

**Seminar: Catholicism in Irish Literature and Culture (ENGL 401-02)**

College of the Holy Cross, Spring 2008

Wednesdays 6:30-8:20 pm, Fenwick 208

Instructor: Paige Reynolds  
Office Hours: Fenwick 228, W 5:00 –6:00 or by appointment  
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**Texts:**

Emmet Larkin, *The Historical Dimensions of Irish Catholicism* (Catholic UP, 0813205948)  
Tom Inglis, *Moral Monopoly* (University College Dublin Press 1900621126)  
George Moore, *The Untilled Field* (Dodo Press, 1406545945)  
Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (Penguin Classic, 014143984X)  
J. M. Synge, *Playboy of the Western World* (Dover 0486275620)  
James Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Norton Critical, 0393926796)  
Frank O'Connor, *Collected Stories* (Vintage, 0394710487)  
Kate O'Brien, *The Land of Spices* (Virago Modern Classics, 1844083160)  
Brian Moore, *Catholics* (Loyola Press, 0829423338)  
Denis Devlin, *The Collected Poems* (Wake Forest UP, 978-0-916390-37-2)  
Bernard MacLaverty, *Cal* (Norton, 0393313328)  
Eiléan Ní Chuilleánain, *The Girl Who Married the Reindeer* (Wake Forest UP, 978-1-930630-06-2)  
ERES Password:

**Course Objectives:** With its uniquely central role in Ireland, the Catholic Church has formally influenced state practice, as well as providing the long-accepted orthodoxy of everyday life. Consequently, throughout much of the twentieth century, the country resisted the increasing secularization found throughout western culture and continued to place religious identity – and in particular, Catholic identity – at the center of Irish self-understanding. However, in recent years, societal changes and a rash of Church scandals, such as those involving Bishop Eamonn Casey or the Magdalene laundries, have led many to question the authority and influence of the Church in Ireland. This seminar examines the variable representation of Catholicism in modern and contemporary Irish and Northern Irish literature and culture through a study of nineteenth and twentieth-century poems, short stories, novels, plays, and films that address Catholic ritual, doctrine, and culture. These primary texts will be supplemented by a rich array of interdisciplinary explorations of Irish Catholicism by anthropologists, sociologists, historians, art historians, theologians, literary and film scholars.

**Coursework:**

**Class participation (10%):** Come to class having read the material closely and be prepared to participate actively in discussion. Unexcused absences jeopardize your grade; more than two absences mean you likely will not pass the course.

**Short Papers (40%):** You will provide a few short exercises over the course of the semester: an oral history of someone who identifies as “Irish Catholic”; a close reading of a passage of text; a short analysis of an assigned critical essay; a short essay (3 pgs) that integrates your reading of a primary text and a secondary source.

**Research Presentation (10%):** To rehearse your research skills, to practice rhetoric, and to introduce the class to important events in Irish Catholicism, you will present to the class a short oral introduction to a key issue or event related to the themes of the course. Details to follow.

**Bibliography and Abstract (10%):** After midterm, I will expect you to provide a brief (250-500 wd.) abstract of your final paper along with an early (and therefore truncated) bibliography of at least 5 related works.

**Final Paper (30%):** This 15- to 20-page paper will be a significant critical analysis of a work related to the themes of the class. You will amass a significant bibliography of at least 10 works ranging from reviews and news articles to books (including those used in class) and provide in this paper your own original contribution to the discussion about this topic related to Irish Catholicism.

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

### **Reading and Assignment Schedule:**

W 1/16 Introduction

James Clarence Mangan, "Lament over the Ruins of the Abbey of Teach Molaga" (1846); Padraic Pearse, "The Mother" (1915); Proclamation of the Irish Republic (1916); Seamus Heaney, "The Other Side" (1972); Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, "First Communion" (1993)

W 1/23 William Carleton, "The Lough Derg Pilgrim" (ERES)

Marjorie Howes, "Literary Religion: William Carleton," from *Colonial Crossings* (ERES)

George Moore, *The Untilled Field* (1903)

Tom Inglis, *Moral Monopoly* (97-128)

**Oral History Due**

M 1/28 **Research Seminar with John Coelho**

W 1/30 Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (1897)

Patrick O'Malley, "The Blood of the Saints: Vampirism from Polidori to Stoker" from *Catholicism, Sexual Deviance, and Victorian Gothic Culture* (ERES)

**Close Reading Exercise Due**

W 2/6 J. M. Synge, *Riders to the Sea* (1904), *Playboy of the Western World* (1907)

Inglis, *Moral Monopoly* (129-177)

Emmet Larkin, "The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850-75" (57-90)

W 2/13 James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1914)

St. Ignatius, *The Spiritual Exercises* (Norton 277-289)

Jonathan Mulrooney, "Stephen Dedalus and the Politics of Confession" (Norton 470-486)

**Article Summary Due**

W 2/20 Kate O'Brien, *The Land of Spices* (1942)

Adele Dalsimer, "The Land of Spices" from *Kate O'Brien* (Twayne, 1990) (ERES)

*Moral Monopoly* (178-200)

**Text and Context Exercise Due**

W 2/27 Frank O'Connor, "Guests of the Nation," "The Conversation," "Lost Fatherhoods," "Vanity,"

"The Ugly Duckling," "A Case of Conscience," "The Miracle"

Mary Lavin, "The Will," "Chamois Gloves," "My Vocation," "A Wet Day," "A Pure Accident" (ERES)

Margaret MacCurtain, "Godly Burden: Catholic Sisterhoods in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Ireland" (ERES)

"Conscious and Duty," *A Manual of Catholic Action by an Irish Priest* (1933) (ERES)

W 3/5 **Spring Break**

W 3/12 **Research Presentations**

W 3/19 Denis Devlin, *Collected Poems*

- Stan Smith, "'Precarious Guest': The Poetry of Denis Devlin" (ERES)
- W 3/26 Brian Moore, *Catholics* (1972)  
Dermot Keogh, "The Catholic Church in Ireland since the 1950s" (ERES)
- W 4/2 Bernard MacLaverty, *Cal* (1983)  
Inglis, *Moral Monopoly* (204-259)  
*CAIN: Northern Ireland Conflict, Society, and Politics* (<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/>)  
**Abstract and Bibliography Due**
- W 4/9 Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin, *The Girl Who Married the Reindeer* (2002)  
Catriona Clutterbuck, "Good Faith in Religion and Art: The Later Poetry of Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin" (ERES)
- T 4/10 Screening: *The Magdalene Sisters* (dir. Peter Mullan, 2002)
- W 4/16 *The Magdalene Sisters*  
Elizabeth Cullingford, "'Our Nuns Are *Not* a Nation': Politicizing the Convent in Irish Literature and Film" (ERES)  
Lionel Pilkington, "Religion and the Celtic Tiger: The Cultural Legacies of Anti-Catholicism in Ireland" (ERES)
- W 4/23 Colm Toibin, "A Priest in the Family" from *Mothers and Sons*; "A Native Son," "Crowds and Power" from *The Sign of the Cross: Travels in Catholic Ireland* (ERES)  
**Final Paper Presentations**
- W 4/30 **Study Period**
- F 5/9 **Final Paper Due**