

# SS120 GAELIC LITERATURE AND CULTURE: From Cú Chulainn to the Cultural Revival and Beyond

6 ECTS/3 US Semester Credits

## COURSE OBJECTIVE

Gaelic literature is the oldest vernacular literature in Western Europe; this course introduces the student to early Gaelic narrative literature and gives insights into the culture(s) which created that literature. Students read and interpret a selection of texts in translation, including tales of Cú Chulainn and the Ulster Cycle, Fionn mac Cumhaill and the Fianna and tales of the Otherworld, and develop skills in engaging critically with literature. Tracing the vicissitudes of the Irish language and its culture from the seventeenth century onwards, the second section of the course explores Irish folklore and the oral storytelling tradition, examining the emergence and development of modern Gaelic literature from the period of the Cultural Revival in the late-nineteenth century. The representation of so-called 'Gaelic' identity as portrayed through Irish language literature and folklore is explored; through the reading of selections of Gaelic prose and poetry in translation, students gain insights into the rapid changes within Gaelic culture from the nineteenth century as represented in folklore and literature. While demonstrating an intimate awareness of formal and thematic developments in a broad range of world literatures, contemporary Gaelic prose and poetry engages closely with earlier sources within the Gaelic literary, oral and cultural traditions. The course develops students' understanding of the dynamic interplay between the traditional and the contemporary within modern Gaelic literature.

A knowledge of Irish is not a prerequisite for this course; all classes are through English. Introductory classes in the Irish language can be provided to interested students.

## COURSE OUTLINE

### Part I

1. The beginnings of literacy in Ireland; an introduction to the sources and methods of interpretation of Old and Middle Irish literature (Part I)
2. The beginnings of literacy in Ireland; an introduction to the sources and methods of interpretation of Old and Middle Irish literature (Part II)
3. Tales of the *Ulaid* (*Táin Bó Cúailnge*)
4. Tales of the Monastery (Early Irish Poetry)
5. Tales of the Otherworld I (*Echtrae Chonnlaí*)
6. Tales of the Otherworld II (*Immram Brain*)
7. Tales of the *Fianna* (*Acallam na Senórach*)

### Part II

1. Exploring Ireland's National Folklore Collection: a short lecture followed by a practical workshop
2. 'Away with the Fairies:' traditional Irish narratives of the *slua sí* [fairy folk] in their sociocultural context
3. 'I suppose that never again will there be an old woman as Irish as me on this Island:' the literature of the Blasket Islands
4. 'The Great Queen Speaks:' The Poetry of Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill
5. 'Banished to this wasteland because of one sin:' Exile in Irish-language literature of the 20th century.
6. '*Sruth Teangacha*/Stream of Tongues': modern Irish poetry in translation.

## GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHY: Part I

Students are required to purchase the basic textbook Gantz, J., *Early Irish Myths and Sagas*, Oxford: Penguin Classics [ISBN: 978-0140443974] – c. \$8-10.

### Basic Texts

- Cross, T.P. & Slover, C.H. 1936 *Ancient Irish Tales*  
Cross, T.P. 1952 *Motif-Index of Early Irish Literature*  
Dillon, M. 1948 *Early Irish Literature*  
Dooley, A. & Roe, H. 1999 *Tales of the elders of Ireland*  
Gantz, J., 1981 *Early Irish Myths and Sagas*  
Greene, D. & O'Connor F. 1967 *A Golden Treasury of Irish Poetry*  
McCone, K. 1990 *Pagan Past and Christian Present in Early Irish Literature*

McCone, K. 2000 *Echtrae Chonnlaí and the Beginnings of Vernacular Narrative Writing in Ireland*  
Murphy, G., 1956 *Early Irish Lyrics*  
Welch, R. 1996 *The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature*

#### Further Reading

Caerwyn Williams, J.E. & Ford, P. 1992 *The Irish Literary Tradition*  
Carney, J. 1967 *Medieval Irish Lyrics*  
Jackson, K.H., 1951 *A Celtic Miscellany*  
Koch, J.T. & Carey, J. *The Celtic Heroic Age*  
Mac Cana, P. 1980 *The Learned Tales of Medieval Ireland*  
Mallory, J.P., 1992 *Aspects of the Táin*  
Ó Corráin, D. 1989 'Early Irish hermit poetry?' in *Sages, Saints and Storytellers*, (eds.) D. Ó Corráin, L. Breathnach, K. McCone, 251-67  
Wooding, J., 2000 *The Otherworld Voyage in Early Irish Literature: An Anthology of Criticism*

### GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHY: Part II

**There is no textbook required for purchase for Part II of this course.**

#### Basic Texts

Ní Dhomhnaill, Nuala. 1986. *Selected Poems: Rogha Dánta*. Dublin: Raven Arts Press. [891.3 NiD]  
O'Brien, Flann. 1986. *The Poor Mouth*. London: Grafton. [893.3 OBR]  
Ó Cadhain, Máirtín. 2015. *Cré na Cille: The Dirty Dust* (trans. Titley, Alan). New Haven: Yale University Press. [893.3 OCA]  
Ó Cadhain, Máirtín. 2016. *Graveyard clay/Cré na cille: a narrative in ten interludes* (trans. Mac Con Iomaire, Liam; Robinson, Tim). New Haven: Yale University Press. [893.3 OCA]  
Ó Conaire, Pádraig. 1986. *The Finest Stories of Pádraic Ó Conaire*. Dublin: Poolbeg. [893.3 OCON]  
O'Crohan, Tomas. 2000. *The Islandman*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. [894.3 OCRIOM]  
Ó Duilearga, Séamus. 1999. 'Irish Tales and Story-Tellers' in Dundes, Alan (ed.) 1999. *International folkloristics: classic contributions by the founders of folklore*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 153-176. [398 INT]  
Ó hEochaidh, Seán; Mac Néill, Máire & Ó Catháin, Séamas. 1977. *Síscéalta ó Thír Chonaill: Fairy legends from Donegal*. Dublin: Comhairle Bhéaloideas Éireann. [398.210941693]  
Sayers, Peig. 1974. *Peig : the autobiography of Peig Sayers of the Great Blasket Island*. Dublin: Talbot Press. [894.3 SAY]

#### Further Reading

Cruise-O'Brien, Máire. 1977. 'An tOileánach', *The Pleasures of Gaelic Literature*, ed. John Jordan, pp. 25- 38, 85-96. [890]  
Kiberd, Declan. 2000. 'Blasket Autobiographies', *Irish Classics*, London: Granta, pp. 520-43. [828.9909 KIB]  
Narváez, Peter. 1991. *The Good People: New Fairylore Essays*. New York: Garland Pub. [398.2 GOO]  
Ní Dhomhnaill, Nuala & Frawley, Oona. 2005. *Selected Essays*. Dublin: New Island. [894.3 NIDH]  
Ó Giolláin, D. 2012. 'Ireland' in Bendix, R. & Hasan-Rokem, Galit (eds.) *A Companion to Folklore*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 409-425. [398.2 COM]  
Ó Giolláin, D. 2000. *Locating Irish folklore: Tradition, Modernity, Identity*, Cork: Cork University Press. [398.09415 OGI]  
O'Leary, Philip. 1994. *The Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival 1881-1921*. Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press. [894.309 OLE]  
O'Leary, Philip. 2004. *Gaelic Prose in the Irish Free State 1922-1939*, Dublin: University College Dublin Press. [894.309 OLE]

### REQUIREMENTS FOR CREDITS

1. Attendance at all lectures and participation in seminars.
2. One essay of 1,500 words on a subject of your choice, subject to the agreement of the Course Professor (Those seeking graduate credit must write a 3,000-word paper).
3. Written examination of material covered in lectures and seminars over both sections of the course.

## **COURSE PROFESSORS**

### **Liam Ó hAisibéil, BA, MA, Ph.D. (Director)**

Liam Ó hAisibéil graduated with a Ph.D. in Modern-Irish from the National University of Ireland, Galway in 2013, and has been employed at the University of Limerick, at St. Angela's College, Sligo, and at Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Canada. He has spent periods of research with the Locus Project at University College, Cork, and as a Visiting Scholar at the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic at Cambridge University, England. His research and teaching interests include onomastics (place-names and personal names) and medieval Irish literature, history, and culture.

### **Kicki Ingridsson, M.A., Ph.D.**

Kicki Ingridsson was teaching Celtic Civilisation and Old Irish at NUI Galway for many years before she moved to Belgium to teach Swedish and research methodology. Her research is focused on death, sex and violence in Early-Irish literature and language and the narrative functions of these themes. She believes discussing Early-Irish literature with her students is the most joyful way to spend her time, which is why she is teaching this summer school for her eleventh year.

### **Ailbhe Nic Giolla Chomhaill, M.A.**

Ailbhe Nic Giolla Chomhaill holds a Ph.D. from the Department of Modern Irish at the National University of Ireland, Galway. She has taught undergraduate and postgraduate courses at NUI Galway and has spent time as a visiting researcher at the University of California, Los Angeles. Her doctoral research focuses on the folktale tradition of Joyce Country, County Galway.