

SURVEY OF IRISH LITERATURE

Fall 2011

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Description

In the preface to *A Short History of Irish Literature*, Seamus Deane writes that story of Irish literature is one of "literary tradition which has undergone a series of revivals and collapses, all of them centered upon an idea of Ireland. Sometimes the Ireland we speak of is an Edenic, sometimes it is a Utopian place. On other occasions, it is a rebuke to both. There is a constant fascination with discrepancy between the Irish world as imagined and the Irish world as it is, and this eventuates, time and again in a critique of the idea of authority." This course will explore these ideas of an Eden before and after the fall and the critique of authority by reading various Irish myths and works from the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, centering on the accomplishments of the "Irish Renaissance" (1885-1940). Representative figures will include W.B. Yeats, James Joyce, Patrick Kavanagh, Flann O'Brien, John Synge, Sean O'Casey, Sean O'Faolain, and Frank O'Connor. Irish literature is not a subset of British literature, it is its own distinct entity, and the class will emphasize the idea of these works as expressions of an ethnic literature.

Schedule of Assignments

M-8/29--INTRODUCTION

W-8/31--OVERVIEW

M-9/5--**LABOR DAY**

W-9/7---OVERVIEW & Andrew Carpenter, "Double Vision in Anglo-Irish Literature" (see web site for article); "The Old Woman of Beare" (PBIV, 62); "Maguire and MacDermot"; Laoiseach Mac an Bhaird, "'Civil Irish' and 'Wild Irish'"

M-9/12--David O'Bruadair, "The Change," "Eire," "O'Bruadair," "The New Style," "O, it's Best to be a total Boor," "A Shrewish, Barren, Bony, Nosey Servant"; "Kilcash" (PBIV, 69); Egan O'Rahilly, "Grey Eye Weeping" (71)

W-9/14----"Brightness of Brightness" (72); Eileen O'Leary, "The Lament for Art O'Leary" (78); Stephen Bonnycastle, "Postcolonial Criticism and Multiculturalism" (see web site for article); James Clarence Mangan, "Dark Rosaleen" (PBIV, 149), "O'Hussey's Ode to the Maguire," (151);

M-9/19--William Butler Yeats, "To Ireland in the Coming Times" (18), "September 1913"

(38), "Easter, 1916" (83) (Easter Proclamation; more legible version; "Wearin o the Green")

W--9/21--

M--9/26--"The Second Coming" (89), "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen" (115), "Parnell's Funeral" (172)

W--9/28--"The Municipal Gallery Revisited" (193), "Under Ben Bulbin" (199)

M--10/3--Seamus Deane, "Introduction" (see web site for article); Patrick Kavanagh, "The Great Hunger"

W--10/5--

M--10/10--James Joyce, *Dubliners*--"The Sisters," "Eveline," (Joyce on epiphany) **FIRST PAPER DUE**

W--10/12--**MIDTERM**

M--10/17--"Ivy Day in the Committee Room," "The Dead"; John M. Synge, *The Playboy of the Western World*

W--10/19--*Playboy* (cont)

M--10/24--

W--10/26--William Trevor, *Fools of Fortune*

M--10/31--

W--11/2--" " *** **SECOND PAPER DUE** ***

M--11/7--Brian Friel, *Translations*

W--11/9--

M--11/14--Seamus Heaney, "Digging," "Requiem for the Croppies," (postcolonial response)

W--11/16--"Bog Oak," "Anahorish"

M--11/21--

W--11/23--**HOLIDAY**

M--11/28-- "The Other Side," "Viking Dublin," "Act of Union,"

W--11/30--"The Toome Road," "Flight Path,"

M--12/5--TAKE HOME FINAL DUE

W--12/7---Last Day of Instruction

EXPECTATIONS

*Complete all reading assignments by dates assigned

*Participate in class discussions

*Regular class attendance

Since this is not a correspondence course, attendance is **mandatory**. A student will be allowed no more than **TWO** (2) **unexcused absence** (and no more than TWO excused absences). Those who have more than 3 hours of unexcused absences will have **one full grade** deducted from the final grade for each additional hour. Attendance will be taken at the start of each class. If a student arrives after attendance has been taken, it is his/her responsibility to see that s/he is recorded as being present. Excused absences will be granted only for extenuating circumstances (neither general malaise nor an assignment in another class will do) and must be cleared no later than the next class period. It is your responsibility to check your attendance; my records are final.

