

SPRING TERM IN IRELAND 2010

Classes and Academic work

The overall focus is on “Modern Irish Literature,” the major period of the early 20th century (often described as the “Celtic Revival” or “Irish Renaissance”) that featured such astonishing work as the poetry of W.B. Yeats, the plays of J.M. Synge, the fiction of James Joyce, and the plays and folklore of Lady Gregory. But we really spread our net wide in this program, studying as well early Irish language and poetry, storytellers from the Island culture, works of history, politics, and culture, other playwrights, and several major 20th and 21st century poets and novelists including Patrick Kavanagh, Seamus Heaney, Jamie O’Neill, and Evan Boland. We see several plays while in Ireland as well as dance, theater, and musical performances. So while our main focus is on modernity, we engage the whole range of Irish culture from pre-historic to contemporary.

CREDITS/DISTRIBUTION: The 4-week program receives 4 credits in English at the 300 level, Late British distribution. The 6-week program receives 6 credits in English at the 300 level, Late British distribution.

Course Descriptions & Schedule

Eng 385: Preparatory Reading for Study Abroad (1 credit, P/F, winter term)

A 1-credit class that will meet bi-weekly during the winter semester, to introduce students to the culture and history of Ireland. The major text will be Conner’s Irish History: A Web Text, accompanied by 3 lectures on Irish history and the development of Irish literature. We will also view several films on Irish subjects (Michael Collins, The Field, The Commitments, The Wind that Shakes the Barley, Dancing at Lughnasa), as well as read several plays, memoirs, works of history and culture, and selected poems.

Eng 380: Irish Poetry (3 credits, late British literature for distribution)

This course will focus on the development of the rich traditions of Irish poetry, paying attention both to major historical themes and specific poets. We will devote three weeks to the study of the Irish language and Irish mythology, culminating in student translations of several medieval Gaelic lays (short poems); concurrently, we will read a wide range of medieval and early modern Irish poetry in translation, attending to the tension between pagan and Christian elements, as well as the movement from oral to written poetry. All readings will coincide with site visits to numerous sites throughout the southwest, west, and midlands of Ireland. We will focus principally on the work of Ireland’s greatest poet, W.B. Yeats, and will devote two weeks to detailed readings of his greatest lyric poems, concurrent with our tour of the Yeats and Gregory country and properties. In addition, throughout the term we will concentrate on two of the greatest 20th/21st century Irish poets, Seamus Heaney and Patrick Kavanagh, reading a significant range of their work and treating such themes as the uses of the Irish past, particularly myth and legend; belief, despair, prayer, and sin in poetry; fragmentation, paralysis, and silence; the figure of the artist; attitudes toward the Irish landscape, people, and culture; and the political crises of nationalism, colonialism, and revolution that dominate Irish thought. Students will take a

number of language quizzes; write three short papers on the relations between the Irish landscape and Irish poetry; and write a longer (7-page) essay on Yeats's poetry and its relation to Irish place.

Eng 387: Ireland in Literature and Landscape (Supervised Study in Ireland, 3 credits)

An intensive engagement with the landscape and culture of Ireland past and present. Readings will be coordinated with our site visits, and will include: The Blasket Island literature (Tomas O'Crohan, *The Islandman* and Peig Sayers, *An Old Woman's Reflections: The Life of a Blasket Island Storyteller*); the Aran Islands (J.M. Synge, *The Aran Islands*); the West of Ireland in folk and fairy tale (Lady Gregory, *Visions and Beliefs, Poets and Dreamers, A Book of Saints and Wonders, The Kiltartan Poetry Book*, and *Cuchalain of Muirthemne*); Joyce's Dublin (James Joyce, *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*); Irish drama, keyed to current showings at the Abbey, Peacock, and Gate theaters in Dublin and the National Folk Theater (Siamsa Tire) in Tralee; and Irish poetry (selected poems based upon or composed in various sites). Site visits will range quite broadly: prehistoric burial tombs, Celtic sites of religious and political import, early Christian monastic sites, Norman castles and tower houses, Georgian houses, as well as a range of contemporary structures including the contested neighborhoods in Belfast, Stormont, and other areas of Northern Ireland. Students will write three short interpretive essays on various cultural "texts" (architectural, botanic, historical, literary, dramatic, or otherwise); and a longer essay (7 pp.) on Joyce's fiction and its relation to Dublin and environs.

