

Literature

Landscape & the Literary Imagination in 20th Century Irish Literature ~ Peter Murphy

UD only (Upper Division 300-500)/3 credit hours

The course will focus on twentieth century Irish literature and include poetry, short stories, and drama. Depending upon which play is being performed at the Abbey Theater in Dublin while we are there, every effort will be made to include that play in the required readings along with attendance at a performance of the play. We will begin with what has been called "The Irish Revival" or "The Celtic Revival" initiated by W. B. Yeats and work our way to the present with particular emphasis on both Ireland divided and what might be thought of as a more recent development of Ireland united (or at least an effort to unite its literary efforts). Thus, the course will begin with Yeats and end, probably with Seamus Heaney. The bookends of the course, then, will be two dominant and internationally significant poets. In between these two giants we will read the poetry of: Patrick Kavanagh, Louise Macneice, Thomas Kinsella, John Montague, Michael Longly, Ciaran Carson, and Derek Mahon, among others. We will read the short stories of: James Joyce, Elizabeth Bowen, Mary Lavin, Sean O'Faolain, Frank O'Connor, Liam O'Flaherty, Edna O'Brien, John Banville, John McGahern, Colm Toibin, and William Trevor. I would like to begin our study of drama with J. M. Synge's *Playboy of the Western World* (as part of the "the Irish Revival"), and include at least one play by Brian Friel. Specific contemporary plays will be determined by what is being performed at the Abbey Theater. Teaching this course in Dublin rather than in Murray, KY (or any other city or town in the US) provides an opportunity to experience the historical and cultural context in which this literature was conceived and produced. In his book, *A Writer's Ireland: Landscape in Literature*, William Trevor examines the ways in which "the landscape of Ireland has had a profound and creative influence on its literature, from the heroic myths of the Celts to the marvelous works of Synge, Yeats, Joyce and Heaney." It takes Trevor roughly 200 pages to track this influence. In addition, Dublin is a rich literary and cultural resource. In and around Dublin, Yeats was born as was Sean O'Casey, George Moore wrote *A Drama in Muslin*, between 1901 - 1911, and Joyce located all of *Ulysses*. More recently, Roddy Doyle wrote *The Commitments*, Liam O'Flaherty wrote *The Insurrection*, Flann O'Brien wrote *At Swim-Two-Birds*, and Brendan Behan wrote *The Quare Fellow*, to name just a few literary works produced in this marvelous city. In addition to locating literary works in the precise locale in which they were conceived, Dublin also offers many cultural venues in which to explore the development of Irish literature. Among many, many places to visit, some of the more desirable spots might include the following: the Dublin's Writer's Museum at 18 Parnell Square; the James Joyce Center at 33 North Great Georges St.; Old Library at Trinity College; Dermot Bolger's Raven Arts Press and the Parson's Bookshop. The James Joyce Museum is just on the outskirts of Dublin in the Martello Tower in Sandycove, Dun Laoghaire, and if we could get to Galway the W. B. Yeats House might be a fun place to visit.

Can the course be taken to fulfill major and minor requirements? YES

Can the course be taken to fulfill general elective credits? YES

Are there prerequisites for this course?

NO

Assessment Methods:

Students will keep a daily journal of their readings, places visited, and the connection between the two: 20%

Students will lead the discussion of one of the readings, which will serve as the basis for the longer paper; 10%

There will be two exams: one at the end of the first week and one toward the end of the course: 20%

Student participation:

10%

A final post-trip paper that will build on the in-class presentation:

40%.