Contemporary Irish & Northern Irish Literature

IRSH 360 *** MWF 11:10 – 12:00 *** LA 308

ABOUT WE COURSE

It's fashionable these days to be an Irish writer, and this at a time when the Irish themselves often feel that "Irishness" is something from which they must escape. The surge of interest in all things Irish can make it difficult to locate Ireland and Irishness—geographically, culturally, or otherwise; indeed, never has Irishness been more open, adaptable, and elusive than it is in this historical moment. In this course, we will study an exciting and provocative selection of fiction, poetry, drama, film, and music of Irish and Northern Irish artists of the past four decades. The primary goal of the course will be to understand how contemporary artists are responding to the burdens of history, identity, and political conflict, as well as articulating the challenges and possibilities created by the profound changes attending a globalized world. Regarding Northern Ireland, after surveying some of the literary responses to the political conflict euphemistically known as the “Troubles,” we'll study the inspiring (though still fragile) peace process. Ultimately, you will be expected to leave with a basic knowledge of Irish history in the twentieth century and with a more informed understanding of the crisis and subsequent peace in Northern Ireland.

TEXTS

Boland, Eavan *Object Lessons* (1995)  
McLaverty, Bernard *Cal* (1983)  
Carson, Ciaran *Belfast Confetti* (1989)  
Toibin, Colm *The Heather Blazing* (1992)  
Friel, Brian *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990)  
Trevor, William *Fools of Fortune* (1983)  
Wilson, Robert McLiam *Eureka Street*  
McGahern, John *Amongst Women* (1990)

NOTE: Additional readings (both required and optional) will be available via the course Moodle site.

requirements

Group presentation (w/ handout & annotated bibliography) .................. 10%  
Two (2) response papers (2-3 pp. each) ........................................ 20%  
History and reading quiz .............................................................. 20%  
Participation ................................................................................. 20%  
Analytical/research paper (8-10 pp.) ............................................. 30%

All papers must be turned in at the beginning of class on the day they are due. Unless otherwise noted, all papers must be typed and double-spaced, with 1” margins; to avoid grade reductions, you must meet the minimum page requirement (e.g., 2-3 pages means at least two full pages, not counting the space used for headings, etc.). Additional formatting instructions will be provided when the papers are assigned. Late papers will be marked down one-half letter grade per day (weekends count as one day). Your ability to take advantage of revision opportunities as they arise will be contingent upon the original paper having been turned in on time and having met the basic
requirements for the assignment (minimum page length, etc.); I recommend, too, that you meet with me during office hours to discuss your revision.

We *analytical/research paper* will be derived from a line-of-inquiry of your choosing and will focus on one (or more) of our class texts. This thesis-driven investigation will also necessarily be in conversation with multiple secondary sources as it conducts its argument. You will be asked to submit an abstract in advance that outlines the contexts, subject matter, and possible argument for your essay.
In addition to the final analytical paper, you will write two shorter response papers that will find you investigating a specific aspect of/angle on a text of your choosing from roughly the first half of the course. Your class participation grade will hinge on regular attendance, diligent and careful reading of the assigned texts, on your willingness to talk about this reading in class (there will be mini-lecture segments each week, in all likelihood, but this will largely be a discussion-based environment), and on various short and largely informal short writing assignments. Regarding attendance, more than three absences will start to attract attention; if you miss six or more classes (i.e., two or more weeks of class) your class participation grade will likely not be higher than a “C.”

For the group presentation, you are to pair up with a colleague sign up for one of the “special topic” presentations (see the schedule). On the scheduled day, your group will (1) give a 10-12 minute presentation on your topic, and (2) provide each member of the class with a handout that includes a short but informative written summary of your topic and an annotated bibliography of 3-5 sources that scholars might consult if they should wish more information on your topic (only one of these sources may be a website).

**ACADEMIC HONESTY**

All work that you submit for this class must be your own, and it must be written exclusively for this course. The unacknowledged borrowing of others’ words or ideas—whether from books, the internet, or other sources—constitutes the serious academic crime of plagiarism; if you fail to document properly those sources consulted for your writing, you risk an automatic failure for the entire course. If you have any doubts or questions about plagiarism or the University’s policy on it, please see me.

**SPECIAL NEEDS**

If you have a documented disability, or otherwise anticipate needing special accommodations in this course, please bring this to my attention as early in the semester as possible so that we have an understanding and can make arrangements.

