

MODERN IRISH LITERATURE

ITHACA COLLEGE LONDON CENTRE – Spring 2007

LECTURER: **LEE WHITE**

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COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course aims to examine the development of Modern Irish literature in the early 20th century. The course will focus on the relationship between the writer and society, exploring the literature and culture of the period and how social and political contexts inspired and shaped this body of work.

The key issues that will be considered are the role of the writer within society, the role of Gaelic culture through myth, symbolism and folklore, constructions of Ireland and Irishness through the representation of ruralism and urbanism, romanticism and modernism, the influence of literary revivalism and idealism on the Easter uprising in 1916, the legacy of colonialism and its impact on literature. Throughout the course we will consider the relationship between culture and society by examining how key aesthetic themes that recur throughout the literature of this period have been used in politics, religion, violence, rebellion and identity. The final part of the course will focus on contemporary Irish writing and how it seeks to challenge and question the cultural legacy that has been handed down.

As much as possible the works will be discussed in chronological order to enable us to consider the development of the four main writers (Yeats, Synge, Joyce, O'Casey), their work, the influence they had on each other, the debates and conflicts that occurred between them.

TEACHING METHODS

The teaching methods employed for this course will be primarily discussion based. These discussions will be based upon aesthetic ideas in texts and critical theory within the field of Irish studies. It is important to keep up with the required reading. Many of the key texts are available in the Resource Room or alternatively you may wish to purchase your own copies. Supplementary material will be available in the Resources Room. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have read the supplementary reading either through the resources service or by making your own copies. Lack of preparation will be reflected in the contribution mark. The theoretical aspects of the course will form a key component of our discussions and the written assessments.

ASSESSMENT

Evaluation will be based on four key areas of assessment

Assignment 1.	First Essay	25%
Assignment 2.	Creative Writing Assignment	20%
Assignment 3.	Second Essay	25%
Assignment 4.	Research and Class Contribution	30%

ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment 1. First Essay (Word Count: 2000)

Due In Tuesday 27th February

For Assignment 1 you are encouraged to set your essay questions. Focusing on one of the texts encountered in the first half of the course, you may choose to develop your research topic/questions in response to the issues discussed in class.

Assignment 2. Creative Writing Assignment (Word Count: 2000 min - 1500 for the creative writing piece + 500 for a rationale which justifies the creative writing piece in relations to either the work of James Joyce.) Due In Tuesday 24th April

Write a short story or extract of a proposed short story or novel, using the writing techniques and style of James Joyce. Your piece might explore similar themes that reoccur in Joyce's. Your writing must demonstrate a clear understanding and engagement with the writing styles, techniques and conventions employed by Joyce. Refer to extracts from his work to ensure that you have a clear understanding of how the author uses the role of the narrator in telling the story, different perspectives, internal monologue, thought process, conscious and unconscious states of awareness, structure, removed and distanced point of view, language and imagery.

Assignment 3. Second Essay (Word Count: 2000 min)

Due In Tuesday 1st May

For the second essay you are required to research and analyse the genre of 'troubles literature'. Having researched and identified specific issues you wish to explore in your essay, use at least two of the following books; 'Reading In The Dark' 'Cal', 'Eureka Street' as part of your analysis. Your essay should cover the following areas of analysis.

1. The Role Of The Author

What role might the author play in exploring the troubles? What responsibilities does the writer have in portraying the troubles? What problems might the author encounter in trying to explore and represent the troubles through the form of the novel?

2. Forms And Conventions In 'Troubles Literature'

What specific forms and conventions are employed in these novels? Consider the use of structure, narrative, character, style and tone. How does the authors use of specific literary forms and conventions contribute to the effectiveness of their writing? What effect does this have on the reader?

3. Representing The Troubles

Consider how each author creates a different representation of the 'troubles'? Does the author suggest specific causes of the conflict? What possible ways of resolving the conflict are proposed? How is the experience of living with the troubles articulated? What effects does the conflict have on people's lives? What specific themes are addressed? What different perspectives and understandings of the conflict does each author create through their writing?

Assignment 4 Research and Class Contribution

You are expected to do a significant amount of independent thinking and researching as preparation for each class. Specific research assignments will be set for each class and you will be encouraged to bring this material to the texts and issues we cover. Research should be done alongside the reading of the set texts and you are expected to find and make available resources to the rest of the class.

The quality and content of the seminars are largely dependent on the amount of preparation that you do and the contribution you make to class discussions. You are expected to do a significant amount of independent thinking and researching as preparation for each class. Specific research assignments will be set for each class and you will be encouraged to bring this material to the texts and issues we cover. Research should be done alongside the reading of the set texts and you are expected to find and make available resources to the rest of the class.

The discussions will be based primarily on your responses to and understanding of the novels and the issues and ideas they raise. Please be aware of your responsibilities in making the sessions an interesting and productive learning experience.

To enable students to contribute and demonstrate their independent thinking and researching and preparation for each class, you will have an opportunity to influence the teaching agenda for each class. Each student is required to set three questions for each class. These questions should be submitted to me via e-mail by 2.00pm on the Friday before each class.

