MODERN IRISH LITERATURE
CAS EN 392

Spring 2016

Lecturer: Dr Edwina Keown
Email: embkeown@gmail.com

Class Times: Tuesdays, 2.00-5.00pm
Fridays, 10.00-1.00am

Venue: See Calendar

Course Overview:
This course provides a broad introduction to modern Irish literature. Opening in the 1890s with the work of Oscar Wilde, it will explore the development of Ireland’s national literature in the early twentieth century as the country moved towards political independence, looking at the socialist playwright Sean O’Casey’s interpretation of the War of Independence. Students will have the opportunity to study the writing of three Nobel laureates - W.B. Yeats, Samuel Beckett and Seamus Heaney – as well as leading modernist writers such as James Joyce and Elizabeth Bowen. Having developed an understanding of the course of Irish writing over the twentieth century, they will be equipped to critically evaluate the work of contemporary Irish writers and interrogate their relationship to the idea of a national literature. The course will close with an introduction to new trends in Irish writing, including work by Anne Enright and Kevin Barry.

Seminars are evenly distributed between poetry, drama, the novel and the short story. Key concerns include the role of literature in shaping (and interrogating) national identity, the relationship of writing and politics, and the place of Irish writing on the international stage. There will be four guest lectures - by scholars specialising in modernism and Irish poetry. Field trips also form an essential part of the syllabus, with a visit to the Abbey, the National Theatre of Ireland, and an opportunity to see a Dublin theatre production.

Learning Outcomes:
By the end of the course you should be able to:

• Outline the development of modern Irish literature in English.
• Identify the major themes of these writers and of Irish writing in general.
• Critically reflect on the relationship between these writers in an Irish context.
• Evaluate the contribution these writers made to the formation of modern Irish identity and to world literature.
Teaching Methodology:
Tuition is conducted mainly through a series of seminars, followed by class discussion. This will often involve close readings of texts requiring full class participation. There are a number of lectures given by guest speakers; class discussion will follow these lectures. Students are expected to read and be familiar with the texts on their required reading list and any subsequent reading lists circulated, even if those texts are not explicitly discussed in class. They may be asked to give brief presentations on the major texts or on class content.

Grading Criteria:

Attendance & participation (30%): 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 also be asked to produce/direct and perform an act from Sean O’Casey’s play, *The Plough & the Stars* (1926), and write up a play journal (1,000 words) due on Friday 4th March.

Essay (30%): The essay should be 2,000-2,500 words long and is due on Friday, 15th April. Essays should answer the question posed or discuss the topic set. All papers must be typed and double spaced. All quotes must be clearly designated by ‘quotation marks’ and duly acknowledged. It is essential that you provide full references of your sources, either in end- or footnotes. In addition, you should attach a full bibliography.

Bear in mind that marks will be awarded for:
- presentation: punctuation, spelling, grammar, references properly cited.
- a persuasive and well-structured argument
- originality in perception or in your approach to the subject
- evidence of independent research (e.g. use of critical essays and other secondary material)

Exam (40%): This examination percentage includes two short test quizzes taken during the course, in each of which you will be required to answer 10 out of 15 short questions. These will account for 10% of your final grade in total. In the final exam you will be required to comprehensively answer two questions from a selection on the paper – excluding the topic on which you did your essay. This will account for 30% of your final grade.

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

Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895)  
http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/844
Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*

* This edition contains not only a selection of Yeats’ poems, but the plays and miscellaneous writings useful for this course.
** The Introduction to this edition is required reading.

All other material will be provided in handouts.

**Suggested Background Reading:**

----------*--- Samuel Beckett* (London: Reaktion, 2009)

**Web Resources**

Links to critical resources on W.B. Yeats, James Joyce, Elizabeth Bowen, Samuel Beckett 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

Online version of the W.B. Yeats exhibition in the National Library of Ireland:  
http://www.nli.ie/yeats/

For information on literary events in Dublin see:

Dublin UNESCO City of Literature - http://www.dublincityofliterature.ie/  
The Irish Writers’ Centre - http://www.writerscentre.ie/  
http://www.culturefox.ie/
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.

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.
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Lecture Title / Activity</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tues 26 Jan</td>
<td>Introduction to Irish Literature &amp; critical reading</td>
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<td>Tues 2nd Feb</td>
<td>Oscar Wilde, <em>The Importance of Being Earnest</em> (1895)</td>
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<td>Tues 16th Feb</td>
<td>James Joyce, <em>Dubliners</em> (1914) Guest Lecturer: Dr Margaret Robson</td>
<td>QUIZ 1</td>
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<td>Tues 23rd Feb</td>
<td>The Abbey theatre, and staging a rebellion and the Easter Rising. Sean O’Casey <em>The Plough &amp; the Stars</em> (1926)</td>
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<td>Tues 1st March</td>
<td>In class performance <em>The Plough &amp; the Stars</em> (1926). Write play journal (1,000 words) to be submitted Friday 4th March.</td>
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<td>Tues 8th March</td>
<td>READING WEEK</td>
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<td>Fri 18th March</td>
<td>Elizabeth Bowen, <em>The Last September</em> (1929)</td>
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<td>Weds 23rd March</td>
<td>Fieldtrip to see O’Casey, <em>The Plough &amp; the Stars at the Abbey, 7pm</em></td>
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<td>Fri 1 April</td>
<td>Modern Irish Poetry: Seamus Heaney, Ciarán Carson and Paul Muldoon. Guest Lecturer: Dr Eibhlín Evans <em>Handout provided</em> QUIZ 2</td>
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<td>Fri 8 April</td>
<td>Samuel Beckett, <em>Waiting for Godot</em> (1952) Guest Lecturer: György Vídovszky (Barka Theatre, Budapest)</td>
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<td>Fri 15 April</td>
<td>The Contemporary Short Story: Kevin Barry, Anne Enright, Claire Keegan <em>Handout provided</em></td>
<td><strong>ESSAY DUE (2,000 – 3,000 words)</strong></td>
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<td>Weds 20 April</td>
<td>Revision Class 7-10pm</td>
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<td>Fri 22 April</td>
<td>Final Examination 11am-1pm HG10</td>
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