

## MODERN IRISH LITERATURE CAS EN 392

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### **Course Overview**

Students are introduced to the rich heritage of modern Irish literature. The work of influential literary figures such as James Joyce, Flann O'Brien, Elizabeth Bowen and Eavan Boland, together with that of Nobel laureates W.B. Yeats, Samuel Beckett and Seamus Heaney, are examined with reference to shifting cultural and historical contexts. The course will encompass drama, fiction and poetry and cover the period from the beginning of the Irish Literary Revival in the 1890s up to contemporary Irish writing and writers of the twenty-first century. Key recurring themes include the importance of the artist both in the shaping and interrogation of national identities, issues of gender, myth and cultural memory, and the writer as social critic and chronicler.

### **Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the course you should:

- Have experienced a range of literary work across different genres by Irish writers.
- Be familiar with the major themes of those writers and of Irish writing in general.
- Be able to relate these writers to each other in a specifically Irish context.
- Understand and write about the contribution these writers made to the formation of modern Irish identity and world literature.

### **Teaching Methodology**

Tuition is conducted mainly through a series of seminars, followed by class discussion. Sessions are also set aside for close readings of texts involving full class participation. There are also a number of lectures given by guest speakers; class discussion will follow these lectures. Video materials may be used to stimulate interest and vary the teaching methods. Students are expected to read and be familiar with the texts on their required reading list and any subsequent required reading lists circulated, even if those texts are not explicitly discussed in class, and they may be asked to give brief presentations on the major texts or on class content. Students may also be taken on a number of guided field trips of relevant interest.

### **Grading Criteria**

**Attendance & participation (20%):** Participative class discussion is an integral part of the course. Students are encouraged to ask questions and are expected to actively engage in discussion during class, and to give short presentations when requested by the lecturer. Students will be required to submit a written copy of their class presentations.

**Quizzes (10%):** There are **two** short test quizzes taken during the course, in each of which you will be required to answer 10 out of 15 short questions.

**Essay (40%):** The essay should be 2,000-2,500 words long. Essay requirements will be distributed with the essay titles.

**Exam (30%):** In the final exam you will be required to comprehensively answer **three** questions from a selection on the paper – excluding the topic on which you did your essay.

### **Required Reading**

Declan Kiberd, 'Irish Literature and Irish History', in R.F. Foster (ed.) *The Oxford History of Ireland* (Oxford), pp. 230-81.

In addition, students should have their own copy of the following to bring to class:

W.B. Yeats, *The Major Works*, ed. Ed Larrissy (Oxford)\*

James Joyce, *Dubliners*, ed. Terence Brown (Penguin)\*\*

Flann O'Brien, *At Swim-Two-Birds* (Penguin)

Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (Faber and Faber)

Chris Binchy, *Open-handed* (Penguin)

\* This edition contains not only a selection of Yeats' poems, but the plays and miscellaneous writings necessary for this course.

\*\* The Introduction to this edition is required reading.

All other material will be provided in hand-outs.

### **Suggested Background Reading**

Eavan Boland, *Object Lessons: The Life of the Woman and the Poet in Our Time* (Norton).

Terence Brown, *The Life of W.B. Yeats* (Macmillan).

*Ireland: A Social and Cultural History 1922-2002* new ed. (Harper Perennial).

Neil Corcoran, *After Yeats and Joyce: Reading Modern Irish Literature* (Oxford).

*Elizabeth Bowen: The Enforced Return* (Oxford).

Anthony Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* (Paladin)

Seamus Deane et al (eds), *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* (Cork U.P.).

Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (Oxford).

Andrew Gibson, *James Joyce* (Reaktion).

P.B. Haberstroh, *Women Creating Women: Contemporary Irish Women Poets* (Attic).

Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland* (Vintage).

*Irish Classics* (Granta).

James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (Bloomsbury).

Hermione Lee, *Elizabeth Bowen* (Vintage).

Bernard O'Donoghue, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Seamus Heaney* (Cambridge)

Helen Vendler, *Seamus Heaney* (Harper Collins).

## **Web Resources**

Links to critical resources on W.B. Yeats, James Joyce, Elizabeth Bowen, Samuel Beckett, Eavan Boland and Seamus Heaney can be found at:

<http://www.literaryhistory.com>

Samuel Beckett resources:

<http://www.samuel-beckett.net/>

[http://www.themodernword.com/beckett/beckett\\_criticism.html](http://www.themodernword.com/beckett/beckett_criticism.html)

Online version of the W.B. Yeats exhibition in the National Library of Ireland:

<http://www.nli.ie/yeats/>

Further recommended reading may be suggested.

## **Terms and Conditions**

Full attendance and participation in class is required. Non-attendance must be verified by a medical certificate or will result in grading penalties at the discretion of the professor. Essays should answer the question posed or discuss the topic set. An essay should include a discussion of different positions in the literature, develop an argument relevant to the topic and reach a conclusion. Attempt to summarize the different positions in the literature in your own words. Do not use excessively long quotes. All quotes must be clearly designated by 'quotation marks' and duly acknowledged. All papers must be typed and double spaced, and be 2,500 words in length. It is essential that you provide full references of your sources, either in end- or footnotes. In addition, you should attach a full bibliography. Proper and full referencing is one of the marking criteria. Should you wish to write on authors or texts not on the course, please consult with your lecturer in advance.

## **Plagiarism**

It is every student's responsibility to read the Boston University statement on plagiarism, which is available in the Academic Conduct Code. Students are advised that the penalty against students on a Boston University program for cheating on examinations or for plagiarism may be "...expulsion from the program or the University or such other penalty as may be recommended by the Committee on Student Academic Conduct, subject to approval by the Dean."

**Note:** Students must retain an electronic copy of all essays submitted for assessment.

## Lecture Schedule

Date	Lecture Title / Activity
	Introduction: Anglo-Irish Literature and the Literary Revival
	W.B. Yeats and Nationalist Ireland Texts: 'Cathleen Ni Houlihan' (play); 'To Ireland in the Coming Times', 'September 1913', 'Easter 1916'
	James Joyce I Text: <i>Dubliners</i>
	James Joyce II Text: 'The Dead'; Film: <i>The Dead</i> (John Huston)
	Elizabeth Bowen Text: selection of short stories (handout provided) Guest Lecturer: Dr Edwina Keown (TCD)
	Theatre Trip: Flann O'Brien, <i>At Swim-Two-Birds</i> at the Project Arts Centre (evening)
	<b>BREAK</b>
	Flann O'Brien Text: <i>At Swim-Two-Birds</i>
	Samuel Beckett – World Writer Text: <i>Waiting for Godot</i> Guest Lecturer: György Vidovszky (Barka Theatre, Budapest)
	Field Trip: W.B. Yeats Exhibition at the National Library and 'Kingship and Sacrifice' at the National Museum
	Politics and Poetry Text: Poems by Seamus Heaney, Ciaran Carson (handout provided)
	Irish Women Poets Text: Poems by Eavan Boland, Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin, Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill and others (handout provided) Guest Lecturer: Dr Eibhlín Evans
	The Contemporary Irish Novel Text: Chris Binchy, <i>Open-handed</i> Guest Speaker: Chris Binchy
	Conclusion
	<b>Final Examination</b>