I recommend you date your class notes in order to demonstrate your attendance should there be a conflict in records. Be prepared to show those notes at the time that you inquire about your absences.

Class begins on the hour; students arriving consistently late by more than 5 minutes will be considered absent for any time missed. The time missed will be calculated as absences which will affect the final grade as explained above.

GRADING

The final course grade will be based on;

- 1 essay midterm--20% final grade (bring blue book)
- 1 essay--50% final grade
- 1 essay final exam--30% final grade (bring blue book)
- quizzes--factored in at no more than 10%
- class participation & improvement--swing factors

*To miss any of the assignments above will result in an automatic failure of the course.
NO EXCEPTIONS.

GRADING STANDARDS

Grading standards are identical to those defined by the university in the Catalog.

- A Exemplary achievement of the course objectives. In addition to being clearly and significantly above the requirements, the work exhibited is of an independent, creative, contributory nature.
- B Superior achievement of the course objectives. The performance is clearly and significantly above the satisfactory fulfillment of course requirements.
- C Satisfactory achievement of the course objectives. The student is now prepared for

advanced work or study.

- D Unsatisfactory achievement toward the course objectives, yet achievement of a sufficient proportion of the objectives so that it is not necessary to repeat the course unless required to do so by the academic department.
- F Ineffective achievement toward the course objectives. The student has made no clearly significant progress.

NB: **I do not negotiate grades.** If you have questions, I will be glad to explain, but I will not barter a grade up or down. If you wish to discuss a paper, you may not do so on the day it is returned to you; see me at my next office hour. No exceptions.

GENERAL POLICIES

LATE PAPERS--in this class they do not exist; the date an assignment is due is the date the assignment is due. If there is some clear and compelling reason for a late paper (not great powder at one's favorite ski resort, general malaise, or an assignment in any other class), see or call me in advance of submission. All papers must be submitted in class on date due, not some time that day.

TYPING--mandatory for all papers and out-of-class exercises or assignments. Papers should be neat and free of extreme typographical errors. Double-space, use 1" margins, and use *only* a 12 pt font. Number pages, beginning with second page, in upper right hand corner, and secure pages only with a staple in the upper left hand corner. On a cover page center the title and put in the lower right hand corner your name, the date the assignment is due, the topic number you are addressing, and my name.

PLAGIARISM—Plagiarism is the false assumption of authorship, and, as the *MLA Handbook* notes, it constitutes the “use of another person’s ideas, information, or expressions without acknowledging that person’s work. . . . Passing off another person’s ideas, information, or expressions as your own to get a better grade or gain some other advantage constitutes fraud.” Simply put, if you didn’t think of it, didn’t say it, or didn’t write it, you must give full attribution in the form of proper citation. I will not tolerate plagiarism, whether intentional or unintentional, and I will fail anyone I catch cheating and report that student to the Dean of Students. For information on the university’s policy concerning plagiarism and academic honesty, see <http://www.csus.edu/um anual/student/UMA00150.htm>.

BEHAVIOR---recently a professor in another department did a survey of standards of behavior, and the results suggested there is some confusion about what is (and is not) acceptable in university classes. She has advised that professors define their standards, so here are mine: certain fundamental standards of behavior must be observed in this

class. Common courtesy and respect is demanded of all enrolled in this class. Therefore you are not to read the newspaper or a textbook for another course once the class meeting has begun. **Turn off your cell phones**; no one is to take or make a call during class; the same goes for texting, don't send or view any during class. **Turn off the laptops**; no one may use a laptop during class. Likewise, no one is to work on assignments for another course in this class. Do not talk or otherwise interrupt me or another student who is speaking, and under no condition will anyone be permitted to sleep during class lectures or discussions. Those who cannot or will not follow these obvious rules of behavior will be counted as absent for that class period and may be subject to dismissal from the course.

