Crwr 210: Introduction to Fiction
LA 330
T/Th 09:30-10:50

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Office Hours: Wednesday 1:30pm - 3:30pm and by appointment

“That's what fiction is for. It's for getting at the truth when the truth isn't sufficient for the truth.”
Tim O’Brien

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 one’s own work and that of peers.

Course Description
Everywhere we turn, we’re surrounded by stories. We hear them. We see them. We touch, taste, and smell them. As the above learning outcomes suggest, Crwr 210 is designed as an introduction to allow you to gain further appreciation and understanding of ‘the story’ as you acquire and develop skills in writing, reading, and discussion. The course will be split roughly into two halves. Firstly, you will be introduced to key concepts, literary terms, and devices, and you will be given plenty of time (around 8 weeks) to experiment with them. Then, as your writing and reading skills grow and take shape, the course will switch to a workshop format where each student will write and submit a work of fiction to be workshoped by the rest of the class. You will then consider the suggestions for revision provided by both your peers and your instructor, and you will submit a revised version of your story as part of your final portfolio alongside a short reflective piece.

Required Texts and Materials
- All required reading will be made available on the course Moodle shell or distributed in class
- Something to write in or on - you may wish to bring notepads for writing exercises and note taking, or you may wish to bring a laptop or some other suitable device.
- A folder to manage written, printed, and distributed materials, eg. stories and handouts - please bring this to every class
- A folder in which to submit your final portfolio at the end of semester

Course Requirements
• **Short Writing Exercises and Assignments:** You will be required to write frequently, perhaps as expected in a writing course. Writing which is done in class will (almost) always be ‘low-stakes’ writing meaning it need not be seen by others, so you’re free to experiment and push boundaries etc. Writing which is done as homework will often be peer-reviewed.

• **Readings and Responses:** Some amount of reading, whether a short story or several excerpts, will be assigned for almost every class in the first part of the semester. You are responsible for completing this assigned reading. Sometimes you will be asked to provide a short written response to the reading as part of the homework. Other times, you might be asked to respond as part of an in-class activity.

• **The Story:** You are required to draft and revise one short story over the course of the second part of the semester. You will be assigned a date by when your story is due to be submitted for workshop. The story should be roughly 8-16 double-spaced pages (a purposefully vague guideline).

• **Written Workshop Responses:** As other students will do for your story, you must provide written feedback for each of theirs. During the workshop portion of the class, you will be required to provide detailed feedback of at least 500 words for two stories per week, and shorter responses to the rest (most likely three further stories). The structure of this feedback will be discussed in more detail in class.

• **Final Portfolio:** Your final for this course will take the shape of a portfolio consisting of the following:
  - the first draft of your story
  - a (significantly) revised version of that story
  - a short piece of reflective writing.

**Expectations**

• **Respect:** Especially in an introductory writing class, respecting your peers is of the utmost importance. Respectful discussion is expected and necessary. Feedback on peers’ work should make appropriate use of constructive criticism as we will discuss and practice in class.

• **Submitted work:** All submitted work - including homework assignments, stories, and feedback - should be typed in 12-point Times New Roman or similar, double-spaced, paginated, with regular margins.

• **Participation:** Consider why it is important to participate in this class - to get the most out of what is being taught, and to give the most to your peers. We will do plenty of in-class activities which are designed to help you develop your writing, reading, and discussion skills - it is important to give maximum participation in these. Everyone is expected to participate to the best of their ability, but I recognise that everyone is an individual and thus there are different opportunities to participate in this course. For example, a particular student might not be comfortable offering frequent oral contributions. So while that student’s oral participation might be below par, they could make up for this - to an extent - with exceptional written feedback on their peers’ work.
• **Office Hours:** I sit in my office for at least two hours a week. You’re more than welcome to visit me during my office hours to discuss writing, feedback, expectations, policies, and beyond. If my office hours don’t suit you, you’re also welcome to email me and ask to meet at a more convenient time. I encourage you to do this. I’m generally pretty flexible with times.

• **Late work:** No, thank you. Credit will not be given to late work.

**Grading Criteria**

- **60%** of your grade is based around participation. This encompasses quality oral contributions; effort during in-class writing exercises; consistently submitted, quality written feedback for peers’ work; consistently submitted, quality responses to assigned readings, as well as generally being prepared for class - punctuality, having the correct resources, etc.

- **40%** of your grade is based around your final portfolio - the first draft of your story, the second draft, and the reflective piece. This is an introduction to fiction class, and thus grading is not based around an unrealistic expectation of expert writing. Rather, it is based largely around how far you appear to have attempted to implement and experiment with ideas which have been taught in class, and around attention to feedback and effort in significant revision.

**Attendance**

Regular attendance is imperative to success in this class. The concepts which will be taught and practiced in the first part of the course will prove to be of vital significance to your work in the class and beyond. During the workshop portion of the class, it is your duty to your peers to be present to discuss, critique, and help them with their work.

However, circumstances outside of students’ control often arise and instructors generally appreciate this. That is why the following attendance policy is in place:

Three absences are allowed throughout the semester without directly compromising your grade. Any homework that is due when you are absent must be submitted in the following class, and you should contact your instructor to discuss missed work. Failure to do so will affect your participation grade.

- Fourth absence: final grade drops one letter
- Fifth absence: final grade drops one additional letter
- Sixth absence: final grade is an F

This policy may be adjusted in particular circumstances, such as documented illness or emergency.

**Punctuality**
At the moment, there is no lateness policy in place. I simply ask that you arrive to class on time for the benefit of yourself and your peers. Poor punctuality will reflect poorly on your participation grade.

However, if punctuality becomes a widespread problem, a harsh lateness policy may be implemented. For example, lateness may be equated to absence.

**Academic Conduct**

You must abide by the rules for academic conduct described in the Student Conduct Code. If you have any questions about when and how to avoid academic dishonesty, particularly plagiarism, please review the Conduct Code and talk with your instructor. The University policy states, “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.” Academic honesty is highly valued in the University community and acts of plagiarism will not be tolerated. All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course, and all students must practice academic honesty. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code, which is available for review online at http://www.umt.edu/vpesa/documents/Student%20Conduct%20Code%20PDF-%20FINAL%208-27-13.pdf

**Students with Disabilities**

Qualified students with disabilities will receive appropriate accommodations in this course. Please speak with me privately after class, in my office, or send an email. Be prepared to provide a letter from your DSS Coordinator.

This syllabus is subject to change.