

Introduction to Creative Writing: Fiction

CRWR 310.01

DHC 118

TR 3:30-4:50

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Introduction:

The purpose of this course is, quite simply, to become *active* writers and readers. Writers who practice the craft conscientiously and diligently, who understand differences of style and tone and how to effect those differences, and who appreciate the writing of those whose approaches are widely dissimilar to our own. We will practice writing with a variety of styles and forms, and much of this practice will involve studying contemporary short stories for a general, though by no means comprehensive, understanding of the literary tradition into which we are entering. To this end, we will discuss and respond to a variety of published stories, and we will do the same with one another's work. We will learn to effectively critique one another's stories, and how to learn from one another's critiques. The world of the short story is a challenging and awesome (in the true sense of the word) world to navigate; we will do so with fresh imaginations and a spirit of creativity.

What is Expected of You:

One word: Participation.

In a workshop, every member is integral. What happens in the classroom is just as important as the assignments and writings you work on outside of class. I will be asking you to:

- Prepare and submit complete short stories for the class to read and critique.
- Ask questions as they arise.
- Come to class prepared to discuss any and all readings—and, during the workshops, to bring a written response to each student's story.
- Substantially revise your work, even if you think it's perfect to begin with.

Assigned Readings:

We will start off the semester by reading and discussing short stories to get an idea of different forms, voices, and styles. As the semester progresses, we will begin to devote more time to our own writing, with fewer readings. I reserve the right to adapt the syllabus (adding new readings, subtracting others), and will of course inform you of the changes with plenty of time to get the work done. **All stories can be found on**

the class Moodle page, which is also where you will be submitting your stories for class workshops.

Workshop Stories:

Note: Your stories are due on Moodle before class on the class day BEFORE your story would be workshopped. (If you are going to be workshopped on Thursday, you will upload your story onto Moodle on Tuesday, for example.) I will create a Moodle forum for you where you can attach your story (using a .pdf or .doc or .docx file only, please).

The stories that you present to the class should represent your best work, though they by no means need to be considered final, polished drafts. They should take the form of a complete story (no bits and pieces, no beginning without end, etc.), and should be work that you complete this semester. Turning in old pieces that you've worked on in the past will be a disservice to you; active writers are always *actively* writing. Getting into the habit of putting pen to paper is half the battle. When it is your turn to be workshopped, you will be expected to read your peers' critiques respectfully, and to not jump into the discussion while the students are sharing their thoughts. At the end of the week that you are being workshopped (the last day), you may add your thoughts or questions (though not defenses) to the discussion. Conversely, when you are workshopping one of your peer's pieces, you will be expected to construct your comments in a thoughtful, non-abrasive manner.

Absence Policy and Late Work:

After 3 absences, your final grade will drop one letter (an A becomes an A-). After 4 absences, your final grade will drop 2 letter grades (the original A becomes a B+). After 5 absences, we will discuss the idea of dropping the course.

Obviously, as we are on a tight schedule in this class, late work is unacceptable. If you are not going to be able to turn your story in on time, it is up to you to contact someone in the class and exchange deadline dates with him/her so that we are always workshopping enough stories in a day. If there is a crisis (and I don't mean one involving a late dinner or forgotten assignment), please contact me immediately.

Portfolio and Revision:

Toward the end of the semester, you will turn in a Portfolio that will include a thorough revision of one of the two longer stories that you wrote during the class. This should be a very thorough and complete revision, and representative of your very best work. You will be required to turn in the original draft as well as the revision. Also, you must include a 250-300 word response to the revision process: what worked, what didn't, how you came up with the changes, how you felt about the process, etc. You will also include a response to a public reading that you have attended throughout the semester. This will be considered your final project, and should be a representation of your best work.

THERE IS NO FINAL EXAM.

Final Portfolio Recap:

- Original draft of revised story
- Revision of story
- Response to the revision process (250-300 words)
- Response to a public literary reading that you attended over the course of the semester.

Workshop Critiques:

You will be required, for every story except your own, to respond to the stories being workshopped. Your response should consist of one or two substantial paragraphs.

Grading:

I am not grading for skill, as that is an abstract commodity and subject to personal taste. Instead, I grade for improvement and effort. The grading breakdown is as follows:

- **Workshop pieces and short assignments: 25%.** You will not receive a letter grade on your first drafts, but I will be watching for grammar, punctuation, and evidence of the time that was spent crafting each story.
- **Class Participation, including written critiques and in-class discussion: 25%**
- **Revision Portfolio: 50%.** I will be grading these portfolios with extensive revision in mind. The best portfolios will a) be complete, b) include a revised story that has obviously been altered from its original state, and c) be free of any glaring grammatical errors.

Your stories will not receive letter grades, but I will provide written notes on the drafts that should give you a good idea of where you are.

Workshop Procedures:

If you are up for workshop on a certain date, your story must be ready to paste into the forum that I will create for you on the class period before your story is due. So, if your story is due to be workshopped on a Tuesday, you will paste it into the forum on Moodle with your name on it no later than the Thursday before. Everyone will come to class on Tuesday having read the story, and bringing with them their written critiques.

Public Readings:

I am asking each of you to attend at least one public reading over the course of the semester. UM provides wonderful opportunities to participate in the greater community of writers, and I will alert you to any readings that I know about each week. You will turn in your response to the reading with your final portfolio.

Academic Honesty:

There is no room in creative writing for plagiarism of any kind. If you have any questions, please refer to the University's Conduct Code at: http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php

Class Schedule:

WEEK ONE

8/30: Introductions.

****Assignment: Read "The Swimmer" (on Moodle)**

9/1: Arc of the story

****Assignment: Read "Sarah Cole: A Type of Love Story" (Moodle)**

WEEK TWO

9/6: Character and Voice

****A and B due on Moodle**

9/8: Begin Workshops: A and B

****C and D due on Moodle**

WEEK THREE

9/12: C and D ****E and F are due on Moodle**

9/14: E and F ****G and H are due on Moodle**

WEEK FOUR

9/20: G and H. ****I and J are due.**

9/22: I and J. ****K and L are due.**

WEEK FIVE

9/27: K and L. ****M and N are due.**

9/29: M and N. ****O and A are due.**

WEEK SIX

10/4: O and A. ****B and C are due.**

10/6: B and C. ****D and E are due.**

WEEK SEVEN

10/11: D and E. ****F and G are due.**

10/13: NO CLASS. YOU'RE WELCOME.

WEEK EIGHT

10/18: F and G. ****H and I, are due.**

10/20: H and I. ****J and K are due.**

WEEK NINE

10/25: J and K. ****L and M are due.**

10/27: L and M. ****N and O are due.**

WEEK TEN

11/1: N and O. ****A and B are due.**

11/3: A and B. ****C and D are due.**

WEEK ELEVEN

11/8: NO CLASS. GO VOTE. GO VOTE TWICE.

11/10: C and D. ****E and F are due.**

WEEK TWELVE

11/15: E and F. ****G and H are due.**

11/17: G and H. ****I and J are due.**

WEEK THIRTEEN

11/22: I and J. ****K and L are due.**

11/24: NO CLASS. EAT A TURDUCKEN.

WEEK FOURTEEN

11/29: K and L. ****M, N, O are due.**

12/1: M, N, and O. ******

WEEK FIFTEEN

12/6: Workshop revisions in class.

12/8: Final class. Evaluations, portfolios due (on Moodle) by midnight.