

FILM & TV DRAMA IN IRELAND

SEMESTER / YEAR

Lecturer: Sheamus Sweeney, M.A.

Email: sheamus.sweeney@dcu.ie

Class times: TBC

Venues: TBC

Course description

Ireland has a rich production history of film and television drama, stretching back to the early twentieth century. However, Ireland's peripheral position both geographically and culturally between Europe and the US means that the film and television of other countries has had a disproportionate effect on how the Irish see themselves and others. This module provides a contextual and thematic overview of film and television drama in Ireland. By necessity this includes not only indigenous productions, but also those of other countries that deal with Ireland/Irishness and other foreign film and television that has shaped the expectations and aesthetic sense of successive Irish audiences. The course incorporates numerous theoretical approaches to film and television studies, including political economy, social history, mass communication theory, and cultural studies. This approach provides not only an introduction to film and television drama in Ireland but will also provide a firm basis for further general study of film and television.

Learning outcomes

On completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand the range of social forces, economic and historical factors, both internal and external, that have shaped film and television in Ireland;
- Compare the historical ethos of public service broadcasting in Europe with that of commercial network and cable television in the US;
- Analyze critically the representation of Ireland and Irishness on film and television, whether produced in Ireland or elsewhere;
- Engage with and understand the difficulties faced by Ireland and other countries attempting to produce culturally relevant film and television in the context of a globalised entertainment industry;
- Create a group presentation incorporating various themes and topics covered during the module, and integrate these with their other modules and experiences while in Ireland.

Class Time

The classes are principally taught through 3 hour lecture-seminars. Each class focuses on a particular aspect of Irish film and television, and is broken down into a mixture of lecture, discussion and screening. Students are required to engage with class discussions.

Students are assigned preparatory readings each week, which will be drawn from one of the assigned books or distributed either in hard copy or electronically the preceding week. These help provide additional context or detail for the lecture content. (Note: there is no assigned reading for week 1).

There is one cinema field trip and at least one guest lecturer during the course.

Finally, students are required to familiarise themselves with as much Irish film and television drama as possible, through visits to the cinema, borrowing DVDs from the DCU library and watching television.

Assignments and grading

The grading for this course is based on four components. These components and their percentage of total course grade are as follows:

1. Attendance and participation (10%): Attendance and participation in class discussion is essential to get the most out of the course. Students are encouraged to ask questions and are required to actively engage in discussion during presentations.

2. In-class presentation (10%): Students will give a 12-15 minute group presentation during the final class of the semester. This will be in the form of a “pitch”, made to a hypothetical group of American film / television executives. Students are expected to draw from, not only the film and tv drama module, but from their other classes, their internships and personal experiences. Their proposal must be for an Irish themed or related film, or television drama, documentary, reality show etc. An electronic copy of the script and presentation slides (Powerpoint, etc.) must be submitted prior to class.

3. Essay (20%): Students are required to submit an essay of 1,500 words, due for submission prior to the mid-semester break. A selection of topics will be provided. Essays should develop an argument relevant to the topic, and reach a conclusion. Excessively long quotations should be avoided and all quotations must be clearly designated by quotation marks and duly acknowledged. All papers must be typed at 1.5 line spacing. In addition you should attach a full bibliography.

4. Research Paper (30%): Students are required to propose a subject and complete a research paper of 3,000 words, due for submission in the penultimate week of the semester. A detailed proposal and outline, including a draft bibliography must be submitted for approval immediately after the mid-semester break. Excessively long quotations should be avoided and all quotations must be clearly designated by quotation marks and duly acknowledged. All papers must be typed at 1.5 line spacing with a full bibliography attached.

Boston University Dublin Programs

Note: Written work must be submitted to the lecturer in hard-copy at the start of class on the due date. Students must also retain an electronic copy of all essays submitted.

5. Exam (30%): Students are required to comprehensively answer two out of five questions for the exam. Students are excluded from answering an exam question that deals substantially with the topic on which they completed their essay or research paper.

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."

Reading list

Key readings are assigned each week. However, students are expected to read additional material.

