students complete each week's module by working through all of the components listed above. Proactive support is provided to all students by the Course Convener, Ron Irwin, and the Course Coordinator, Andrea Vavruch.

Course dates:

Registrations close: 17 September 2010

Course starts: 27 September 2010

A course calendar is available on request.

Payment details:

Course fee: R6,600 (excl. VAT)

Payment deadline: 17 September 2010

A 10% discount is offered to groups of 3 or more when arranged with GetSmarter staff.

How to register:

Four-step registration process

1. Visit www.getsmarter.co.za.
2. Click "Creative Writing" on the left menu and then click "Register Now".
3. Complete the online registration form.
4. You will receive confirmation of registration by email and SMS within 24 hours.

Payment details:

The following payment options are available:

- 1. Once-off payment**
R7,524 on registration or by 17 September 2010
- 2. 2-month payment plan**
R3,850 on registration or by 17 September 2010
R3,850 by 31 October 2010

GetSmarter accepts payments by direct deposit, electronic funds transfer (EFT) and credit card (Mastercard and Visa). Students opting to pay by credit card will be contacted by phone to obtain their credit card details. Students opting to pay by direct deposit and EFT are required to use their name and surname as a reference.

Non-South African students should contact GetSmarter for payment details.

Banking details:

Account name: Get Learning
Bank: Standard Bank
Branch: Claremont
Branch code: 025109
Account number: 04 332 0813
SWIFT Code: SBZAZAJJ

Contact details:

Should you have any queries, please contact Karin at GetSmarter:

Contact: Karin
Tel: 021 685 4775
Fax: 021 685 4883
Email: karin@getsmarter.co.za

Appendix A

The table below describes each of the 10 modules covered in the course.

Module 1: Planning the story
<p>What is your story about? Who will read it? Is your story really a story? Can you outline it? This module helps you examine closely whether you want to spend an extended period of time with your fiction or nonfiction story, and how to make it a story readers cannot put down. This module should appeal to writers of fiction and non-fiction, both of whom hope to maximise reader interest in their work.</p>
Module 2: The importance of beginnings
<p>It is crucial that every story grabs the reader’s attention from the very first sentence. This holds true for people writing fiction as well as for magazines and newspapers. A good beginning jumps out at the reader – as well as the editor who might buy it. This module helps writers create an instant curiosity about their work and looks at great beginnings to novels written by novelists ranging from John le Carre to Hunter Thompson and JM Coetzee. It will ensure that every story you write demands to be read, right from the outset.</p>
Module 3: Characters and characterisation
<p>Creating characters that readers remember and will follow through your story with interest is an art form. Characterisation is a skill that both fiction and non-fiction writers – who must characterise real people – must become adept at. Some editors believe that “characters are your story” and the ability to create a person on page who readers will sympathise with is quite possibly the most important task you will face as a writer. This module helps you learn the difference between “round” and “flat” characters, and to watch out for “caricatures” rather than characters.</p>
Module 4: Plot vs. story
<p>When does a story become a plot? Journalists always have to write “stories” for newspapers and magazines, but longer fiction requires a plot and the professional author is sure of the important difference in this regard. A good plot gives cohesion and form to your novel and even to your short stories. Understanding what drives characters and how a novel is plotted is a crucial part of your education as a writer. If you can’t tell the difference between a story and a plot, then this module will be most illuminating.</p>
Module 5: Dialogue
<p>A good part of your fiction and non-fiction will be relating to readers what characters say. But does your dialogue spring off the page? Does it help cast the story forward while at the same time telling us something more about the characters themselves? Are you dead sure about the difference between how people really talk and what dialogue looks like? Writers who are masters at dialogue have a distinct advantage over writers who do not. Here is where you develop your writer’s “ear”.</p>

Module 6: Point of view
Should you write in first person or third person? What about the elusive second-person voice? What are the pros and cons of each for the writer of fiction and non-fiction? Understanding exactly why authors choose a certain point of view to present their stories can help you decide how your own story should be written. This module uses examples from popular fiction and non-fiction and provides writers with a checklist they can use to decide which POV will work best for them.
Module 7: Conflict
This module examines how conflict and plot meld together to create an incredible reading experience. Understanding how conflict affects your characters, and how it adds motion and energy to your writing, is what this module is all about. Many conflicts – psychological, physical and metaphysical – drive novels and non-fiction prose. The judicious handling of conflict can prevent your prose from “sagging” and will give a focus to your work. Included in this module is an examination of conflict and characters’ desires. How do readers want to see conflict resolved – and how and when do you give them what they want?
Module 8: Tying it all up
Finding the perfect ending is one of the biggest challenges a writer can face. How do you know when enough is enough? How do you end things so the reader wants to read your next piece? How do you begin with the end in mind? What makes for a bad ending, and a good one? How should we feel after reading the ending to a novel or an extended piece of non-fiction, and what kind of endings leave readers feeling dissatisfied and confused?
Module 9: Revision
In this module, writers taking the online course share their work with their fellow participants. Each writer will look at writing from two other course members as well as submit material to the instruction. Here we will look at how your writing can be tightened up and improved. It is a unique opportunity to get instant feedback from informed readers about your work, and to get solid advice about how you can improve. Revision is a key element of all writing – many writers spend fifty percent of their working time or more revising their work into publishable quality. This module shows you how to do it!
Module 10: Approaching publishers and agents with your finished work
How do you write a query letter to a publisher that instantly garners interest? What are the main differences between amateur and professional when looking for publication or representation? How can you immediately be taken seriously as both a businessperson and an artist? This module looks at how authors create query letters that sell, synopses that are smashes, and manuscripts that demand to be read.

We hope to welcome you to the course!