MISCELLANEOUS--Students must keep abreast of assignments; I will not accept the excuse that because someone misses a class s/he did not know there was a change in the syllabus or an assignment. If there are any changes in the syllabus, they will be announced in class, and students are then responsible for these on dates announced.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

Literary Texts

"The Old Woman of Beare"

- 1.) Who is the old woman?
- 2.) What is her situation?
- 3.) What is the point of the sea imagery?
- 4.) What is the speaker referring to at the bottom of p. 63 when she says she's "Now among stinking hags"?

"Maguire and MacDermot"

- 1.) The poem asks us to compare to figures; how is the comparison drawn?
- 2.) The poet claims "it is justice gone askew to compare them. . . ." Explain this remark.
- 3.) When the poet calls Maguire a "stinking-gummed half-blind oaf," what is going on?
- 4.) How are the possessions of each man described; what is revealed through these?
- 5.) Is there a personal element to all this; if so, what is it?

"'Civil Irish' and 'Wild Irish'"

- 1.) Another comparison poem; what are being compared here?
- 2.) What's the point of the discussion of hair?
- 3.) What is the point of discussing clothing and personal possessions?
- 4.) What is the real point of this poem?

O'BRUADAIR

- 1.) What theme(s) runs throughout these six poems?
- 2.) Explain the extended metaphor in "Eire."
- 3.) What is the point of the catalogue of names in stanza three of "Eire"?
- 4.) Explain what's going on in "O'Bruadair"; isn't this just an exercise in shameless self-pity?
- 5.) What is the point of stanza three?
- 6.) Who is the Craftsman mentioned in stanza four; what is the point here?
- 7.) If the eponymous "O'Bruadair" seems sill-tempered, then "O It's Best to be a Total Boor" is positively dyspeptic; what is going on here?
- 8.) Why is he complaining about people's attire?
- 9.) Why is he so nasty in "A Shrewish, Barren, Bony, Nosey Servant"?
- 10.) The invective is overdone--is it not--what is the purpose here? Is this a difficult poem to read; if so, why?

"Kilcash"

- 1.) What is the subject of this poem; what is the poet talking about? What specifically is Kilcash?
- 2.) What point is the poem making? For instance what is the point of the references to the timber in l. 1 or the gates in l. 10 or the ducks and geese in l. 17?
- 3.) Explain the structure of the poem; how could we describe the movement between stanzas?

"A Grey Eye Weeping"

- 1.) Who is Valentine Brown?
- 2.) What is the subject of the poem?
- 3.) What is the grey eye of the title and which is mentioned in the penultimate line?

"Brightness of Brightness"

- 1.) What does the title refer to?
- 2.) What is it that the poet is told in stanza three?
- 3.) Who is it the poet approaches in stanza four?
- 4.) Where does the poet arrive in stanza six?
- 5.) What ultimately does the poet learn or realize?

"The Lament for of Art O'Leary"

- 1.) Explain what the basic structure of the poem is?
- 2.) What is the gist of the sister's two stanza interruption beginning on p. 81?
- 3.) What is the importance of the two stanzas on p. 82 which address themselves to Morris?
- 4.) Is there anything familiar about stanza sixteen on p. 83?
- 5.) What is the point of the stanza at the bottom of p. 83 and that on the bottom of p. 85?

JAMES CLARENCE MANGAN

- 1.) Who is dark Rosaleen?
- 2.) What is the point of the mention of the Pope and Spanish ale in the first stanza?
- 3.) What is the relationship of the poet to his subject?
- 4.) Does this poem remind us of anything we have already encountered?
- 5.) Who is the speaker of "O'Hussey's Ode to the Maguire"?
- 6.) Consider the poem's imagery.
- 7.) How is "the Maguire" described; is this reminiscent of anything?

