

Contemporary Irish Literature (ENGL 364-01)
College of the Holy Cross, Fall 2007
WF 2:00–3:15 pm, Stein 202

Instructor: Paige Reynolds
Office Hours: Fenwick 228, F 9:30-11:30 or by appointment
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Texts:

Contemporary Irish Poetry, ed. Anthony Bradley
Marina Carr, *The Mai* (1994)
Brian Friel, *Translations* (1980)
Bernard MacLaverty, *Cal* (1983)
Roddy Doyle, *The Van* (1993)
Patrick McCabe, *The Butcher Boy* (1993)
Tom Murphy, *Bailengangaire* (1986)
Edna O'Brien, *Wild Decembers* (1999)
Anne Enright, *The Gathering* (2007)
Dislocations: Stories from the New Ireland, ed. Caroline Walsh (2003)
Other texts available on ERES (keyword: ENGL364)

Objectives: This course focuses on prose, poetry, and drama produced by Northern Irish and Irish writers since the last quarter of the twentieth century. We will survey work from familiar names like Seamus Heaney, Roddy Doyle, Edna O'Brien, and Brian Friel – but our attention will focus largely on contemporary writers who deserve more critical and popular attention in America, writers such as Anne Enright and Tom Murphy. As we read, we will explore how recent Irish writing in both form and content was influenced by the cultural nationalism of the Irish Literary Revival and the tenets of international high modernism. We will also consider these writers and their work in light of present-day cultural concerns including the place of the Irish language, post-colonialism, the border between north and south, gender and sexuality, the status of the Catholic Church, the consequences of the Celtic Tiger, alcoholism and drug addiction, terrorism, immigration and emigration.

Expectations:

Participation and Preparation (10%): Come to class with questions, puzzles, observations, and other responses to the text we've read. Work to weave your responses to an individual text into ideas about the other texts that we'll read this semester. Obviously, this means you must read closely and critically. If it becomes clear that you have not read and cannot enter into the discussion, this will bode ill for your grade.

Absences: Come to class. Any unexcused absence will lower your final grade. If you have a genuine emergency or you discuss the absence with me in advance, we will explore your options.

Critical Papers (3 papers at 20% each): You will be required to develop original theses and to write three analytical papers on texts we read this semester. We will discuss these assignments in more detail as the deadlines approach. If you do not already own a stylebook, I recommend that you purchase one such as Anne Raimés, *Keys for Writers* (Houghton Mifflin).

Cultural Activities: We're lucky enough to live in a hotbed of Irish cultural events and activities. As a class, we'll attend the production of *Brendan*, a new play by the Irish-born playwright Ronan Noone (10/12-11/17 at the Huntington Theatre, Boston, 7:30 pm). But I will keep you posted on events in the area that relate to contemporary Irish literature and culture, and I will expect you to attend as many of them as possible.

Final Exam (30%): There will be a final, cumulative exam asking you to identify and analyze key passages that we've read during the course. As well, there will be a short essay component of the exam.

Basic Ground Rules:

- Plan to meet with me during office hours at least once this semester. Also, please feel free to talk with me about reading or writing during office hours.
- Be prepared for a few changes in the syllabus, if we see that the class needs demand those changes.
- Don't plagiarize. If you're confused about what constitutes plagiarism, see the English Dept. website on "Academic Honesty" and/or ask me questions. Any plagiarized work receives a zero, and I report it to the Dean.
- Late papers are penalized 1/3 of a grade for each date they are late, including weekends. So Friday's A- is Monday's B-.

Reading and Assignment Schedule:

W 8/29 Introduction

Making History

F 8/31 Heaney (CIP 272-293)

W 9/5 Friel, *Translations*

F 9/7 O'Brien, *Wild Decembers* (1-50)

W 9/12 O'Brien, *Wild Decembers* (51-259)

F 9/14 McCann, "Fishing the Sloe Black River" and "Cathal's Lake" (ERES)

M 9/17 First Paper Due**Language and Identity**

W 9/19 Ní Dhomhnaill (CIP 435-445); "Why I Choose to Write in Irish..." (ERES); Ní Chuilleanáin (CIP 340-350)

F 9/21 McGuckian (CIP 414-418); Muldoon (CIP 423-434); Frank Sewell, "Between Two Languages: Poetry in Irish, English and Irish English" (ERES)

Family and Community

W 9/26 Murphy, *Bailengangaire*

W 9/26 Reading: Anne Enright, Connolly House, Boston College, 7:30

F 9/28 Doyle, *The Van* (1-73)

W 10/3 Doyle, *The Van* (74-311)

F 10/5 Boland (CIP 356-364)

M 10/11 Columbus Day Break

W 10/10 Enright, *The Gathering*

F 10/12 Enright, *The Gathering*

M 10/15 Second Paper Due

North and South

W 10/17 Devlin, "Naming the Names"; Trevor, "Beyond the Pale" (ERES)

F 10/19 No class.

W 10/24 Paulin (CIP 406-413); Longley (CIP 294-306); Carson (CIP 395-405)

W 10/24 Screening: *Once* (dir. John Carney), Kimball at 3 and 8.

F 10/26 McLaverty, *Cal* (1-67)

W 10/31 McLaverty, *Cal* (68-154)

Violence and Mourning

T 11/1 Reading: Colum McCann, Connolly House, Boston College, 7:30

F 11/2 McCabe, *The Butcher Boy* (1-98)

W 11/7 McCabe, *The Butcher Boy* (99-231); Cullingford, "Virgins and Mothers: Sinéad O'Connor, Neil Jordan, and *The Butcher Boy*" (ERES).

T 11/8 Screening: *The Butcher Boy* (dir. Neil Jordan)

F 11/9 Hartnett (CIP 313-325); Mahon (326-339); Durcan (365-372); McCarthy (CIP 446-450); Maxton (CIP 382-388)

W 11/14 Carr, *The Mai*

"The New Ireland"

F 11/16 *Dislocations: Stories from the New Ireland*

M 11/19 Third Paper Due

W 11/21 Thanksgiving Break

F 11/23 Thanksgiving Break

W 11/28 *Dislocations: Stories from the New Ireland*

F 11/30 *Dislocations: Stories from the New Ireland*; review for final

F 12/14 (8:30 am) **Final Exam.**