

**BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
COURSE SYLLABUS**

**CAS EN 392 – *Modern Irish Literature***

**Lecturer: Jim Shanahan M.A., M.Phil.**

**Tuesdays: 6:30 – 9:00 p.m.                      Classroom number C167**  
**Fridays: 1:00 – 3:30 p.m.                      Classroom number C167**

**Course Overview**

Introduces students to the rich heritage of Modern Irish literature. We will examine the work of major literary figures such as Oscar Wilde, W.B. Yeats, Elizabeth Bowen, James Joyce and Samuel Beckett within changing cultural and historical contexts, beginning with colonisation. Study of contemporary Irish drama, fiction and poetry will include such dynamic figures as Brian Friel, Roddy Doyle, Patrick Kavanagh, Seamus Heaney and Eavan Boland, and new writers like Chris Binchy and Tom French. 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; the writer as social critic and chronicler.

**Methodology**

Tuition will be conducted through lectures, followed by class discussion. Sessions will also be set aside for close reading of texts involving full class participation. Video materials will be used to stimulate interest and vary the teaching methods. Students may be asked to give brief presentations on the major texts or on class content. It is also intended that students will be taken on field trips of relevant interest (theatre, tours, cultural centres, art museums) to take advantage of Dublin's rich literary heritage.

**Required Reading**

Oscar Wilde:	<i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i> (Methuen)
W.B. Yeats:	<i>The Major Works</i> (Oxford Univ. Press)
James Joyce:	<i>Dubliners</i> (Penguin)
Elizabeth Bowen:	<i>The Last September</i> (Vintage Classics)
Samuel Beckett:	<i>Waiting for Godot</i> (Faber and Faber)
Brian Friel:	<i>Dancing at Lughnasa</i> (Faber and Faber)
Eavan Boland:	<i>The Collected Poems of Eavan Boland</i> (Carcanet)
Seamus Heaney:	<i>Opened Ground: Poems 1966-1996</i> (Faber and Faber)
Chris Binchy:	<i>The Very Man</i> (Macmillan)

Other material will be presented in handouts at seminars.

## Videos/DVDs

The Dead  
Waiting for Godot  
Dancing at Lughnasa

## Suggested Background Reading

- 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 Univ. Press).
- Patricia Craig: *Elizabeth Bowen* (Penguin).
- Seamus Deane (ed.): *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* (Field Day Press).
- Richard Ellmann: *Oscar Wilde* (Hamish Hamilton).
- Robert Garrett: *Modern Irish Poetry* (Univ. of California Press).
- Clive Hart (ed.): *James Joyce's Dubliners: Critical Essays* (Faber and Faber).
- P.B. Haberstroh: *Women Creating Women: Contemporary Irish Women Poets* (Attic Press).
- Declan Kiberd: *Inventing Ireland* (Vintage).  
*Irish Classics* (Granta Books).
- Antoinette Quinn: *Patrick Kavanagh: Born-Again Romantic* (Gill and Macmillan).
- Anthony Roche: *Contemporary Irish Drama: From Beckett to McGuinness* (Gill and Macmillan).
- Helen Vendler: *Seamus Heaney* (Harper Collins).

## Grading Criteria

Examination: 50%  
Term Paper: 40%  
Class Participation: 10%

Students will be required to sit a two-hour written exam in which they will be set questions based on the material covered in class.

## Chronology

### **Week 1**

Class 1 (Tues, Mar. 7): Introductory lecture: Overview of Irish literary tradition from pre-Christian to twentieth century. Discussion.

Class 2 (Fri, Mar. 10): W.B. Yeats and 1916: Texts: *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* (play), 'September 1913', 'Easter 1916'.

### **Week 2**

Class 3 (Tues, Mar. 14): James Joyce's *Dubliners*: Text: *Dubliners*.

Class 4 (Thurs, Mar. 16): Guest Lecturer: Dr Noreen Doody (St Patrick's College, Drumcondra). Oscar Wilde – Irishman? Text: *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

### **Week 3**

Class 5 (Tues, Mar. 21): James Joyce's 'The Dead': Text and Video.

Class 6 (Fri, Mar. 24): Field Trip: Visit to Irish Writers Museum, Parnell Square.

### **Week 4**

Class 7 (Tues, Mar. 28): DVD: Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*.

Class 8 (Fri, Mar. 31): Guest Lecturer: Dr Edwina Keown (TCD). Changing social order: Elizabeth Bowen and the demise of the Anglo-Irish big house. Text: *The Last September*.

### **Week 5**

Class 9 (Tues, Apr. 4): Beckett's world view: Text: *Waiting for Godot*.

Class 10 (Thurs, Apr. 6): Theatre Trip: Samuel Beckett's *Endgame* at the Gate Theatre, Dublin.

### **Week 6**

Class 11 (Tues, Apr. 11): Guest Lecturer: Dr Fionnuala Dillane (TCD). Eavan Boland and other contemporary Irish women poets: Discussion and close reading of selected poems. Text: *The Collected Poems of Eavan Boland*.

Class 12 (Thurs, Apr. 13): Patrick Kavanagh, Seamus Heaney and contemporary Irish male poets: Discussion and close readings of poetry. Text: *Opened Ground: Poems 1966-1996*.

### **Week 7**

Class 13 (Tues, Apr 18): Society and Gender in Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa*.

Class 14 (Fri, Apr 21): Guest Speaker: Chris Binchy, author of *The Very Man*. Changing and challenging orthodoxies: Identity in contemporary Irish fiction. Text: *The Very Man*.

**ESSAYS DUE FRI, APR. 21**

### **Week 8**

Class 15 (Tues, Apr 25): Conclusion and Revision class.

Class 16 (Thurs, Apr 27): Final Exam.

**Terms and Conditions**

Full attendance and participation in class is required. Non-attendance must be verified by a medical certificate or it 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 summarise 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 3-3,500 words in length. It is essential that you provide full references of your sources in the text, end or footnotes. In addition you should attach a full bibliography. Proper and full referencing is one of the marking criteria. Please note that term papers written on writers for whom you have been given a reading list **must** confine itself to the items on the reading list. If you wish to write on texts and/or authors who are not on the course please consult with your professor 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."