YEATS

"To Ireland in the Coming Times"

- 1.) Who is the company the poet refers to in l.2?
- 2.) Who is the her of "the red-rose-bordered hem"?
- 3.) In stanza 2 the poet identifies with Davis, Mangan, and Ferguson, but he also announces a difference; what is that difference?
- 4.) What is the poet asserting in stanza three; does this contradict his ideas in the two earlier stanzas?

"September 1913"

- 1.) Who is the "you" of the first stanza; who in general is the poet addressing?
- 2.) Who is O'Leary?
- 3.) Who are the "they" of the second stanza?
- 4.) Who are the "wild geese" of the third stanza and the various figures mentioned?
- 5.) What is the point of the last stanza; what are the "you" saying about the "they"?

"On Those That Hated "The Playboy of the Western World," 1907"

- 1.) Who is the Juan mentioned in l. 4?
- 2.) Who are the "they" mentioned at the poem's end?

"In Memory of Major Robert Gregory"

- 1.) What is the tower the poet refers to in first stanza?
- 2.) Who are the "discoverers" and "companions" mentioned?
- 3.) Who is the Lionel Johnson of stanza three and what is the poet saying about him?
- 4.) How and why is Synge memorable?
- 5.) How and why is George Pollexfen memorable?
- 6.) Why is Robert Gregory compared to Sidney in stanza six; what is the point?
- 7.) Consider the respective point of stanzas seven to ten; what is each saying?
- 8.) In sum what is Yeats saying about Gregory; why such a long meditation on his

death? How and why was he important to the poet?

"Easter 1916"

- 1.) Who is the "them" referred to in l. 1?
- 2.) What is the poet describing in the first stanza: what's going on here?
- 3.) What does he mean when he says, "Being certain that they and I/But lived where motley is worn"?
- 4.) Who are the figures described in stanza two: the woman who once rode, the man who kept a school, the helper and friend, and the drunken lout?
- 5.) Whose hearts, in stanza 3, have "one purpose alone," and what is that purpose?
- 6.) What is the poet referring to with the lines, "Enchanted to a stone/To trouble the

living stream"?

- 7.) Collectively, what is the point of the images in stanza 3; do they have some symbolic significance?
- 8.) Explain the importance of the stone image in stanza 4.
- 9.) What is the poet questioning in stanza 4?
- 10.) What does the poet refer to when he asks, "And what if excess of love/Bewildered them till they died"?
- 11.) What has been changed or transformed (the poet repeats these assertions at various points in the poem)?
- 12.) What is the "terrible beauty [that] is born"; explain this paradox.

"The Second Coming"

- 1.) What is the point of stanza one; what sense of things do we get here?
- 2.) What does the poet mean with the lines, "The best lack all conviction, while the worst/ Are full of passionate intensity"?
- 3.) What is the Second Coming referred to in the second stanza?
- 4.) What is the rocking cradle referred to in l. 20?
- 5.) What "rough beast" is the poet referring to in the penultimate line?

"Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen"

- 1.) What is the point of referring to the Athenian sculptor Phidias in stanza one?
- 2.) The next two stanzas refer to things in the past; what is the point here; if something no longer exists, what is that?
- 3.) What are the "dragon-ridden" days referring to in the fourth stanza? Has something replaced something else?
- 4.) Who is the "he" referred to in the next stanza; what is his plight?
- 5.) What is the point of the next stanza; who are the incendiaries and bigots?
- 6.) How is dance imagery important in the next stanza?
- 7.) In comparing the soul to a swan that plays or rides, what is the poet getting at?
- 8.) What is the major concern in section III?
- 9.) What is the point of section IV?
- 10.) Who is the us referred to in the first stanza of section V; what is this "us" doing?
- 11.) What is the audience left with in the last section; what is the resolution to the situation the poet describes throughout the poem?

"Parnell's Funeral"

- 1.) Who is the "Great Comedian" referred to in the first line?
- 2.) Is there anything striking or significant about the setting?
- 3.) Although the image is confusing, what seems to be the general point of the image of the boy in the tree in stanza two?
- 4.) Who is the "quarry" referred to in stanza three; and what is the point about "an age is the reversal of an age"?

