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COM 195.01: Creative Writing - Fiction

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The University of Montana

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COM 195 Creative Writing: Fiction

Instructor: Robert Stubblefield
Office: North Corbin 339
Email: robert.stubblefield@umontana.edu
Office Hours: T,Th 12:00-2:00 and by appointment

Text: *Writing Fiction: A Guide to the Narrative Craft* (sixth edition) by Janet Burroway.
Required Materials: A journal and folder for compiling all exercises and in-class and out-of-class assignments. You will be responsible for photocopying and distributing a copy of your workshop story to each of your classmates.

Course Objectives:

COM 195 is an introductory fiction writing class. We will focus on the craft of fiction writing and the components required for a successful short-story. Initially, we will focus on stories from our textbook and supplemental handouts. Developing a critical acumen and becoming an active and discerning reader is the first step toward becoming a writer. We will explore the various methods for developing plot, form, and structure and essential elements such as believable, compelling, characters, dialogue, and consistent point-of-view. Initial writings will include character sketches, dialogue exercises, and developing openings that beg the reader to turn the page. Writing is an exercise in faith and doubt—we will work to sustain your faith and overcome your doubts.

Through the second half of the semester we will continue reading published texts, but the primary focus of the class will shift to student-generated work. You will be responsible for carefully reading the work of your peers and responding both in classroom discussion (workshop) and with written comments.

Course Requirements:

- **Writing Exercises:**All writing exercises will be turned in on the date due and must be typed and double-spaced with one-inch margins. Exercises will focus on one component of a story or be of a specified length (usually one page or less). Keep these in your portfolio upon return.
- **Journal:** I expect you to keep a journal of dialogue bits, story ideas, brilliant insights, complaints, whatever you desire. Although I will not ask you to turn in these journals, I will occasionally ask for a typed excerpt (again, one page or less) of your collected wisdom.
- **Major Assignment (story):**You will produce a 15-20 page work of fiction over the course of this semester

Grading/Evaluation:

Grading fiction is difficult and subjective by nature. You will be graded on your active participation in class, your writing exercises, your improvement from draft to revision,

and your attendance. **DO NOT MISS MORE THAN ONE CLASS OR YOUR GRADE WILL BE AFFECTED**

- **40%** of your grade is based on active participation. Show up prepared, comment on readings and the work of your peers, and contribute to the community of the classroom.
- **30%** of your grade is based on successful completion of all writing assignments. Turn these exercises in on time, put some thought into the work, and type and double-space all out-of-class work. You will receive credit for exercises, but not a letter grade.
- **30%** of your grade is based on your 15-20 pages of fiction. Turn in the draft by the beginning of Week 10, successfully revise your piece by the end of the semester. Demonstrate improvement and the ability to effectively respond to criticism.

Some other Matter:

It is important that our classroom develop into a community of writers prior to the opening of our workshop in November. You must be able to provide and accept criticism and feedback in a positive manner. I will be available during my office hours to meet with you and will also schedule individual and group conferences by appointment.

Missoula is a vibrant literary community. Although not required, I suggest you take advantage of readings, conferences, and gatherings occurring this semester. I will announce upcoming events. Readings are frequently held on campus and at local bookstores.

A Few Words to Ponder:

“I try to leave out the parts people skip.”

Elmore Leonard

“Whatever our theme in writing, it is old and tried. Whatever our place, it has been visited by the stranger; it will never be new again. It is only the vision that can be new, but that is enough.”

Eudora Welty

“I think I did pretty well, considering I started out with nothing but a bunch of blank paper.”

Steve Martin

“If we had to say what writing is, we would define it essentially as an act of courage.”

Cynthia Ozick

Holidays and Important Dates

September 6 (Monday)—Labor Day, Holiday

November 2 (Tuesday)—Election Day, Holiday

November 11 (Thursday)—Veterans Day, Holiday

November 24,25,26 (Wed,Thur,Fri)—Thanksgiving Vacation

Deadlines: Before the course has began or during the first 3 weeks of the Spring or Fall Semester you can drop on Cyberbear. <http://cyberbear.umt.edu>

After the end of the third week you need to obtain your advisor (undergraduate students only) and your instructor's signature. There will be a \$10 fee and you have until the end of the 30th instructional day to do

this. After the 30th instructional day has passed, you must petition to drop. On the petition you will need to have your advisor, instructor and dean of your major's signature. There will be a \$10 fee. The deadline is the Friday before finals week.