Use the following guidelines to help

- The questions can cover any aspect of the novel; themes, character, style, issues. As well as setting the questions, you will also need to ensure that you can initiate and lead the class discussion. Therefore you will need to ensure that you are sufficiently prepared to develop ideas and points that emerge in response to set questions. You should be able to steer the conversation towards specific points that you feel need to be made. Help in preparing this session you might the following points useful to consider.

- Avoid setting closed questions which can only lead to very limited response. Set questions that are sufficiently open to allow a range of responses or conflicting points of view.

- Avoid setting very easy questions. Your questions should challenge us to think about a particular aspect of the book critically and intellectually. Be prepared to push your colleagues in their responses so that we achieve an *analysis* of the novel rather than merely expressing an *opinion*.

- Try to engage with the complexity of the novel in all of its different aspects. Be prepared to direct us towards specific references in the text, give us relevant information and context to help us think through the question.

- Avoid setting three questions about the same character or theme. Similarly don't set three questions about the beginning of the novel. Your three questions should reflect different aspects of the novel (i.e. one question on character, one on theme, one on historical or political issues; one on the beginning and two on the end).

- When setting the questions, focus on what you found interesting about the novel. Remember that you will be talking through your own responses to the questions that you set, so be prepared to articulate your own ideas and understandings.

- A range of questions are available on most of the set texts at <http://www.readinggroupguides.com/findaguide/index.asp>. Alternatively you could consult the Readers Guides which have been published by Continuum Contemporaries. These contain discussion questions as well a detailed analysis of the novel and a comprehensive booklist.

- Submit the questions to me in order of preference. The questions you really want the class to discuss should be listed first. I'll structure them in to some cohesive order and will edit if there's an overlap.

- Email your questions to me at la.white@roehampton.ac.uk and at Lee.White10@btopenworld.com by 6.00pm on the Sunday before each class.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Each student is required to undertake a research project that will be presented to the group. Each presentation should be at least 15 min long. Students are encouraged to think beyond the limits of the dry lecture and incorporate other modes of presentation. Think of illustrating your presentations with staged extracts of texts, interviews, video clips, music or practical tasks involving the group. Be adventurous and think beyond the obvious.

These projects will draw upon common themes and questions in Irish literature that have been discussed during class. The areas of research encourage you to examine issues explored on the course in terms of their cultural, social, political and historical context.

The areas of research are intentionally broad, in order to extend our knowledge of Irish culture. However, they are all directly or indirectly influenced or shaped by the literary movement which we will be studying and it is this relationship that the research should focus on. Time will be made available to discuss the presentations and I will advise you on appropriate sources for research.

Areas of research will be discussed and agreed in Week 6. Research presentations will then be presented in Week 12 & 13.

RESEARCH TOPICS

Students must choose from one of the following research topics or suggest their own.

Irish History

The Famine

Easter Uprising 1916

The Civil War

Irish Politics

The Hunger Strikes (1981)

The IRA (focus on its most recent manifestation as the Provisional IRA, 1970-present)

The Civil Rights Movement (1969-71)

The Peace Talks

Irish Society

Religion

Women in Ireland

The Irish In America

Irish Migration

Irish Culture

Irish Cinema

Irish Comedy

Irish Media

Irish Music

Irish Theatre

Guidelines for Assignments

- 1) use available research. Bill can arrange for you to have access to the London Metropolitan University which has a good library collection on Irish literature . You need to give him about 2 weeks advance notice.
- 2) Your paper must demonstrate a close analysis and understanding of the relevant text.
- 3) Create a thesis which is well supported by your ideas, points and relevant research materials.
- 4) Keep your essay focussed on your ideas and points. Don't waste words on writing up information which isn't relevant. Use footnotes where appropriate.

GRADES

A Grades

Work that demonstrates a sophisticated and intellectual understanding of literary analysis in relation to relevant issues and ideas pertinent to the topic. Work that takes on and develops ideas and points covered in class and integrates this as part of your own independent thinking. Presentation of ideas and analysis that clearly demonstrates the deployment of original thinking and arguments, supported by a appropriate, informed and detailed use of research material.

B Grades

Work that demonstrates an awareness and understanding of literary analysis in relation to relevant issues and ideas pertinent to the topic. Work that shows some evidence of taking on and developing ideas and points made in class and demonstrates some independent thinking. Deployment of some original thinking and arguments. Presentation of ideas that clearly demonstrates the deployment of some original thinking and arguments supported by research which gives some weight to the points being made

C Grades

Work that shows little independent thinking and critical analysis. Over reliance on repeating ideas and points that have already been made in class. Insufficient research and failure to integrate research as support to independent thinking.

ESSENTIAL TEXTS

* denotes that you are expected to purchase the text

Lucy Caldwell: When They Were Missed*

Seamus Deane: Reading In The Dark*

Roddy Doyle: A Star Called Henry*

Brian Friel: Translations
Copies in the Resources Room

James Joyce: Dubliners
Copies in the Resources Room

John McGahern: Amongst Women*

Joseph O'Connor: Star Of The Sea*

Tony Parker, May The Lord In His Mercy Be Kind To Belfast*

J. M. Synge: The Playboy of The Western World
Copies in the Resources Room

Robert McLiam
Wilson: Eureka Street*

WEEKLY PROGRAMME

The weekly programme provided is a guide for students to help them with advance planning. However there may be changes to allow for discussion and development of issues that emerge from our discussions.