**Weekly Readings & Assignments for Spring Term in Ireland, 2010
(English 380 and 387/388)**

Basic schedule: M & W, site visit trip (all day), Tu & Th, classes 10-11:30 (380: Irish poetry), 12-1:30 (387: Irish language, myth, and politics)

Week One: Synge, "In West Kerry," Heaney, "In Gallarus Oratory," and Kavanagh, "The Great Hunger" (for Monday, 4/26)

Gregory, all selections from *Visions and Beliefs, Poets and Dreamers, A Book of Saints and Wonders, The Kiltartan Poetry Book*, and *The Kiltartan History Book* (pp.55-164) (for Tuesday, 4/27); and *Kathleen ni Houlihan* and *The Rising of the Moon* (pp.301-311, 363-372) (for Thursday, 4/29)

Site Reading #1 due

Week Two: Selected poems by Yeats

Site Reading #2 due Monday

Week Three: Synge, *The Playboy of the Western World* (for Tuesday, 5/11) and *Riders to the Sea* (for Thursday, 5/13)

selected poems by Heaney and Kavanagh; **Site Reading #3 due**

Week Four: Thomas O'Crohan, *The Islandman*

selected poems by Heaney and Kavanagh

Site Reading #4 due**Essay #1, on Yeats or Gregory, due Monday 5/17
for 388 only: web log of travels and sites due****Week Five: Joyce, *Dubliners***

selected poems by Heaney and Kavanagh

Site Reading #5 due**Week Six: Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man***

selected poems by Heaney and Kavanagh

Site Reading #6 due**Essay #2, on Joyce and Dublin, due Friday 6/4**

Site reading assignment: Choose any kind of cultural “site” that you have encountered on your travels thus far in Ireland (this can be a poem, a human structure such as a castle, a graveyard, or an abbey, a natural landscape such as a river or mountain, a cultural object such as a painting or a pint of Guinness, a cultural event such as a hurling match or a music session, etc.). Write a 3-page “reading” of that site, explaining its specific qualities, its cultural importance, and the reason it interests you.

WRITTEN WORK: there are lots of ways we penetrate Irish culture through various written projects. There will be some variation, but you can pretty much count on the following: 2 interpretive papers, a weekly “site reading” project (1-2 page written study of some object of Irish culture, ranging from a poem to a traditional music session to a pint of Guinness to a medieval ruin, etc.), a weekly journal assignment (a more focused and interpretive work than, say, one’s own personal diary), various in-class written works, and more. The writing load is consistent with on-campus courses, but we seek to spend the bulk of our time “in the field,” not the library or computer terminal, so the assignments differ a bit from traditional projects. NOTE: the 4-week program will add an online web log as part of its written work.

Course Objectives for a 300-level English class: Students will learn how to . . .

1. write clear, persuasive analytical essays driven by arguments about texts.
2. read closely, recognizing subtle and complex differences in language use.
3. seek out further knowledge about literary works, authors, and contexts, and document research appropriately, adhering to the highest standards of intellectual honesty.
4. broaden the range of literary texts and performances from which they can derive pleasure and edification.

Foundation Requirements for Literature Objectives:

Literary study aims to understand the human condition and experience as expressed by the individual imagination through language. Through such study, students acquire an aesthetic interest to pursue throughout their lifetime. Courses may focus on literature written in English, in a foreign language, or in translation. In literature courses, students

- acquire knowledge about the cultural and historical context of literature;
- learn to analyze various literary forms and complex and difficult language;

- learn to read with imagination; and,
- respond critically to literature orally and in writing.