

CW911 Writing about Human Rights and Injustice

Introduction

People from many and diverse occupations feel compelled to write in response to past and present injustices and about human rights; journalists, creative writers, lawyers, historians, philosophers and sociologists. They may write to seek redress or policy change, or they may simply want to bring wrongs to public attention. But to do so, they face common problems of representation. What forms of writing are appropriate? Which are possible? What ethical and political sensitivities and sensibilities are constraining? Are any liberating? What skills do they need to develop to write effectively and well? How is the matter of 'truth' addressed in different media and how does this affect the nature and content of representing wrongs?

In this module, we'll examine the ethical and practical elements of writing about human rights and social (in)justice in varying contexts and media, looking at classic and contemporary non-fiction and fiction as well as other forms of creative writing forms and expression. You'll have the opportunity to investigate and write about human rights related topics of your own choosing too, working towards producing an assessment that is part creative writing and part critical analysis. Along the way, we'll also examine writing on selected contemporary crises and issues focusing not just on the topics but also the matters of writing technique, competing political and media agendas, ethical dilemmas and legal constraints that those writing about injustice/human rights commonly face.

Tutor

Andrew Williams has been teaching law at the University of Warwick since 2000 and creative writing since 2012. Prior to that he was a practising solicitor working in London. He also spent time in Malawi with Save the Children Fund and since 1996 has specialised in human rights law and the laws of war. He's the author of 'A Very British Killing: the Death of Baha Mousa' (Vintage) which won the George Orwell Prize for Political Writing in 2013. His second book, 'A Passing Fury: Searching for Justice after WWII' (Vintage) about the criminal trials in Germany after 1945, was shortlisted for the Crime Writers Association Gold Dagger Award in 2017.