Introduction to Fiction
CRWR 210, Section 2
Spring Semester 2016

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Office Hours: Mondays 2-3 and Fridays 2-3, or by appointment
Meeting Time: M-W-F 1:10-2
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A writer is someone for whom writing is more difficult than it is for other people. - Thomas Mann

Course Description:
In Creative Writing 210, Introduction to Fiction, we will approach the study of fiction from the perspective of writers. Everyone has told stories in various forms. In this class, we will delve into the work of writing to uncover the craft it takes to shape stories into fiction. We will do this by reading short stories in 100 Years of American Short Stories, Paris Review interviews, transcribing paragraphs from our favorite stories, fastwriting via in-class creative prompts, and giving and receiving feedback on our stories in a workshop setting.

Course Requirements:
In the first part of the semester, we will focus primarily on studying craft. We’ll read published short stories that demonstrate different narrative techniques in fiction. We’ll read interviews with authors about choices they made when they wrote their stories. We’ll write creatively in response to prompts.

Each time a story is assigned, I will ask that you type and print a 250-word response. When we discuss these stories, we’ll approach fiction not so much as literature students interpreting stories, but as writers analyzing what techniques have been used and if they are effective.

You will keep a running “Good/Bad Writing Is” sheet in your textbook. As you read stories, you can add words to the sheet. Why the “Good/Bad Writing” sheet? Because it’s surprisingly easy to write something you wouldn’t want to read yourself if someone else had written it. We can make the world a better place by writing fiction we actually want to read ourselves!

Most Fridays, and some other days, we will do in-class writing in response to creative prompts. For this, we’ll use the computers available in our classroom. The idea is to get a certain quota of words on the page. I will only glance at these fastwrites, and will not grade them for their quality. The idea is just to write! On Mondays, you will get to share your writing in a mini-workshop setting.

Halfway through the semester, I’ll schedule a conference with you, where I’ll give you feedback on your work (including the fastwrites, if you’re comfortable with me seeing them) and we can discuss what you plan to turn in for workshop or any other questions you might have about your writing. Class will be cancelled for a week to ensure that everyone is able to have a meeting with me.
In the second half of the semester, our focus will shift to workshopping your stories. You will each workshop a story between 6-10 pages. My hope is that some of our in-class fastwrites will generate material for these stories, so that you’ll be working on the story for workshop all semester, not just in the second half. All stories must be typed, double-spaced, and use a 12-point font, preferably Times New Roman. Bring copies of your stories to hand out to your peers the class prior to your workshop. Please bring your peer’s story to class when it’s slotted to be discussed. You are required to give feedback to your classmates. This includes marking up the story and generating a page-long response. Trust me: editing your peers’ work will make you better writers yourselves.

In place of final exams, a final portfolio will be due, which will include three of your best workshop responses, two of your best story responses, three in-class fastwrites, as well as a first and substantially-revised draft of the story you submitted to workshop.

Materials:

- I will send you via email Paris Review interviews and other documents from time to time. It is your responsibility to print these out for class discussion.

Attendance Policy:
You are allowed up to three (3) absences, but missing any more time than that will result in your grade dropping by one letter grade for each absence. There are no exceptions to this rule, period. In a workshop environment, good attendance is absolutely mandatory.

Grading Criteria:

- 30% of your grade is based on active participation. This includes good attendance and participation in class discussions. Demonstrate that you have read the textbook stories assigned and the work of your peers.
- 30% of your grade is based on your written assignments (responses to stories, both in the textbook and those of your peers.)
- 40% of your grade is based on your creative writing, including free-written responses to prompts and edits after peer discussion and the story you submit for workshop and its revised draft. The focus here will be the effort that you put into the writing, the attention to detail, and how you revise in response to feedback.

Course Objectives:
1) Acquire foundational skills in reading, discussing and writing short fiction;
2) Understand terminology and concepts that apply to fiction;
3) Practice the art of writing and revising short fiction;
4) Learn to critique the quality of your own work and that of fellow students.
Workshop Etiquette:
In workshop, please keep in mind that we’re sharing creative work that is in all probability personal to us. While it is important that we be critical so that we can all improve as writers, the point is not to knock down anybody’s stuff. Let us all aim for respect and open-mindedness. Discrimination or harassment of any kind will not be tolerated in our classroom.

Plagiarism:
Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Please see the UM Student Conduct Code for more information. Plagiarism will likely result in failure of the course.

Disabilities Info:
Qualified students with disabilities will receive appropriate accommodations in this course. Please come and see me after class, during my office hours or by appointment about ways I can accommodate your learning style. Be prepared to provide a letter from your DSS Coordinator.