

Irish Drama
College of the Holy Cross, Fall 2001
MW 3:00-4:15 pm, Stein 133

Instructor: Paige Reynolds
Office Hours: Fenwick 220, M 2:00 –3:00 or by appointment
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Texts: Thomas Sheridan, *The Brave Irishman* (handout)
Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *The Rivals* (Dover)
Dion Boucicault, *The Shaughraun* (handout)
J. W. Whitbread, *Lord Edward, or '98* (handout)
Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Dover)
John Harrington, ed. *Modern Irish Drama* (Norton)
G. B. Shaw, *Pygmalion* (Dover)
Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (Grove)
Anne Devlin, *Ourselves Alone* (Dramatists Play Service)
Frank McGuinness, *Plays: One* (Methuen)
Marina Carr, *Plays: One* (Methuen)
Martin McDonagh, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane and Other Plays* (Vintage)
Conor McPherson, *The Weir and Other Plays* (TCG)
Paula Meehan, *Mrs. Sweeney* (handout)

Course Objectives: In this course, we will study major works of Irish playwrights from the eighteenth-century to the present, while attending closely to the historical and cultural contexts in which these plays were produced. The course begins with work by the eighteenth-century expatriate playwright Sheridan and with nineteenth-century popular melodramas by Boucicault. These plays will set the stage for the work both of twentieth-century expatriates like Wilde, Shaw, and Beckett and of those involved with the Irish Literary Renaissance like Yeats, Gregory, Synge, and O'Casey. By examining the work of Brendan Behan, Brian Friel, Frank McGuinness, and Anne Devlin, we'll trace how drama after the Republic challenged and refined the Revival's depictions of Irish identity. We'll end the course by looking at more recent successes of Irish drama before international audiences, reading work by Irish playwrights like Conor McPherson, Marina Carr, Martin McDonagh, and Paula Meehan.

Coursework:

Class participation (10%): Come to class having read the material closely and be prepared to participate actively in discussion. You'll be expected not only to offer not only your own analysis of the class material, but also to assume roles in the play readings. Unexcused absences jeopardize your grade; more than six absences mean you likely will not pass the course.

Theater Review (15%): You will attend and write a review of one live theater production. I'll provide a handout that explains how to write a review as we approach the assignment date.

Short Papers (40% total, 20% each): You'll write two short analytical papers (4-6 pgs) for the course, the first on your understanding of "stage Irishness," the second will look at a play in light of its cultural, historical, or political contexts.

Final Paper (35%): For the final paper, you may select one of four options that engages with the course material. You may construct a production history of a modern Irish play; you may write an extended analysis of a play in light of selected criticism; you may craft a detailed account of how you might stage a play; or you may write about two or more plays in light of a single coherent thesis. Many, many more details will follow.

IMPORTANT NOTE: For these written assignments, I will expect your paper to be in proper MLA form. These papers will be typed, double-spaced, stylistically and grammatically correct.

Basic Ground Rules:

- There will be a number of events falling outside of class time that you will be required to attend. Your participation in these events is part of your grade, so show up.
- 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 class needs demand those changes.
- Don't plagiarize. If you're confused about what constitutes plagiarism, ask me questions.
- 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; T. Sheridan, *The Brave Irishman* (1743)
- M 9/3 R. B. Sheridan, *The Rivals* (1775)
- W 9/5 Boucicault, *The Shaughraun* (1874)
- M 9/10 Whitbread, *Lord Edward, or '98* (1894)
- T 9/11 Screening: *The Quiet Man* (Ford, 1952)
- W 9/12 Kosok, "John Bull's Other Ego: Reactions to the Stage Irishman in Anglo-Irish Drama" (handout); Ford, *The Quiet Man*
- M 9/17 Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1894)
Paper 1 Due: Versions of Stage Irishness
- W 9/19 Abbey Theatre: Yeats and Gregory, *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (1902); Gregory, *Spreading the News* (1904), *The Rising of the Moon* (1907); Norton 377-394.
- M 9/24 Synge, *Playboy of the Western World* (1907); Norton, 451-470.
- W 9/26 Synge, *Playboy of the Western World*; Susan Cannon Harris, "More Than a Morbid, Unhealthy Mind: Public Health and the *Playboy* Riots" (handout)
- M 10/1 Shaw, *Pygmalion* (1916)
- W 10/3 Shaw, *Pygmalion*; Norton, 471-478.
- M 10/8 No class.
- W 10/10 O'Casey, *Juno and the Paycock* (1924); Norton, 493-512.
- M 10/15 Behan, *The Quare Fellow* (1954); Norton, 521-531.
- W 10/17 Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (1952); Yeats, *Purgatory* (1938); Nicholas Grene, "Living On" from *The Politics of Irish Drama* (handout)
- M 10/22 Friel, *Translations* (1980)
- W 10/24 Friel, *Translations*; Norton, 551-570.

M 10/29 McGuinness, *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme* (1985)
Paper 2 Due: Text and Context

W 10/31 McGuinness, *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme*

M 11/5 McGuinness, *Carthaginians* (1987)

W 11/7 Devlin, *Ourselves Alone* (1986)

M 11/12 Carr, *The Mai* (1994)

W 11/14 Carr, *By the Bog of Cats* (1998)

(S 11/18) *The Lonesome West* at Suga Theatre Company, Boston.

M 11/19 McDonagh, *The Lonesome West* (1997)

W 11/21 No class. Thanksgiving.

M 11/26 McDonagh, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (1996)

W 11/28 McPherson, *The Weir* (1997)
Review of *The Lonesome West* due.

M 12/30 Meehan, *Mrs. Sweeney* (1997)

M 12/5 Study Period

TBA Final Paper Due