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CRWR 210A.02: Intro to Fiction Workshop

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Creative Writing 210 – Introductory Fiction Workshop

Liana Imam | liana.imam@umontana.edu

M/W/F 1:00-1:50pm // NAC 014

Spring 2018

- + In-office: M/W 2:00-3:00pm & appointment
- + Office: LA 230
- + Mailbox: LA 133

“I feel changed. Like, say my mind is a sweater. And a loose thread gets tugged at, pulled and pulled until the sweater unravels and there’s only a big fluffy pile of yarn. You can *make* something with it, that pile of yarn, but it will *never* be a sweater again. That’s the state of things.”

[Rachel Kushner, *The Flamethrowers*]

Course Description

Writing fiction, like making any art, is an individualized and variant practice, both in terms of the work we produce and the way it’s made. Regardless of personal practice, though, writing requires thoughtful and consistent study, attention to detail, and keen observational and interpretive skills. In this course, we will be considering the many ways there are to tell a story and to develop a world, a character, a plotline, and beyond. We’ll discuss the habits and practices of established writers and other artists, and read craft essays and criticism in order to become better readers of our own and each other’s work. And we will engage in significant revision of our work: we will, as Rachel Kushner might say, pull apart the sweater and make something else with its parts, and what it means to do that. We will be working closely and personally with each other’s minds and ideas, so this classroom must be a space that is open to and respectful of all its participants. Hopefully, this wide consideration of many possible ways of writing will help you to create or develop your own personal practice that will continue long past our time together.

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 Texts & Required Materials

Readings will be handed out weekly and posted on Moodle as a backup. Students will need:

- + Notebook and writing utensils for in-class writing and notes
- + Folder for collecting handouts, stories, etc.
- + Folder for final portfolio

Course Requirements & Policies

Our class will be highly focused on discussions of assigned readings and each other's work. Except when noted otherwise, students should come prepared to discuss all assigned readings for the week each Monday. Every week (apart from when we workshop) will follow the same general assignment format:

Monday: Prepare and print out **at least three thoughtful questions** that are directly related to or stemming from the week's readings.

Wednesday: **In-class writing** exercises, either restraint- or imitation-based. We will often share; sometimes not.

Friday: Write & **print out a 1-2 page expansion** or revision of your in-class writings from the week. You are free to move away from any initial prompts, and to use these exercises as the seeds of your workshop story.

Workshops

You will be turning in one short story to be workshopped this semester. This piece must be typed in 12pt Times, and 7-12 double spaced pages. You will turn in your story one class period before your workshop, and must bring enough copies for each of your peers and me. If you do not meet this deadline your story will not be workshopped and you will not be able to continue with the class (the final portfolio being largely dependent on revisions based on your workshop). Thus, attendance for your story deadline and your own workshop should be considered mandatory.

For each of your peers' stories, you will type and turn in a ~400 word response outlining what you see as the strengths and areas needing development in the piece. Responses are due in class on the day of discussion; bring one copy for me and one for the writer. I also encourage you to make margin notes and line edits on the story itself – this can help develop ideas for your response – which you may give to the writer along with the response.

At the end of the semester, you will turn in a final portfolio which includes: your original workshop story (with my comments), a significant revision of this story, and 3-5 of your best Friday pieces.

Grading

Assessing fiction is difficult and subjective. Grades will largely depend on active participation, consistently turning in thoughtful short work, considerably commenting on your peers' stories in workshop, and revision of your original story.

- + Participation 40%
- + Short assignments and workshop responses 30%
- + Final portfolio 30%

Attendance

Consistent attendance is vital to the success of a workshop. *More than 3 absences from a M/W/F class will compromise your grade. 6 or more absences will result in a failing grade.* Lateness, and late work, are not acceptable.

I reserve the right to adjust the policy in cases of significant, documented illness or emergency,

and value open communication in these circumstances. Please note that instances of poor time management on your part do not constitute extenuating circumstances. If you miss class, you are responsible for obtaining any handouts or readings. Make sure you talk with me in advance if you are worried about meeting a deadline or missing a class.

Academic Conduct & Plagiarism

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://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php

Students with Disabilities

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

+++ This syllabus is subject to change +++