CRWR 210 Major Assignment Sheet
Original Short Story

"The scariest moment is always just before you start." ― Stephen King, "On Writing"

The major assignment for this introduction to fiction writing course challenges you to write your own short story. It must be an original work of short fiction you write for this class, practicing the concepts and techniques we have been studying over the first part of the semester. It should demonstrate your learning about character, structure, detail, point of view, and other elements fundamental to fiction writing. It should reflect your reading by observing the stylistic standards exemplified in the short published works we've been studying. It should aim to be "literary" fiction, distinct from "popular" or "genre" fiction such as fantasy, romance, or similar forms generally crafted with a reliance on formulaic conventions. (If you can't seem to help working with these themes or material, at least attempt to do so with the serious literary style we are practicing.)

Your final draft must be 10 to 15 pages (formatted to course guidelines; about 2,800 to 4,200 words). Stories are due at the start of class the Friday before they are scheduled to be workshopped, giving us time to read and respond thoughtfully**.** We will decide as a group whether writers will provide printed copies for everyone or upload the story so everyone may print their own copy. Check the workshop schedule (printed, handed out in class or on the website) for your due date and workshop date.

You will be revising this draft after it has been workshopped and include it in your final portfolio.

📖 Considerations
- Use the fastwrites and exercises from class to try out ideas or discover seeds for stories
- Read like a writer. Pay attention to choices writers make about fiction elements, vocabulary, etc.
- Write about the things you cannot get out of your head and heart, that keep coming back, that haunt you
- Must be a short story: no novel bits, flash fiction, plays, screenplays, poems, creative non-fiction, or other writing.

📑 Guides to Invention
Use your journal and the exercises we do in and outside of class to develop story ideas, characters, scenes, even titles.
- Read. Read. Read. This is the best way to get your creative mind on a fiction track.
- Generate ideas using in-class fastwrite exercises
- Keep a running list of ideas, titles, characters, bits of dialogue, etc. in your journal
- Try some additional writing prompts from the sources linked to our class website's Resources page
- Get out into the world, and pay attention. Inspiration for characters, conversations, places, conflicts, and situations awaits.

☑ Evaluation Criteria

I will evaluate your story to determine success practicing concepts and techniques essential to good fiction writing:
- Structure: a single story with a clear beginning, middle, and end
- Showing and telling: using significant, concrete details drawn from the senses to reveal information and meaning
- Well-developed, believable characters, interactions, and authentic dialogue
- Setting conveyed through description and character interaction to establish sense of place, a believable fictional world
- Consistent and appropriate point of view
- Time: sense of when this story is taking place, pacing is appropriate
- Plot: conflict and complication, crisis, resolution
- Scene (present action, dialogue) and summary (backstory, summarizing, exposition, character reflection)
- Ending: clear ending that seems appropriate to the story (not tacked on)
- Creative title
- Creativity: significant thought given to originality and the creative process
- Story is free from spelling, syntactical, grammatical, and other mechanical errors
- Story meets length and formatting requirements
- Of course, no plagiarism or self-plagiarism (submitting work that's yours but is written for another class or purpose other than this assignment), which are automatic disqualifiers with serious consequences. (If you have any questions or doubts, see the UM Student Conduct Code, linked through the syllabus on our class website, or ask.)