**IRISH 360: A PARTIAL GLOSSARY**

Terms, figures, events, dates, and, generally, “quiz bait”

| 1541, 1798, 1801 | H-Blocks | Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) |
| 1916 | Home Rule |
| 1919-21, 1922-23 | Hume, John |
| 1922, 1937, 1949 | Ideology |
| 1968, 1998 | Long Kesh |
| Act of Union | Loyalist |
| Adams, Gerry | Mitchell, George |
| Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement | Nation |
| Black & Tans | Nationalist |
| Bloody Sunday | Northern Ireland Assembly |
| Carson, Edward | Official IRA |
| Catholic | O’Neill, Terence |
| Clinton, Bill | Paisley, Ian |
| Collins, Michael | Partition (1922) |
| Constitution | Peace line |
| De Valera, Eamon | Protestant |
| Direct Rule | Provisional IRA |
| Easter Rising | Religion |
| Ethnicity | Republican |
TENTATIVE SCHEDULE
All reading to be completed by class time on the date listed; please always bring your book(s) to class.

1  **The Rising, The Free State, The Six Counties**
   Sept 02 (W)  Trevor *Fools of Fortune* (9-44)
   Sept 04 (F)  *Fools of Fortune* (44-104)

2  **The Anglo-Irish & the Big House**
   Sept 07 (M)  NO CLASS : Labor Day
   Sept 09 (W)  *Fools of Fortune* (107-192)  [ sp. topic: the big house ]
   Sept 11 (F)  McGahern *Amongst Women* (1-61)

3  **The Post-Independence Republic**
   Sept 14 (M)  *Amongst Women* (61-145)
   Sept 16 (W)  *Amongst Women* (145-184)  [ sp. topic: sinn fein & the ira ]
   Sept 18 (F)  *Amongst Women* (145-184)

4  **The Post-Independence Republic**
   Sept 21 (M)  Toibin *The Heather Blazing* (3-81)  [ sp. topic: e. de valera & m. collins ]
   Sept 23 (W)  *The Heather Blazing* (85-145)
   Sept 25 (F)  *The Heather Blazing* (146-188)

5  **Home Rules**
   Sept 28 (M)  *The Heather Blazing* (189-245)
   Sept 30 (W)  Friel *Dancing at Lughnasa* (Act I)  [ sp. topic: the celtic cross ]
   Oct  02 (F)  *Dancing at Lughnasa* (Act II)

6  **Mother Ireland**
   Oct  05 (M)  Boland *Object Lessons* (3-119)
   Oct  07 (W)  *Object Lessons* (123-254)
   Oct  09 (F)  poems by Boland, Ni Dhomhnaill, and McGuckian (Moodle)

7  **Politics and the Northern Irish Writer**
   Oct 12 (M)  “The Troubles”: introduction and contexts.  [ RESPONSE PAPER 1 DUE ]
               McCann “Everything in This Country Must” (Moodle)
   Oct 14 (W)  MacLaverty *Cal* (7-56)  [ sp. topic: bloody sunday ]
   Oct 16 (F)  *Cal* (57-89)

8  **Contested Spaces**
   Oct 19 (M)  *Cal* (90-154)
   Oct 21 (W)  Poetry of “The Troubles”  [ sp. topic: belfast ]
   Oct 23 (F)  Carson *Belfast Confetti*

9  **The Peace Process and The Troubles Thriller**
   Oct 26 (M)  *Belfast Confetti*, cont’d.
   Oct 28 (W)  McLiam Wilson *Eureka Street* (1-58)
   Oct 30 (F)  *Eureka Street* (59-130)  [ sp. topic: bobby sands & hunger strikes ]
10  “The Citizens, They are tender, murderable”
   Nov 02 (M)  Eureka Street (131-211)
   Nov 04 (W)  Eureka Street (212-238)
   Nov 06 (F)  Music and the Troubles  [ sp. topic: music & ireland ]

11  “The Goal is SOul”
   Nov 09 (M)  Film viewing: The Commitments (1991, dir. Alan Parker);
   Nov 11 (W)  NO CLASS : Veterans Day
   Nov 13 (F)  The Commitments, cont’d.  [ RESPONSE PAPER 2 DUE ]

12  Peacing Together the North
   Nov 16 (M)  The Commitments, cont’d & discussion.
   Nov 18 (W)  Eureka Street (239-339)
   Nov 20 (F)  Eureka Street (340-396);  [ sp. topic: good friday agreement ]
               The Good Friday Agreement

13  A Look Back
   Nov 23 (M)  History quiz
   Nov 25 (W)  NO CLASS : Thanksgiving
   Nov 27 (F)  NO CLASS : Thanksgiving

14  Crossings
   Nov 30 (M)  McCann TransAtlantic (3-99)
   Dec 02 (W)  TransAtlantic (100-152)
   Dec 04 (F)  Writing workshop

15  A Further Shore
   Dec 07 (M)  TransAtlantic (153-248)
   Dec 09 (W)  TransAtlantic (249-300)
   Dec 11 (F)  Conclusions and course evaluations

16  Final Papers
   Dec 17 (TH)  Papers due by 5:00 p.m. in LA 226 or LA 133  [ ANALYTICAL/RESEARCH PAPER DUE ]