Week One **INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE**

Tuesday 16th January

Wednesday 17th January **THEATRE VISIT:** The Seafarer by Conor McPherson at National Theatre: Cottesloe.

Week Two **LANGUAGE, PLACE AND COLONISATION**

Tuesday 23rd January

'a civilisation can be imprisoned in linguistic contour which no longer matches the landscape ... of fact'

Set Texts: Brian Friel, Translations
(Copies available in The Resource Room)

Week Three **THE EASTER UPRISING**

Tuesday 30th January

Screening: Michael Collins

Week Four **THE GREAT FAMINE, LEAVE TAKING AND MIGRATION**

Tuesday 6th February

'Providence sent the potato blight but England made the Famine'

Set Text: Joseph O'Connor, The Star and The Sea

Wednesday 7th February **THEATRE VISIT:** 'There Came a Gypsy Riding' by Frank McGuinness at The Almeida Theatre

Week Five **MYTH, MORALITY AND LANDSCAPE**

Tuesday 13th February

'after making a mighty man of me this day by the power of a lie'

Set Text: J. M. Synge, The Playboy of the Western World,
(Copies available in The Resources Room)

Week Six **REVISING THE PAST**

Tuesday 20th February

'He made his life up as he went along'

Set Text: Roddy Doyle, A Star Called Henry

Week Seven **THE AFTERMATH OF WAR**

Tuesday 27th February

'I kept my promise: I did not exist today'

Set Text: John McGahern, Amongst Women

Assignment 1 Tuesday 27th February

MID TERM BREAK

Week Eight **MEMORY AND CONFLICT**

Tuesday 13th March

*"Great hatred, little room / Maimed us at the start. / I carry from
my mother's womb / A fanatic heart."*

Set Text: Seamus Deane, Reading In The Dark

Week Nine

VOICES OF THE TROUBLES

Tuesday 20th March

Set Text :Tony Parker, May The Lord In His Mercy Be Kind To Belfast

Wednesday 21st March **THEATRE VISIT:** 'Leaves' by Lucy Caldwell at The Royal Court

Week Ten

POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND EVERYDAY LIFE

Tuesday 27th March

'The sun beats down on the marchers to the time of their own lambeg drums, and the heat makes everyone cross and cranky.'

Set Text: Lucy Caldwell, When They Were Missed

Week Eleven

VIOLENCE, INSANITY AND ABSURDITY

Tuesday 3rd April

'People thought them deathfields - - remote, televised knackers' yards. Belfast was only big because Belfast was bad'

Set Text: Robert McLiam Wilson, Eureka Street

Week Twelve

THE CITY AND JAMES JOYCE

Tuesday 10th April

Set Text: James Joyce, Dubliners
(Copies available in The Resources Room)

DUBLIN TRIP February 13th-15th

Week Thirteen

CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOP

Tuesday 17th April

Week Fourteen

CONSULTATION WEEK

Tues 24th April

Assignment 2 Creative Writing Assignment Due Tuesday 24th April

Week Fifteen

FINAL EXAM WEEK

Tues 1st May

Assignment 3 Due Tuesday 1st May

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Lyons, F. S. L. Ireland Since The Famine

O'Faolain, Sean The Irish

Woodham-Smith, Cecil (1962) - The Great Hunger, Ireland 1845 -1849, Penguin *

Terrorism

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Kiberd, Declan (1996) Inventing Ireland: The Literature Of The Modern Nation, Vintage

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Unterecker, John (1959) A Reader's Guide to W. B. Yeats, Thames and Hudson

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Brown, Terrence, (1981) Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, Fontana

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Lyons, F. S. L. (1979) Culture and Anarchy in Ireland 1890 -1939 *

Film

Hill, John, McLoone, Martin, Hainsworth, Paul, (1994) Border Crossing - Film in Ireland, Britain and Europe, Inst. Of Irish Studies/ BFI, 1994.

Kevin Rockett, Luke Gibbons & John Hill (1988) Cinema and Ireland, Routledge.

* Copies available in The Resources Room

http://www.guardian.co.uk/Northern_Ireland/0,2759,446746,00.html

http://www.guardian.co.uk/Northern_Ireland/flash/0,6189,344692,00.html

<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/index.html>

<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/literature/novels/pelaschiar.htm>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/northernireland/learning/history/index.shtml>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/northernireland/eyewitness/index.shtml>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/northernireland/learning/history/stateapart/index.shtml>

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ira/>

<http://larkspirit.com/general/irishhub.html>

Americans with Disabilities Act: Syllabus Insert for Faculty

In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, reasonable accommodation will be provided to students with documented disabilities on a case by case basis. Students must register with the Office of Academic Support Services and provide appropriate documentation to the college before any academic adjustment will be provided.