

English 4/5391: Topics in Literature: Contemporary Irish Writers:

A Selection of the Best.

3 credits.

John Ruff

Professor English

Valparaiso University

John.Ruff@valpo.edu

Class meets MWR from 3:30pm to 6:15 pm. Attendance at public readings on Tuesday evenings (5-8) also required.

Course Description:

The crowded landscape of contemporary Irish literature cannot be surveyed properly in five weeks-- there are too many great writers winning all the most important international prizes (which has been the case since the days of Yeats, Joyce and Becket). But we can sample six to explore for ourselves what makes them important and distinctively Irish, thematically and stylistically. Since we will be in Cork, acclaimed poet Eilean Ní Chuilleanáin, born there, is on the reading list. Anna Burns, who just won the Booker Prize for her novel *Milkman*, set in Belfast during the time of the Irish Troubles, is there too, as is a book of short stories by Claire Keegan (who was herself an undergraduate in New Orleans). We will read poems by Eamon Grennan, a play by Brien Friel, and a novel by Colum McCann. We will also have time for three critically-acclaimed Irish films.

In this discussion-based course, each student will write two short papers and one longer (8-10 page) paper on the one text (or possibly two) they find most compelling. There will be an entrance exam, a midterm and a final. Missing a class will be the same as missing a week of classes during the regular semester. More than one absence may result in a less than satisfactory grade (D or below) for attendance and participation.

Requirements: Attendance and participation (worth 30%)

Three short papers (worth 30%, 10% each)

Three examinations (worth 40%: 10%, 10%, and 20% each)

*Graduate students will be expected to complete two short papers and a longer final essay (10-15 pages) and annotated bibliography of source materials.

Required texts:

Colum McCann, *TransAtlantic* (novel) ISBN 9780812981926

Brian Friel, *Dancing at Lughnasa* (drama) ISBN 0571144799

Eilean Ní Chuilleanáin, *The Boys of Bluehill* (poems) ISBN 1930630727

Claire Keegan, *Walk the Blue Fields* (short stories) ISBN 0802170491

Anna Burns, *The Milkman* (novel) ISBN 1644450003

Eamon Grennan, *There Now* (poems) ASIN B01N8YFBLY

Films:

Michael Collins, dir. Neil Jordan

My Left Foot, dir. Jim Sheridan

The Commitments, dir. Alan Parker

Learning Objectives

1. Students will demonstrate cross-cultural understanding by increasing knowledge of and engaging with their host country.
2. Students will develop cross-cultural communication skills so that they can communicate appropriately and effectively with diverse individuals and groups.
3. Students will apply knowledge and critical thinking skills to engage in problem solving in global and cross-cultural contexts both generally and in their respective field of study.
4. Students will demonstrate the ability to think reflectively about their own country and culture in relationship to others and develop a more global perspective.

5. Additionally, graduate students will be able to effectively demonstrate advanced research skills by compiling an annotated bibliography and completing a longer final project.

Schedule

7/4: Introductions; entrance exam on Colum McCann's *TransAtlantic* and Brian Friel's

Dancing at Lughnasa. Begin discussion of *TransAtlantic*. Begin dramatic reading of Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa*.

7/8: First short writing due at the beginning of class. *TransAtlantic* discussion continued; continue dramatic reading of Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa*. Begin screening of *Michael Collins* (Neil Jordan, dir.)

7/9: Public reading at An Spailin Fanach, 29 S. Main St.

7/10: Finish dramatic reading and discuss Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa*; continue screening of *Michael Collins*

7/11: Eilean Ní Chuilleanáin, poems TBD from *The Boys of Bluehill*; finish screening and discussion of *Michael Collins*

7/15: Second short writing due at the beginning of class. Claire Keegan, stories TBD from *Walk the Blue Fields*; Begin screening of *My Left Foot* (Jim Sheridan, dir.)

7/16: Public reading at An Spailin Fanach, 29 S. Main St.

7/17: Eilean Ní Chuilleanáin, poems TBD from *The Boys of Bluehill*, continue screening of *My Left Foot*

7/18: Claire Keegan, stories TBD from *Walk the Blue Fields*; finish screening and discuss *My Left Foot*; midterm examination

7/22: Anna Burns, *The Milkman*; begin screening of *The Commitments* (Alan Parker, dir.)

7/23: Public reading at An Spailin Fanach, 29 S. Main St.

7/24: Anna Burns, *The Milkman*, continue screening of *The Commitments*

7/29: Third short paper due at the beginning of class; Eamon Grennan, poems TBD from *There Now*; screening and discussion of *The Commitments*

7/30: Public reading at An Spailin Fanach, 29 S. Main St.

7/31: Eamon Grennan, more poems from *There Now*

8/1: Final examination

Academic integrity is fundamental to the process of learning and evaluating academic performance. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following: cheating, plagiarism, tampering with academic records and examinations, falsifying identity, and being an accessory to acts of academic dishonesty. Refer to the Student Code of Conduct for further information.

It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services as well as their instructors to discuss their individual needs for accommodations. For more information, please go to <http://www.ods.uno.edu>.