

SE u3a Forum Summer School

Monday 7th – Thursday 10th September 2026

University of Chichester



Linguistics: Onomastics – *What's in a name?*

Maximum 12

This course looks at one particular facet of 'linguistics' (the study of language/languages): names and naming, mainly, but not entirely, in English. We'll explore surnames, forenames (and related kinds of 'individual' naming); place-names and similar identifying locations of many sorts; and product/brand/company names from trade and business. Along the way, some key elements and ideas from language generally will emerge.

Many of the names used will come from the tutor; delegates will also be encouraged to bring in their own examples, from their own life and experience -- for comparison, understanding, and even plain old fun!

Previous knowledge of language study isn't needed: just everyday language skills in English, plus curiosity and an open mind! Sessions will involve talks, presentations with audio-visual elements, discussions and practical activities.

Before the summer school and course begins, you'll be given some light-touch, very easy 'field research' to do, gathering some example names of several kinds from your own life and experiences, to bring along and use with other delegates during the sessions.

About the tutor

Mike is American born and raised. He graduated from Stuyvesant High School in Manhattan in 1972 and attended university in the UK, reading English & Drama at Exeter University and has lived in England ever since. He became a teacher and has had many roles in a range of schools and colleges within the UK, until his retirement in 2020.

Summer School Course - 2026

Monday pm Introductions from the delegates and the course leader, plus to the course itself – including the basics of 'onomastics' (the study of all kinds of names and naming).

Tuesday am Considering surnames – in English, and some other languages – and their 4 universal categories, as supplied by both the course leader and the delegates themselves.

Tuesday pm Exploring forenames and other kinds of personal names, in English and some other languages, along with their nature, varieties and patterns, as well as their impacts.

Wednesday am Delving into locational names – for areas and places, in English and some other language, plus their natures, sources, effects and so on...

Wednesday pm ... and then also, names for roads, streets and similar features – plus names for houses, boats and similar objects.

Thursday am Some further topic explorations (members' choice/s); a final recap of the course and its subject-area – plus, advice and practical help in going further, afterwards?

*For further information **about the course**, please contact the tutor*

Mike Cooper

Tutor – Linguistics

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