

Course Last Updated [03/25/2024]



University of
New Haven

Storytelling: Writing Irish Cultural Narratives

Section I: Course Overview

Course Code: THDA320/ENG320

Subject Area(s): English Language & Literature, Theater Arts

Prerequisites: One 200 level course, or two 100 level courses in Creative Writing, English Literature, Drama or related discipline

Language of Instruction: English

Total Contact Hours: 45

Credits: 3

Course Fees: None

Course Description

This course will examine the role of storytelling in Irish culture and the way in which 'story' is used to create a narrative of Irish culture. It will provide an introduction to traditional oral folk traditions, modernist documentations in the Irish short story, theatrical performance, filmic narratives, and the contemporary iteration of cultural change on the streets of Ireland's capital city. Students will have an opportunity to practice immersive research and to engage in a variety of different modes of storytelling. Through continuous assessment and the development of a portfolio of writing exercises, students will have the opportunity to develop their writing and editing skills with a professional journalist.

The course will be taught in theme-based seminars. Students will engage with weekly topic areas through short presentations, guided discussion, group work and writing, as well as imaging exercises that will focus on spontaneity, experimentation and craft. There will be a core lecturer, with visiting speakers as appropriate. Student participation through presentation and class discussion will be essential. Attendance on field trips is mandatory.

Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students are able to:

- Identify narrative content and structure of short stories, theatrical performances, film and their own lived experiences of Dublin;
- Deconstruct oral folk tales and modernist literature in an effort to develop their own storytelling and writing;
- Explain the complex place of storytelling in the context of contemporary Irish culture and society;
- Compose original and relevant stories through discussion within groupwork and written creative assignments;

Section II: Instructor & Course Details

Instructor Details

Name: TBC

Contact Information: TBC

Term: TBC

Course Day and Time: TBC

Office Hours: By Appointment

Grading & Assessment

The instructor assesses students' mastery of course learning objectives by using the forms of assessment below. Each of these assessments is weighted toward the final grade. The Assessment Overview section provides further details for each.

Engagement - 20%

Performance/Presentations (5x components at 10%) - 50% total

Final portfolio - 30%

Assessment Overview

This section provides a brief description of each form of assessment listed above. Forms of assessment may be slightly modified in the term syllabus.

Engagement (20%): Students are expected to be engaged in class, to have read the CEA CAPA Engagement Policy, and to understand the [Class Engagement Rubric](#) that outlines how engagement is graded (20% total).

Short Writing Assignments (50%): Each student portfolio will include at least **five themed pieces of writing – each piece is weighted at 10%**. The pieces will reflect critical engagement with Irish culture,

content from the curriculum, and offer an opportunity to engage with a variety of different modes of storytelling and develop a Storytelling Portfolio made up of the following components:

Assignment 1: Interview Profile Review (750 words)

Assignment 2: Folk Tale (750 words)

Assignment 3: Travelogue (750 words)

Assignment 4: Object Writing (750 words)

Assignment 5: Critical Review of the Performance (750 words)

The portfolio will be built in class through set exercises and gives opportunities to demonstrate a high standard of competency in the processes of drafting and editing. Each of the written assignments will be discussed in detail in class ahead of each submission deadline.

Final Portfolio (30%): The final showcase/performance will be an open reading event, with students presenting a selection of their work and discussing their experience of shaping each piece. Portfolios should be submitted in hard copy on the final day of term (30% total)

Active Learning

Experiential learning is an essential component of education abroad, and participation in field studies is a required part of coursework. In this course, students explore the city in which they are studying using a variety of methods. This provides the opportunity to gain nuance and perspective on the host context and course content, as well as to collect information and resources for assigned papers, projects, and presentations.

- **Guided Tour of MoLi**
- **Field trip to theatre (for example: *The New Electric Ballroom* at The Gate Theatre)**
- **Student-led Storytelling Performance**

Readings and Resources

The below readings and resources are representative of what will be assigned as required in this course, but may vary slightly in the term syllabus.

All students are given access to the online library of the University of New Haven (UNH), accessible [here](#), and are expected to comply with [UNH Policies](#) regarding library usage.

Wherever possible, required readings are made accessible through the online library or Canvas. Students are responsible for obtaining all required readings.

Each course utilizes Canvas as its LMS. Students are expected to check Canvas regularly for updates and deadlines. Canvas is also the primary platform for contacting your instructor in case of questions or concerns about the course.

