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CRWR 310.01: Intermediate Fiction Workshop

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Intermediate Fiction

CRWR 310

TR 12:30-1:50

DHC 118

Introduction: The purpose of this course is to move beyond the skills and knowledge gained in an introductory creative writing class and to focus our talents on those projects that give us joy. We will begin the semester with a quick refresher course on the elements of creative writing—point of view, form, voice, and character—and will read stories by contemporary authors in order to better examine these elements. After that, we dive into our own work, responding respectfully and as helpfully as possible to the work of other emerging writers.

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.

Class Contract

- When in workshop, take a note; don't argue
- Be respectful
- Assume good intentions
- Justify critiques
- Offer a criticism sandwich!

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 or chapter of a novel (no bits and pieces, no beginning without end, etc.), and should ideally 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. (If, however, you are working on a longer piece and want to revise chapters for workshop, we can make an exception. The goal is always to be working on something about which you are passionate.) Getting into the habit of putting pen to paper is half the battle.

For our first round of workshops, we will follow the traditional model. 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 day that you are being workshopped, 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.

The second round of workshops will be unsilenced, and will require more work upfront on the part of the author. When it is your turn, you will prepare notes and questions ahead of time for the readers to consider as we work through the piece.

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 or chapters that you wrote during the class, or a new piece altogether. 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 or new addition to longer work
- Response to the revision process (250-300 words)
- Response to a public literary reading that you attended over the course of the semester. (These can be in person or online.)

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: 30%.** 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: 30%**
- **Revision Portfolio: 30%.** 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

Tues. 1/18: Introductions

*Read “Non-Zero Probabilities” and “The Great Silence”

Th. 1/20: Discuss narrative arc, world-building

*Read “Cat Person”

WEEK TWO

Tu. 1/25: Discuss Voice, Character, Truth

*Read “A Naked Horse”

Th. 1/27: Discuss narrative reliability, setting, point of view

*Read “My Parents’ Bedroom”

WEEK THREE:

Tu. 2/1: Discuss elements of craft

** A and B are due

Th. 2/3: Workshop A and B

** C and D are due

WEEK FOUR

Tu. 2/8: Workshop C and D

** E and F are due

Th. 2/10: Workshop E and F

** G and H are due

WEEK FIVE

Tu. 2/15: Workshop G and H

** I and J are due

Th. 2/17: Workshop I and J

** K and L are due

WEEK SIX

Tu. 2/22: Workshop K and L

** M and N are due

Th. 2/24: Workshop M and N

** O and P are due

WEEK SEVEN

Tu. 3/1: Workshop O and P

Th. 3/3: Maps

**Exercise from Wonderbook

WEEK EIGHT

Tu. 3/8: Wonderbook Exercise

**Maps are due

Th. 3/10: Workshop Maps

**A and B are due

WEEK NINE

Tu. 3/15: Workshop A and B

**C and D are due

Th. 3/17: Workshop C and D

**E and F are due

WEEK TEN

March 21-25: Spring Break

WEEK ELEVEN

Tu. 3/29: Workshop E and F

**G and H are due

Th. 3/31: Workshop G and H

**I and J are due

WEEK TWELVE

Tu. 4/5: Workshop I and J

**K and L are due

Th. 4/7: Workshop K and L

**M and N are due

WEEK THIRTEEN

Tu. 4/12: Workshop M and N

**O and P are due

Th. 4/14: Workshop O and P

WEEK FOURTEEN

Tu. 4/19: Revision Discussion; Exercises

Th. 4/21: Revision Exercises

WEEK FIFTEEN

Tu. 4/26: Workshop Revision Work

Th. 4/28: Workshop Revision Work

WEEK SIXTEEN

Tu. 5/3: Workshop Revision Work

Th. 5/5: **Final Day: Portfolios Due by end of day on Moodle.**

May 9-13: Finals Week: No Final in this class.