

Spring 2-1-2019

CRWR 210A.02: Intro to Fiction Workshop

Kylie M. Westerlind

University of Montana, Missoula

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Spring 2019

CRWR 210A – 02: Introduction to Fiction

Course: CRWR 210A

Section: 02

Meeting time: MWF 1:00-1:50pm

Room: NAC 014

Semester dates: Jan 11 – Apr 26

(no classes: 1/21, 2/18, 3/25-9)

Instructor: Kylie Westerlind

Email: kylie.westerlind@umontana.edu

Mailbox: LA 133

Office: COR 258

Office hours: MW 12:00pm-1:00pm,

F 2:00pm-3:00pm, and by appointment

“The primary subject of fiction is and has always been human emotion, values, and beliefs.”

-- John Gardner, from the *Art of Fiction: Notes on Craft*

“Don’t try to figure out what other people want to hear from you; figure out what you have to say.”

-- Barbara Kingsolver

“It’s none of their business that you have to learn to write. Let them think you were born that way.”

-- Ernest Hemingway

Course description and university outcomes

What is fiction, and why do we want to read it? Why do we want to write it? If fiction is inherently made-up, an avenue for telling lies, what are we searching for within it? What truths can we glean from this rigorous art of fabrication?

This an introductory course in the art and study of reading and writing fiction, with emphasis on the short story. We will learn about fiction in all its aspects: its elements, techniques, forms, models, and its place in the world, the meaning it has for both reader and writer. We will explore these aspects through reading published work, investigating the terms together in group discussions, and employing them in our own writing. This class will provide the tools you need to understand prose as well as creating your own art. How you choose to use these tools within your own writing is up to you—consider that if we all wrote the same, we would be craftsmen and craftswomen rather than artists. I hope for this class to instill within you the habits of these tools of fiction as well as the risk-taking necessary to make your fiction come alive.

Towards the middle of the term, we will turn exclusively to fiction workshop. How will this work? Over the term, you will turn in two original works, which your classmates will take home, read over, and then in response compose a thoughtful and constructive critique. Much of our class time during this part of the semester will be devoted to discussing each other’s work, debating the stories’ ambitions and intentions, as well as commending what works and offering ideas for how to get the stories closer to those goals. During workshop, you will hear my voice and opinions a lot, but I do want to note (and repeat often) that workshops cannot function unless *all* members participate rigorously and often.

The University of Montana’s writing outcomes are as follows:

-acquire foundation 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 work and that of fellow students

Grading

Participation (critiques, attendance, and discussion): 40%
Midterm: 20%
Portfolio: 40%

Participation

This is straightforward. You must come to class on time, having done the required reading and writing, and be prepared to participate in class discussions. Late work will only be accepted if you are absent (to be turned in the next class). I will not accept critiques/writing exercises via email.

Midterm

On Wednesday, March 20th, there will be an in-class midterm exam. The exam will consist of questions and prompts, questions to test your knowledge of key terms and concepts in fiction that we've learned throughout the course and prompts that will allow you to put those terms into action.

Portfolio

A portfolio of your work will be due the last day of class, Friday, April 26. This portfolio will consist of a simple folder that must include:

- 1) A cover letter (more on this later in the term)
- 2) Two original works of fiction
- 3) A substantial revision of at least one of those stories. This revision should take workshop comments into account.
- 4) "Generator" writing exercises, please re-type these for the portfolio

Materials

- Course website (Moodle) to print stories*; as there are no textbook costs for this class, you are responsible for printing the assigned stories and bringing them to class. There will be assigned stories and also suggested readings, for those of you who wish to turn this class into something beyond an introductory course. You are not required to print and bring the suggested readings to class.
- Notebook/paper and writing materials for in-class writing
- Folder for final portfolio
- Not required but suggested: a small writing journal/notebook

*when calculating your expenses for the semester, please note that you will have to print the assigned stories, your fellow classmates' manuscripts for their workshops, and two (2) copies of your critiques, one for the author and one for me

Workshop requirements

- For this class you will turn in two original works of fiction. The **first** submission should consist of at least **6-8 typed, double-spaced pages** in length, while the **second** submission will be longer at **10-12 typed, double-spaced pages** in length. These submissions are due the class period before its assigned workshop dates. The submissions can be longer than the minimum page requirement, but if they are more than twenty pages, please submit two class periods before the workshop date. Please do not turn in work more than 30 pages. Please note that short stories must be finished.

Works must be titled, include your last name and page number in the upper right corner of every page except the first. Works must be submitted in a standard font (Times New Roman, Palatino, Garamond (my favorite), Hoefler text), and be formatted in twelve-point type. Why so strict about formatting? This is standard for manuscripts submitted to journals for publication. If there's enough interest, we can spend a class period or two to going over journals, magazines, and tips for publication.

Works will be submitted to a class email list. Be sure to email out your story one class period before your workshop. If your workshop date is Wednesday, then your story should be emailed out before 1pm on the Monday before. When a story is emailed out, it is your responsibility to print the story, write your comments on it (annotate it), and complete and print a critique for the story. Print two copies of your critique, one for the author, one for me (more below).

Story drafts will be graded as follows:

- original and creative effort 70%
- strong technical and grammatical skill and correct formatting 30%

- Typed critiques for every story submitted for workshop. These critiques are due the day of that story's workshop, one copy for the author and one for me. These do not need to be double-spaced, in fact I would prefer single-spaced critiques. You will receive a more detailed handout on instructions for critiquing later on in the semester. Basically, write the critiques you want to receive. Strong readers make better writers.

The Generator

There will be weekly in-class writing assignments that aim to spark creativity and engage us actively in the art of writing. Keep in mind that most of these writing exercises will be turned into your portfolio at the end of the semester (do not write anything you want kept secret, but also remember that this is a fiction workshop, not nonfiction!). These are not diary or journal entries but creative works written by you spur-of-the-moment. The prompts will be random and unpredictable, though some will be offered by fellow classmates. Remember that the purpose of art is not to make you comfortable. Fiction **is** emotive. Be prepared to write about things you didn't expect.

Attendance

If you must be absent, you are responsible for notifying me before class or as soon as possible afterwards. I want to note that if I respond, that doesn't mean your absence is excused (I've had

students assume this before). Excused absences are for major issues, i.e. medical, family emergency. Be in contact with me if you have concerns.

As per the university's policy: you are permitted three absences from the class. Any absences beyond your third must be excused, otherwise you will be ½ final letter grade per absence. (an A to A-). This class depends on everyone's participation, hence the strict attendance policy.

If you plan on being absent, turn in work early, either in person or mailbox, or get another person from class to help you out.

Academic Conduct

All students are expected to abide by the rules for academic conduct described in the Student Conduct Code Handbook. If you have any questions about how to avoid academic dishonesty, particularly plagiarism, please review the Conduct Code and talk with me.

*All assignments for the course must be composed during the course itself or else you risk committing self-plagiarism.

Disabilities

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