The core text for the course is:

Pettitt, Lance (2000), *Screening Ireland: Film and Television representation*

Other suggested texts for the course:

Horgan, John (et al) (eds.) (2007), *Mapping Irish Media* (BU Program Library)

Sheehan, Helena (2004), *Irish Television Drama: A Society and its Stories* (available online at <http://webpages.dcu.ie/~sheehan/itvd.htm>)

Core books on particular course areas include:

Cinema

Barton, Ruth, (2004), *Irish National Cinema*

Barton, Ruth and O'Brien, Harvey (eds.) (2004), *Keeping it Real: Issues and Directions in Irish film and television*

McLoone, Martin, (2000), *Irish Film: The Emergence of Contemporary Cinema*

Hill, John (ed) (1994), *Border Crossing: Film in Ireland, Britain and Europe*

Rockett, Kevin, et al (1987), *Cinema and Ireland*

Flynn, Roddy and Brereton, Pat (2007), *Historical Dictionary of Irish Cinema*

Rockett, Kevin (2004), *Irish Film Censorship*

Television

Sheehan, Helena (2004), *The Continuing Story of Irish Television Drama: Tracking the Tiger* (available online at <http://doras.dcu.ie/4628/>)

Corcoran, Farrel (2004), *RTE and the Globalisation of Irish Television*

Savage, Robert (1996), *Irish Television: The Political and Social Origins*

McLoone, Martin and MacMahon, John (eds.) (1984) *Television and Irish Society: 21 Years of Irish Television*

General further reading.

Kirby, Peadar (et al) (eds.) (2002), *Reinventing Ireland*

McLoone, Martin, et al (1991), *Cultural Identity and Broadcasting in Ireland*

Rolston, Bill (ed) (1996), *War and Words: The Northern Ireland Media Reader*

Horgan, John (2001), *Irish Media, A Critical History Since 1922*

O'Brien, Harvey (2004) *The Evolution of Ireland in Documentary Film*

Further readings may be suggested by individual guest lecturers. Students are also encouraged to read Irish newspapers, particularly articles dealing with film, television or the media in general.

Lecture Schedule

Note: This schedule may be adjusted to accommodate guest lecturers. Supplementary readings may also be suggested throughout the semester.

Date	Lecture Title / Activity
Week 1	<p>Introduction: Criteria for judging film and television drama. This lecture provides an overview of the module as well as a general introduction to film and television studies. Using different film and tv clips, students will be encouraged to interrogate image and narrative from different critical perspectives including, but not limited to, political economy, social history and textual analysis.</p> <p>No reading for week 1.</p> <p>Screening: <i>Pure Mule</i> (2005)</p>
Week 2	<p><i>The road from Innisfree: The development of Irish film.</i> The majority of the representations of Ireland and the Irish on the cinema screen have not been produced indigenously, but by other film industries. These images exerted a powerful influence to which the development of an Irish film industry was perceived as a necessary corrective.</p> <p>Reading: <i>Chapter 2: A century of cinema in Ireland</i> and <i>Chapter 3: Ireland and popular cinema</i> in "Screening Ireland" by Lance Pettitt.</p> <p>Screening: <i>Angel</i> (1982)</p>
Week 3	<p><i>Early Irish television drama: Social realism in Irish television.</i> In the late 1960s RTÉ was producing more television drama per capita, than any other European broadcaster. This drama bore the influence not only of the Irish literary revival but also of British social realism. The high point of this period was the 1980 adaptation of the novel <i>Strumpet City</i>.</p> <p>Reading: <i>Chapter : The circus in the front room</i> in "Screening Ireland" by Lance Pettitt. <i>Chapter 6: The 80s</i> in "Irish Television Drama" by Helena Sheehan.</p> <p>Screening: <i>Strumpet City</i> (1980)</p>
Week 4	<p><i>Screening the real: Documentary film and television.</i> Documentary film often explores areas deemed inappropriate for fiction, and has also played a part in creating an Irish national image. Ireland has produced many influential cinema documentaries including <i>Man of Aran</i> and <i>The Rocky Road to Dublin</i> and has a rich tradition of television documentary.</p> <p>Reading: <i>Chapter 4: Documents in celluloid</i> and <i>Chapter 10: Documenting Contemporary Ireland</i> in "Screening Ireland" by Lance Pettitt.</p> <p>Screening: <i>The Rocky Road to Dublin</i> (1966)</p>

