CRWR 210A Section 2
Introduction to Creative Writing: Fiction
Fall 2014

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Office Hours: Tuesday 11:00-1:00, and by appointment

Classroom: Liberal Arts 303
Class Meeting Time: Tuesday and Thursday, 9:40-11:00

About This Class:
When it comes to writing fiction, I'm convinced that at the heart of it all, good writing is about telling the truth. So often I find that a rift exists between what is real and what is true, and that space is what fiction seeks to reconcile, to amend, to revise. Our lives would be easier, or if not easier than simpler, if there were an exactness to writing, some specific kernel of wisdom that leads to good fiction, but for better or worse no such thing exists. Writing is hard work. Writing is about discomfort, vulnerability, and risk-taking; it is about cutting through the flesh to expose the bone. We tell ourselves stories in order to live because storytelling is urgent, critical, and necessary.

In this class we will examine some of the basic premises of fiction writing. This class is geared toward learning the building blocks of fiction. As in any discipline or craft there are rules. The basic elements of fiction are difficult to master, so I ask that you strive to learn the basics so that when you want to break the rules, you can do so intentionally and deliberately. Throughout the semester, I will assign exercises geared to help you to not only understand the craft of fiction but to investigate and employ these skills in your own writing. I encourage you to explore and to be daring in your writing. Take on the struggle. Have faith in the process.

Course Objectives:
CRWR 210 is an introductory fiction writing class. We will focus on the craft of fiction writing and the components required for a successful short story. Initially, we will focus on classic and contemporary stories given out each week in handouts. Developing a critical vocabulary and becoming a discerning reader is the first step toward becoming a writer. We will explore the various methods for developing plot, form, structure, and essential elements such as believable, interesting characters, dialogue, and consistent point of view. Initial writings will include character sketches, dialogue exercises, and crafting great opening sentences.

In the second part of the semester we will occasionally read published texts, but the primary focus of the class will shift to your own work. You will be responsible for carefully reading the work of your peers and responding both in classroom discussion (workshop) and with written comments.
Course Texts:
There will be no hard copy text for you to buy.

Materials:
In this class we will mostly deal in photocopies and handouts. Please keep a journal or folder to compile all in-class and out-of-class assignments. You will be responsible for keeping track of all papers and materials distributed during class, and you are expected to bring hard copies of your written exercises and assignments to class. You will also be responsible for photocopying and distributing a copy of your workshop story to each of your classmates.

Course Requirements:
• **Writing Assignments and Exercises:** Writing assignments and exercises will be given to you almost every week over the course of the semester. Though we may not examine all of your work in class, you are still required to perform and submit all assignments on time.
• **Working Journal:** You should keep one – it’s for your own good.
• **Readings and Responses:** Of course, you are responsible for doing the assigned reading for each class. Occasionally you might be asked to write a short reflection in response to the reading.
• **Written Comments:** Written comments to the student being workshopped in each class. These do not necessarily need to be extensive, but you must make some kind of comments on the story itself and write a brief note to the author. Please bring two copies of your feedback – one for the writer, and one to turn in to me.
• **Mid-Semester Project:** Copycat Assignment. For this assignment, you will be asked to imitate the style, form, structure, voice, etc. of one of the short stories we will have read. Analyzing and borrowing the techniques of highly skilled writers can be both practical and incredibly helpful to new writers. More details to follow.
• **Stories:** You will draft and revise two works of fiction over the course of this semester.

Grading Criteria:
Grading fiction is difficult and subjective by nature. You will be graded on your active participation in class, your writing exercises, your improvement from draft to revision, and your attendance.
• **40%** of your grade is based on active participation. Show up prepared, comment on readings and the work of your peers, and contribute to the community of the classroom.
• **30%** of your grade is based on successful completion of all writing assignments. Turn these exercises in on time, put some thought into the work, and type and double-space all out-of-class work. You will receive credit for exercises, but not a letter grade.
• **30%** of your grade is based on your fiction. Turn in your drafts on time, and revise at least one story for your final portfolio.
Attendance:
Please come to class. In a workshop environment, we work on stories as a group and we need everyone present to provide a full, well-discussed critique of each story. Missing more than two (2) days of class will count against your grade in this class. Personal situations and required university events may arise that, on a rare occasion, make it impossible for you to be in class; however, remember that's why a few absences are allowed – please reserve those for emergencies.

Class Policies:
• **Workshops:** If your story is to be workshopped you will be expected to provide copies to everyone in the class. If you have not read a story, do not read it in class. Come prepared.
• **Stories and Assignments:** All of your manuscripts must be typed and titled. Please double space and use a 12-point font – when in doubt, remember that Times New Roman is your friend. Keep back-up copies of all of your work, and always bring all of your writing assignments to class.
• **Conferences:** Please make use of office hours – I am more than happy to talk, to answer questions, to discuss your writing, to agonize, to commiserate. If you cannot make it to office hours, feel free to send me an email and/or schedule an alternate time to meet.
• **Late Work:** Will not be accepted

Community:
This is a class in which we will be sharing creative work with each other. It is essential to this class that we maintain a respectful attitude towards each other personally and towards each other's work. While it is important that we be critical at times, the point is not to knock down anybody's stuff. Obviously, respect and open-mindedness are required from all of us. Hopefully it goes without saying that discrimination or harassment of any kind will not be tolerated in our classroom community. The most important rule I've learned in years of workshop is don't be a jerk. I think it’s safe to say that rule also applies to life in general.

Academic Conduct:
All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course. All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code, which is available for review online at [http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php](http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php)

Students with disabilities:
Qualified students with disabilities will receive appropriate accommodations in this course. Please speak with me after class or in my office hours, and please be prepared to provide a letter from your DSS Coordinator.

*This syllabus is subject to change.*