

## CRWR 210: Introduction to Fiction

MWF 1:00–1:50 / LA 306

Instructor: Nicole Roché  
Email: nicole.roche@umontana.edu  
Office: 258 Corbin Hall  
Office Hours: MWF 12:00–1:00 and by appointment

“The truth is not distorted here, but rather a certain distortion is used to get at the truth.”

—Flannery O’Connor

### Course Description

Writing fiction, like any craft, requires thoughtful study, regular practice, and keen attention to detail—in your work, the work of others, and in the world around you. In this introductory creative writing course, we will delve into the writings of craft theorists and short story masters in order to contemplate the “nuts” and “bolts” of narrative. We will discuss habits of mind, and various approaches to writing and storytelling, that will hopefully inspire and motivate you in your own work. In workshop and in-class writings, we will read one another’s work and help to make each piece the best it can be.

### Learning Outcomes

- Acquire foundational skills in reading, discussing, and writing short fiction
- Demonstrate an understanding of the terminology and concepts that apply to fiction
- Practice the art of writing and revising short fiction
- Learn to critique the quality of your own work and that of fellow students

### Required Texts

*100 Years of the Best American Short Stories*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, ed. Lorrie Moore, 2015.

### Course Requirements

The majority of our class time this semester will be dedicated to discussion: whether about craft, our assigned readings, or workshop stories written by you and your classmates. In addition, you should expect to do a good deal of writing in class, such as invention work or responses to prompts I provide. My hope is that these exercises will spark new story ideas for you, or perhaps help you to work out a problem you face in an existing story. In-class writings will not be collected, though I will encourage you to share what you have written with the class. In addition, you will choose your 5 favorite in-class writings for inclusion in the Final Portfolio (see below).

For each of our assigned *Best American* stories, you will type a 200-word response (approx. ½ db.-spaced pg.) that investigates some element of craft at work in the story. Responses will be due at the beginning of class on the day of discussion (no exceptions).

You will hand in 1 Workshop Story this semester. Your story should be typed (in 12-pt. Times or equivalent) and should be 7–12 db.-spaced pgs. You are responsible for bringing copies for me and your peers to the class period before your assigned workshop date. If you do not meet this deadline, you will

not have your story workshopped, and you will not be able to continue with the class (your Final Portfolio depending largely on the workshop and your subsequent revisions). Plan accordingly.

For each of your peers' workshop stories, you will type a 400-word response (approx. 1 db.-spaced pg.) outlining what you saw to be the story's strengths and weaknesses. Responses will be due during class on the day of discussion (no exceptions)—1 copy for the writer, and 1 copy for me. Remember to bring your copy of each classmate's story with you on the corresponding discussion day. I encourage you to make line edits/marginal comments on your copy (this will help you write your responses), which you may give to the writer after the workshop.

At the end of the semester, you will hand in a Final Portfolio, which will contain the following: your original Workshop Story (with my comments), your revised Workshop Story + 1–2 pg. Cover Letter (which explains your revision choices), and 5 of your best in-class writings.

## Attendance Policy

Regular attendance is vital for the success of any writing workshop. You are permitted 3 absences (excused or unexcused) for the semester. Each subsequent absence will lower your final grade by a letter grade. Again, plan accordingly.

## Grading Criteria

- Participation (In-Class Writing and Discussion): 20%
- Typed Responses to Assigned Readings and Workshop Stories: 40%
- Your Total Body of Fiction Written This Semester, Including Your Workshop Story and Final Portfolio: 40%

## Workshop Etiquette

Together we will create the atmosphere of this classroom and writing workshop. Each student should do their part to make that an inclusive and supportive environment. Keep in mind that a writer's work is often intensely personal—each of us borrows from our lives and experiences in our art. Let's all be respectful of one another, and our work, while we strive to improve as writers, readers, thinkers, and yes, human beings.

## Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined in the UM Student Conduct Code as representing another person's words, ideas, data, or materials as one's own. Consequences include failing an assignment, failing a course, or even expulsion.

## Disabilities

Please speak with me privately after class or in my office if you have a disability for which you will need accommodations in this course. Please bring the letter from your DSS Coordinator when we meet so I know what accommodations you are eligible for.

This syllabus is subject to change.