- 5.) Who or what is the poet addressing in the first line of the fourth stanza and what is his point here?
- 6.) In section II the poet lists a number of people and speculates on what would have happened if they had eaten Parnell's heart. What is he getting at in offering these speculations; what is important about Parnell? Is he a contrast to these other figures in some way?
- 7.) What is the point of the reference to Jonathan Swift at the end?

"The Municipal Gallery Revisited"

- 1.) What is happening in sections I and II?
- 2.) Why is the poet overcome in section II & IV?
- 3.) What is the poet saying in section V; what end is he referring to?
- 4.) What is the poet expressing in the next section by invoking the names of Lady Gregory and Synge and what do you make of the line, "Dream of the noble and the beggar-man"?
- 5.) Who is the "you" mentioned in section VII?

"Under Ben Bulbin"

- 1.) In stanzas 1 & 2 the poet is swearing by different things; what are these?
- 2.) What does he mean with the line in section II that "They [grave-diggers] but thrust their buried men/ Back in the human mind again"?
- 3.) What is the point in section III; is this the same Yeats who abhors violence?
- 4.) In section IV the poet mentions various painters and sculptors; what is his point here? Look closely at the first stanza in this section.
- 5.) What is his advice to poets in section V; what kind of art and what kind of subjects is he advocating? Who, in particular, is he addressing?
- 6.) How do you interpret the last three lines of the poem?

"THE GREAT HUNGER"

- 1.) Explain the poem's title--what is the great hunger?
- 2.) Who is this person Maguire and what is his significance?
- 3.) What strategies does the poet use to reveal Maguire and his world?
- 4.) What is the point of the use of the flashback?
- 5.) Analyze the significance of the poem's setting.
- 6.) What is the significance of the references to religion?
- 7.) Look at section VIII, what is the poet suggesting about rural life and how might this be significant?

DUBLINERS

"The Sisters"

- 1.) What is the importance of the boy's dream on pp.11 & 13?

- 2.) What is simony and how does it figure in the story?
- 3.) What is Father Flynn's importance; does he represent anything?
- 4.) Are the sisters important in a symbolic way?
- 5.) Given Joyce's conception of artistic epiphany, what is the story's epiphany and for whom?

"Eveline"

- 1.) What are we to make of the fact that the street Eveline lives on is changing?
- 2.) Is it in any way important that the major developer is a "man from Belfast"; what is the importance of this detail?
- 3.) One critic has argued that Eveline has "no capacity for love"; do you agree?
- 4.) Why doesn't she board the ship despite her earlier resolve to do so?
- 5.) What point might Joyce be making either about Dublin or Ireland or both together?

"Ivy Day in the Committee Room"

- 1.) What is going on here? Granted there is little action, but what is taking place?
- 2.) Who is Henchy and how is he important?
- 3.) Who is Crofton?
- 4.) Who is O'Connor?
- 5.) Who is Hynes?
- 6.) What is Joyce's point in offering these various individual portraits? Is there some point he is working toward, some theme he is dramatizing?

"The Dead"

- 1.) Joyce originally planned to conclude Dubliners w/ "Grace" in the ms. version of 1906. However, he wrote "The Dead" in 1907, and the collection was eventually published as we find it in 1914. Analyze how "The Dead" is like or fits w/ the stories that precede it.
- 2.) Analyze how the story is unlike or atypical of those which precede it.
- 3.) What role does Miss Ivors play in the story; why does Joyce include her?
- 4.) Given our discussions of epiphany, how is this important in this story? Who has an epiphany and what is the nature of it?
- 5.) What is meant by the sentence on p. 223, "The time had come for him to set out on his journey westward'?"
- 6.) What is the importance of the snow imagery, esp. at the close of the story?
- 7.) To whom does the story's title refer?

PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD

- 1.) Who are these Mayo people Synge depicts in the early portion of the play before Christy Mahon arrives: Shawn Keogh, Pegeen Mike, Michael James Flaherty, Philly Cullen, etc? What are we to make of this community?
- 2.) Is there anything familiar in the Christy--Pegeen Mike--Shawn Keogh--Widow Quin

quadrangle? consider other works we've read this semester?