Boston University Dublin Programs

Date	Lecture Title / Activity
Week 5	<p><i>“Ourselves alone”: A history of Irish language film and television drama.</i> The position of Ireland's national language has traditionally been a fraught one. RTÉ in its early days broadcast many Irish language dramas. However the language has not always been well represented in cinema and an Irish language television channel was only established in 1996.</p> <p>Reading: <i>Recent and current trends in Irish language broadcasting</i> by Iarfhlaith Watson in “Mapping Irish Media” and <i>Chapter 5: A cinema of romance and experiment</i> in “Screening Ireland” by Lance Pettitt.</p> <p>Screening: <i>Poitin</i> (1978)</p>
Week 6	<p><i>Cinema Field Trip.</i> The timing of this trip is subject to change to ensure the film we see is relevant to the course. As a back up there may be a screening of an appropriate Irish film in DCU.</p>
Week 7	<p><i>Guest Lecturer.</i> To be confirmed. We usually have a director / producer from Irish film or television to talk about their work and to offer insights into television and film production in Ireland.</p>
Week 8	<p><i>Contested History: Northern Ireland onscreen.</i> The period of “The Troubles” in Northern Ireland posed unique challenges for broadcasters and filmmakers interested in bring the reality of the conflict to the screen. Dramatists and journalists risked accusations of partiality and in the Republic of Ireland representatives of paramilitary organisations were banned from the airwaves.</p> <p>Reading: <i>Chapter 11: Television drama and the Troubles</i> in “Screening Ireland” by Lance Pettitt. <i>Getting Tough with RTÉ by Des Fisher</i> in “Political Censorship and the Democratic State” (BU Program Library)</p> <p>Screening: <i>Sunday</i> (2002)</p>
Week 9	<p><i>Consumer choice or cultural imperialism? (1): The influence of British television drama in Ireland.</i> RTÉ television, while putatively a monopoly, has always fought for audience share with a better financed and more established competitor. British television has always proved popular with Irish audiences, many of whom saw their experiences reflected in BBC and ITV.</p> <p>Reading: <i>BBC Drama at the margins</i> by Steve Blandford in “Popular Television Drama” (handout). <i>Chapter 7: A short history of broadcasting in Ireland</i> in “Screening Ireland” by Lance Pettitt.</p> <p>Screening: <i>Father Ted</i> (1997)</p>

Boston University Dublin Programs

Date	Lecture Title / Activity
Week 10	<p><i>Global Ireland: The development of modern Irish film.</i> The Irish Film Board was set up with a dual remit; to develop the Irish film industry as an economic entry and also to develop the cultural entity of a national cinema. For those films produced since the 1990s it is not always clear to which remit they conform.</p> <p>Reading: <i>Chapter 6: Between heritage and Hollywood, 1988-92</i> in “Screening Ireland” by Lance Pettitt. <i>About Adam and Paul: film policy in Ireland since 1993</i> by Roddy Flynn in “Mapping Irish Media”.</p> <p>Screening: <i>The Butcher Boy</i> (1997)</p>
Week 11	<p><i>Celtic Tiger television: Irish television drama in the 21st century.</i> More Irish tv drama has been produced in the past fifteen years than in any period since the 1960s. Rather than reflecting the changes wrought by the economic boom this drama has often relied on generic imitation. What drama did attempt to deal with a changing society came from RTÉ, rather than the new commercial broadcaster.</p> <p>Reading: “The continuing story of Irish television drama: tracking the tiger” by Helena Sheehan (online at Doras, the DCU institutional repository.)</p> <p>Screening: <i>Prosperity</i> (2006)</p>
Week 12	<p><i>Consumer choice or cultural imperialism? (2): The influence of modern American television drama.</i> David Simon, creator of <i>The Wire</i> has described Ireland as “the Baltimore of Europe”. The recent wave of critically acclaimed US television dramas has often achieved more popularity in the UK and Ireland than with their home audience. Is this simply a matter of taste or do dramas like <i>The Wire</i>, <i>Mad Men</i> and <i>The Sopranos</i> resonate with an Irish audience for other reasons?</p> <p>Reading: <i>The Wire and the world: narrative and metanarrative</i> by Helena Sheehan and Sheamus Sweeney in <i>Jump Cut</i> 51 (2009).</p> <p>Screening: <i>The Wire</i> (2004)</p>
Week 13	<p><i>Summing Up and Revision.</i> Group presentations. Also a chance to review the module, and to revisit and clarify some key points. Students will also be encouraged to provide feedback about their experience of the module.</p>
	<p>Final Examination</p> <p>11:00 am – 1:00 pm in Exam Hall A209</p>