

English 388: Spring Term in Ireland

April 22-May 18, 2012

Professor Marc Conner

SYLLABUS AND ACADEMIC SCHEDULE

WEEK ONE: APRIL 23-27

SYNGE AND THE WEST OF IRELAND

J.M. Synge, "In West Kerry," *Riders to the Sea*, *The Playboy of the Western World*
Seamus Heaney, "The Peninsula," "The Stations of the West," "Personal Helicon," "The Barn," "Churning-Day," "The Forge," "Thatcher"
Site Reading assignment #1 due by Friday, 4/27

WEEK TWO: APRIL 30-May 4

YEATS AND GREGORY

Yeats, "In the Seven Woods," "Upon a House Shaken by the Land Agitation," "The Wild Swans at Coole," "In Memory of Major Robert Gregory," "An Irish Airman Foresees his Death," "A Prayer for my Daughter," "To Be Carved on a Stone at Thoor Ballylee," "Sailing to Byzantium," "Blood and the Moon," "Coole Park, 1929," "Meditations in Time of Civil War," "Leda and the Swan"
Lady Gregory, *Kathleen ni Houlihan* and *Rising of the Moon*; selections from *Visions and Beliefs*, *A Book of Saints and Wonders*, *The Kiltartan History Book*, *The Kiltartan Poetry Book*; also Anne Gregory's *Me & Nu: Childhood at Coole*
Heaney, "W.B. Yeats and Thoor Ballylee"
Site Reading assignment #2 due by Sunday, 5/6

WEEK THREE: MAY 7-11

THE BLASKET ISLANDS

Tomas O'Crohan, *The Islandman*; Robin Flower, *The Western Island* (selections)
Heaney, "The Given Note," "Anahorish," "The Disappearing Island," "North," "Bog Queen," "Kinship"
Site Reading assignment #3 due by Friday, 5/11

WEEK FOUR: MAY 14-18

THE LATE YEATS ~ HEANEY'S BOG POEMS ~ BOLAND'S IRELAND

Yeats, "Among School Children," "Beautiful Lofty Things," "The Municipal Gallery Revisited," "Under Ben Bulbin," "The Circus Animals' Desertion"

Heaney, "Mossbawn: Two Poems in Dedication," *Glanmore Sonnets*

Heaney, "Mossbawn" (essay)

Boland, selected poems

Site Reading assignment #4 due by Friday, May 18

Letter Essay due by Friday, May 18

The Site Reading Assignment: While on one of our journeys, you will choose a "site" of some sort that interests, puzzles, intrigues, or challenges you. You then write a 1-2 page "site reading" of the site/object, approaching it in any interpretive manner you wish: description, argument, interrogation, dialogue, artwork, etc. The writing must offer an *interpretive response*, but this is widely construed. I then read and respond to the writing. You'll write one of these per week, developing over the course of the four-week term a 6-8 page ongoing interpretive journal of your Ireland experience. The "site" can be just about anything: a poem, of course; a castle, monastery, cathedral, etc. Or a live traditional music session in a pub. An island, a cliff, a lake. A politician's poster. An interview, or chance conversation with someone. Each year a student writes on a pint of Guinness, thinking they're being wonderfully inventive. As you watch these readings develop, you'll note your increasing sophistication in interpreting Irish culture: typically students begin with vague generalizations about Irish culture, but by the third week, their observations are growing particularly acute and detailed; and by the term's end, they are producing wonderfully thoughtful, focused, and articulate interpretations of the nuances of Irish society and art.

The Letter Essay: Your final project is a "Letter Essay," which takes the following form: over the course of our four weeks, you will write to me 3 "letters" of 2-3 pages each, in which you'll describe to me something you are learning about Irish literature. (You won't send me these letters as you write them—rather, you'll save them until the end of the term.) At the end of the four weeks, you'll revise these letters into a continuous three-part "correspondence" to me, with an introduction, the 3 letters, and a conclusion. You'll then submit this to me either via email or in hard copy. My comments on this project will be my letter back to you. (Note: the final form of this writing can vary widely—creativity and freedom are encouraged, though acute critical analysis is required.)

Grading: grades are determined as follows: 33% for class participation (meaningful contributions to our discussion of the material; complete attendance at and participation

in all class meetings, program events, trips, and activities, unless something is ANNOUNCED as “optional”); 33% for the 4 site readings; and 33% for the letter essay.

Class Participation Standards and Expectations: A major part of this class depends upon active and thoughtful participation by all members. To clarify what I regard as “active and thoughtful participation,” and how I will grade and evaluate student participation, I offer the following descriptions:

- Outstanding (“A” grade participation): Contributions or questions reflect exceptional preparation prior to class. Ideas are substantive and provide major insights. Questions reflect prior intellectual engagement with the material, they make linkages to other relevant material, and they often contribute to the learning of others. *If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would be diminished markedly.*
- Good (“B” grade participation): Contributions reflect thorough preparation. Ideas offered are usually substantive and provide good insights. Questions are thoughtful and serve to clarify important issues. *If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would be diminished.*
- Adequate (“C” grade participation): Contributions in class reflect satisfactory preparation. Ideas offered are sometimes substantive, and provide generally useful insights. Questions help to clarify material. *If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would be somewhat diminished.*
- Non-participant (“D” grade participation): Person says little or nothing in class. Hence, there is not an adequate basis for evaluation. *If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would not be changed.*
- Unsatisfactory (“F” grade participation): Contributions in class reflect inadequate preparation. Ideas offered are seldom substantive, provide few if any insights and never a constructive direction for the class. Questions clearly indicate a lack of preparation for the class. Student often talks much, but says little. *If this person were not a member of the class, class discussion would actually be better.*

Student Learning Objectives:

Students in English 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.