- 3.) What are some of the play's major themes?
- 4.) How and where does Synge use irony?
- 5.) Explain the meaning of the title?
- 6.) Is this a comedy; why or why not?
- 7.) How would you characterize Synge's treatment of the Irish peasant?

FOOLS OF FORTUNE

- 1.) Who is the Michael Collins who visits the family a couple times before the estate is burned?
- 2.) Events in this novel take place in a specific area of Ireland. What is the view of life here and how are the Quintons situated in their village world? Trevor is writing a particular type of Irish novel; do you know what that is?
- 3.) What appears to be Trevor's view of the Troubles of 1920-21; what is the legacy of those times?
- 4.) Explain the use of the shifts in narrative point of view.

Heaney Poems (pdf version of questions; pdf version of poems)

"Digging"

- 1.) What is the point of all the details about the poet's father at work in stanzas two through five?
- 2.) What is the point of the details about the grandfather in stanza six.
- 3.) Explain stanza seven; where are we in time?
- 4.) Consider the opening and closing lines that relate to the poet. Who is he, what is his relationship, besides kinship, to the men he describes and the work they perform?
- 5.) Consider the poem in cultural, more specifically postcolonial terms, how is this indicative of a postcolonial situation?

"Requiem for the Croppies"

- 1.) In the first line the reader is introduced to an "our" and the pronoun "us" is invoked throughout. Who is this "us"?
- 2.) Explain the lines two to four.
- 3.) Explain the point of the four lines that follow the colon at the end of line six; what is the poem talking about here?
- 4.) What is going on in lines eleven and twelve?

5.) Explain the significance of the final line.

6.) What kind of poem is this; consider it in terms of postcolonial ideas we have discussed.

"Bog Oak"

1.) Explain the title; what is this?

2.) Look at the details of this "carter's trophy" in the first two stanzas; what is the point of these details? Where are we?

3.) Who are these "mustached dead"; what is this section about?

4.) What is the meaning of the line about no 'oak groves'?

5.) What does Edmund Spenser have to do with anything (go on the net or to a reference source and learn something about his biography)?

6.) Explain the poet's position in the poem; where is he, what is his relation to his subject?

"Anahorish"

1.) Explain the first stanza and a half. What is the poet talking about here?

2.) Explain the next five lines after the italicized repetition of the title.

3.) What is he talking about in the last stanza?

4.) Relate this poem to the first; what is the point here?

"Guests of the Nation," Frank O'Connor

1.) Examine the story's structure; how are events organized and related, and what effect does this structure have on the audience and our reading of the tale?

2.) Discuss Jeremiah Donovan's character and his role in the tale.

3.) Look closely at the old woman in whose house the soldiers stay. What is her function in the story; is it important?

4.) How does the method of narration contribute to the effect of the story?

5.) Which postcolonial concerns do you see elaborated here?

STUDY QUESTIONS: Critical Articles
(articles can be found as pdf files on web version of syllabus)

“Postcolonial Criticism and Multiculturalism,” Stephen Bonnycastle

- 1.) What is the emphasis of Frantz Fanon’s discussion of colonial domination in *The Wretched of the Earth*?
- 2.) Explain Fanon’s notion of the Other?
- 3.) Explain the point of mono/multiculturalism.

"Double Vision in Anglo-Irish Literature"--A. Carpenter

- 1.) What is Carpenter’s thesis?
- 2.) Thematically what is the result of the double vision Carpenter describes?
- 3.) What is the effect of such a lit on the reader?
- 4.) What does Carpenter mean by the term "Anglo-Ir"; who are these people?

“Introduction,” Seamus Deane (1990)

- 1.) What is Deane’s thesis?
- 2.) What is “Field Day” and what are its aims?
- 3.) How does Deane view the relationship between England and Ireland?
- 4.) As Deane describes them, what are some of the central concerns of postcolonial research?