

ENHL 4391/5391

Irish Literature and Culture

Cork 2020

Content

As this is an intensive reading course we will read out way through a number of the major Irish novels and autobiographies of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The emphasis will be on the primary texts and their representation of Irish culture and landscape over the last one hundred years. While all of these texts are short, easily accessible and present no difficulty for the reader, they are innovative in style and exciting in their approach to narrative technique. In class I will give a general introduction to each of the novels, their structures, narrative style and central themes, and also the historical and cultural settings from which they emerge.

Texts: In this seminar we will read the following novels and autobiographies.

The Irish novel 1916-1929

James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916)

Narratives of Anglo-Irish Life

Elizabeth Bowen, *The Last September* (1929)

Narratives of Emigration

Samuel Beckett, *Murphy* (1938)

Life-Narratives – Autobiography and Memoir

Seamus Deane, *Reading in the Dark* (1996)

(To place these texts in the context of their time and place we will also read extracts from other Irish prose works, these will be provided in class)

Course Expectations

Students should read all the texts on the course, attend all classes and participate in class discussions. In preparation for the course students are required to read James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and to make a two-page summary of the novel which should be submitted to me by email (m.breen@ucc.ie) before June 15th. Students are also required to participate in at least one reading/performance, or write a one-page response to one of the reading nights. They should also participate in the planned excursions.

Course Assessment

Students are required to participate in class discussion, give a class presentation, and write two papers, one 1500 word paper and one 3,000 word paper. Graduate students will write a paper (1,500 words) on an Irish novel of their choice, not one on the course. Title to be decided in consultation with the course lecturer.

Grading: The grade breakdown for the course assignments is as follows:

Class participation and attendance: 30%

Class presentation and Journal: 30%

Two Written Assignments: 40%

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory. UNO allows one excused absence. Any other absences will affect the final grade by 10%. Three unexcused absences will drop you from the class and result in grade F.

Students are responsible for obtaining their own texts before coming to Cork. (No specific editions of the texts are required) Students should read as many of the texts as they can before they come to Cork. If you have any questions about the course please feel free to contact me at email: m.breen@ucc.ie

Proposed Schedule for Reading Assignments

June 18 – June 23 - The Irish Novel 1916-1929

James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

June 24 – June 30 - Narratives of Anglo-Irish Life

Elizabeth Bowen, *The Last September*

July 1– July 7 - Novels of Immigration

Samuel Beckett, *Murphy*

July 8 – July 15 - Life-Narratives, Autobiography and Memoir

Seamus Deane, *Reading in the Dark*

Some secondary reading will be provided in class but there is no required secondary reading to be completed before the class begins. Students should concentrate on the primary texts and becoming familiar with them. The primary purpose of the course is to introduce students to a wide variety of Irish prose writing and to the ways in which Irish life and culture are captured and reflected in the course texts.

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of the module students will be able to:

Critically read and analyse the range of texts on the course.

Apply a variety of theoretical concepts in the analysis of contemporary fiction.

Relate the set texts to one another, and to their wider historical and cultural contexts

Discuss the cultural and historical backgrounds which framed and informed these texts.

Deliver fluent written and oral responses to the texts.

In addition, graduate students will be able to effectively discuss the evolution of Irish fiction within the context of world literature and to demonstrate this ability by leading discussion in the classroom.

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