

ENH 290: Modern Irish Literature and Culture
Summer 2004—Study Abroad in Ireland

Instructor: Dr. Mary E. Aldridge

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In the twentieth century alone, Ireland has produced much of the western world's great literature. This small country, about the size of Ohio, has generated four Nobel Prize winners for literature: G. B. Shaw, W. B. Yeats, Samuel Beckett, and Seamus Heaney. All of the writers we will study have used Ireland and its complicated history as part of the subject of their work, whether James Joyce is writing about Dublin in 1910 or Seamus Heaney is writing about Derry in 1980. While Ireland has clearly shaped its writers, to what degree have Irish writers shaped the idea of "Ireland"? This course attempts to answer that question as it also considers other aspects of Ireland's culture. We will examine fiction, poetry, and drama by Irish writers in addition to other aspects of Irish culture from the 1880s to the present. We will pay particular attention to the political, personal, and military struggles against British colonialism, as they are reflected in poetry, drama, fiction, music, and film. Beginning with a mixture of mythological "Celtic Twilight" and fervent political activism of the first wave Irish Renaissance—W. B. Yeats, Padriag Pearse, Sean O'Casey, J. M. Synge—, we will work our way through the moment of independence for the Republic of Ireland, and we will address the challenges to the politics and people of the Irish State as it is articulated by contemporary writers—Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, Seamus Heaney, Patrick Kavanagh, Eavan Boland, Brian Friel, Patrick McCabe. From James Joyce's fiction to U2's music to Neil Jordan's films, we will examine how "the troubles" in Northern Ireland have been reflected in high and popular culture and how this culture has influenced Ireland's literary tradition. *No prior knowledge of Irish history is expected.*

Goals and objectives:

The main goals of this course are to acquaint students with a selection of texts that represent the "best" of Irish writing while supplementing these texts with additional aspects of Irish culture. In order to appreciate the milieu in which these texts were produced, students will be expected to understand key components of Irish history as well as present day issues. Students should come to recognize the complex, deeply felt beliefs that divide parts of the country and contribute to the continuing troubles. As a literature course, this class will examine the qualities that make for excellence in writing; students will develop their critical abilities, improve their reading and writing skills and their ability to participate in discussions.

Course expectations:

Students should have the assignments read before class and should come to class prepared to discuss the readings/music/film. Grades will be based on oral and

written discussion, 5 reader responses, in class quizzes (essay format), a reading/reflection journal, and a final essay/project. Final projects may include photographic or film essays. Students who choose this option will exhibit final projects at the Irish Cultural Centre in Phoenix in Fall 2004.

Grading:

The research paper and selected assignments will require a rough draft and a final copy, of which the final will be graded. Here is how your grade will be computed:

Responses: 200 pts.

Quizzes: 100 pts.

Final project: 300 pts

Journal: 200 pts.

Attendance/Discussion: 200 pts.

Attendance and participation:

Attending class is an important part of any college course, but it is more crucial in writing classes where much of the work is accomplished in groups and in conference with the instructor.

Your participation in class is essential to your success in this course. I expect you to contribute relevant comments in class.

Late work:

I will not accept late work.

Assignments:

All assignments on your syllabus are to be completed by the date they appear on the syllabus. If you are absent the class period before an in-class assignment, an impromptu assignment, or any other assignment, you are still responsible for it upon your return.

All out of class papers are to be typed and in MLA format—no exceptions.

Please note: In this course we will watch films that are rated "R". No substitutions.

In class work:

In class work cannot be made up, no matter the reason for your absence. If you miss a movie, it is your responsibility to rent it and to watch it.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism consists of submitting someone else's work as your own or of borrowing someone else's work without citation. Sometimes the line between borrowing and stealing is unclear. If you are ever uncertain, ask me to clarify the difference. Plagiarism is a serious offense with equally serious consequences: failure of the course and possibly dismissal from the college.

Course schedule

May:

- 31: Intro to course
Background info—historical, social, cultural
Intro to traditional Irish art and music

June:

- 1: Irish Resistance and Literary Revival
Literature of the resistance (Padraig Pearse and others)
Film: Michael Collins
- 2: Michael Collins (cont)
Intro to Yeats and the Revival
Elements of Poetry
Response #1 due
- 3: Poetry, Prose, and Drama of Yeats
Quiz #1
Writing a response to literature: thesis and evidence
- 7: Yeats (cont)
Intro to James Joyce
Music
Response #2 due
- 8: Joyce and Dubliners
Elements of fiction
Intro to MLA format
- 9: Dubliners (cont)
Film: John Huston's The Dead
Response #3 due
- 10: Yeats and Joyce—influence and innovation
Responses to Yeats and Joyce—poetry, prose, and music
Quiz #2
- 14: Preparations for Dublin—Joyce, Yeats, and other Dublin Writers
Joyce's Ulysses—a glimpse
Influence on writers and on city
Contemporary music and art
Quiz #5

- 15: Leave for Dublin
- 16: Bloomsday—Dublin and Sandycove
- 17: Walking tour—Dublin: visit sites covered in literature and film
Visit National Gallery for art of the century
Evening music
- 21: Language and Culture
Poetry and song in Irish
Elements of Drama
Brian Friel—Translations
Submit journals
- 22: Language (cont)
Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill and others
Quiz #3
Response #4
- 23: Women in Ireland
Eavan Boland and others—poetry and prose
- 24: Women (cont)
Music
Art
Quiz #4
- 28: Modern Ireland
Current situation—political, economic, cultural, social
Patrick McCabe—The Butcher Boy
- 29: Northern Ireland
“The Troubles”
Literature of the North—the poetry of Seamus Heaney and others
- 30: Film: In the Name of the Father
Response #5 due
- July:
1: **Final projects/papers due**
Journals due

[View final projects](#)

[Oral presentation on written projects](#)