Required

- Barthes, R. (1957) *Mythologies*. Points. Available at: <https://soundenvironments.files.wordpress.com/2011/11/roland-barthes-mythologies.pdf>.
- Benjamin, W. (2016). *The Storyteller*. Verso Books.
- *Dublin You Are*, by Stephen James Smith (no date) Stephen James Smith. Available at: <https://stephenjamesmith.bandcamp.com/track/dublin-you-are> (Accessed: 26 March 2024).
- Dwyer, Christine (2018) 'Hickey Goose Girl' in Hickey, C. *The lives of women*. Victoria, Tx: Dalkey Archive Press.
- Gleeson, Sinead (2016) 'Blue Hills and Chalk Bones' in *Granta*. Available at: <https://granta.com/blue-hills-chalk-bone/>.
- Heaney, Seamus (1989) 'Whatever You Say Say Nothing' via *Changes in Northern Ireland* (no date) RTÉ Archives. Available at: <https://www.rte.ie/archives/exhibitions/1982-seamus-heaney/1989-northern-ireland-troubles/606459-changes-in-northern-ireland/> (Accessed: 24 March 2024).
- Jordan, E. and Arts (2000) *Theatre Stuff : Critical Essays On Contemporary Irish Theatre*. Dublin: Carysfort Press.
- Joyce, J. (2005). *Dubliners*. Collector's Library.
- *Man of Aran* (1934) Flaherty, R. (Dir.) via www.youtube.com [online] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=0JxnU0_BFzw&embeds_referring_urn=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bing.com%2F&embeds_referring_origin=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bing.com&source_ve_path=Mjg2NjY&feature=emb_logo [Accessed 26 Mar. 2024].
- McDonagh, M. (2013). *The Cripple Of Inishmaan*. A&C Black.
- McKay, Susan (2014) 'Easter in Ardoyne' in *The Dublin Review*. Available at: <https://thedublinreview.com/article/easter-in-ardoyne/> (Accessed: 24 March 2024).
- Ní Dhuibhne, Éilís (2003). *Midwife to the Fairies*. Attic Press.
- O'Brien, E. (1963) *The Country Girls*. Penguin (Non-Classics).
- O'Brien, Kate (2005) 'A Bus from Tivoli' in O'Toole, T. (2005 *Dictionary of Munster Women Writers 1800-2000*.
- O'Toole, E (2015) *Girls will be girls : dressing up, playing parts and daring to act differently*. London: Orion.
- Heaney, Seamus, Cooke, B., Rainbow Press (Cambridge, England, John Roberts Press and Sutcliffe, S. (1975). *Bog poems*. London, England: Rainbow Press, London, England.

- Synge, J. M. (1907) *The Playboy of the Western World*.
- Synge, J.M. and Tracy, R. (1962). *The Aran Islands, and other writings*. New York: Vintage Books
- *The Queen of Ireland* (2015) Horgan, Connor (Dir.) [DVD] Blinder Films: Dublin
- Walsh, Enda (2005) *The New Electric Ballroom*, Nick Hern Books
- Yeats, WB (1892) 'A Fairy Enchantment' in The Project Gutenberg eBook of Irish Fairy Tales, by W. B. (William Butler) Yeats (no date) www.gutenberg.org. Available at: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/31763/31763-h/31763-h.htm#A_FAIRY_ENCHANTMENT (Accessed: 26 March 2024).

Recommended

- Abbott, H.P. (2021) *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*. Cambridge University Press.
- Grene, Nicholas. 2009. "Brian Friel and the Sovereignty of Language." *Irish Theatre International* 2(1): 38–47
- Henigan, Julie. 2002. "'Te Power of a Lie': Irish Storytelling Tradition in 'The Playboy of the Western World.'" *New Hibernia Review* 6 (3): 92–112. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20646397> (accessed July 26, 2015)
- Kurdi, Mária. 2010. "Narrative in Drama: The Example of Contemporary Irish Women Playwrights." *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies (HJEAS)* 16 (1/2): 225–41.
- Lonergan, P. (2010) 'Martin McDonagh and the Ethics of Irish Storytelling.' In *A Companion to Irish Literature* vol. 2, ed. Robert Welch, 436–50. Chichester: Blackwell. Morrison, Kristin. 1982. "Te Rip Word in a Piece o' Monologue." *Modern Drama* 25 (3): 349–54.
- Roche, Anthony (1987) "Bailegangaire: Storytelling into Drama." *Irish University Review* 17 (1): 114–128 in *Contemporary Irish Drama from Beckett to McGuinness (1995)* New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Szabo, Carmen (2012) 'Issues of Narrative, Storytelling and Performance in Conor McPherson's The Actors.' In *The Theatre of Conor McPherson: "Right Beside the Beyond"* ed. Lilian Chambers and Eamonn Jordan, 43–60. Dublin: Carysfort Press

Course Calendar

Session 1	
Topics	Introduction: Telling Stories/ Storytelling
Activity	General introduction to the class and the idea of narrative.
Readings & Assignments	'Narrative and Life' pp 1 - 12 in Abbott, H. Porter - <i>The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative</i> . Assignment 1: Interview Profile (750 words)

Session 2	
Topics	The Role of the Storyteller
Activity	In this class, we will look at the evolution of the storytelling tradition in Ireland, from oral narratives to the literary revival in the late 19th century. Using critical texts, we will also identify different strategies of narrative construction and discuss the role of the Storyteller. Working from prepared writing samples will give us an opportunity to put these strategies into action.
Readings & Assignments	Walter Benjamin, The Storyteller, WB Yeats, A Fairy Enchantment Assignment 2: Interview Profile Review

Session 3	
Topics	The Folk Narrative
Activity	In this class we will look at the narrative structure of the Folk Tale and examine its reiteration in contemporary literature. Visit to the National Gallery of Ireland.
Readings & Assignments	Eilís Ní Dhuibhne - <i>Midwife to the Fairies</i> Christine Dwyer - <i>Hickey Goose Girl</i> Assignment 1: Folk Tale (750 words)

Session 4	
Topics	Folk Tales and Fantasies: The gap between the story and the galloway deed
Activity	This class will focus on the documentation of rural life in Ireland in two iconic cultural texts, paying attention to narrative construction and the relationship between truth and fiction.
Readings & Assignments	Assignment 3: Travelogue (750 words) J. M. Synge - Excerpts from <i>The Aran Islands</i> and <i>The Playboy of the Western World</i> . Robert Flaherty dir. <i>Man of Aran</i> (film) *Students may find it useful to listen to http://www.rte.ie/drama/radio/plays/2016/1221/840559-the-aran-islands-by-john-millington-synge/ in advance of class.

Session 5	
Topics	Realism and Resistance: Telling the Story of Censorship
Activity	This class will outline the role of censorship in creating a homogenous narrative of Irish culture in the mid-twentieth century. It will look at how cultural ideals impacted upon the possibilities of censorship and the way in which artists

	circumnavigated censorship law. It will also compare the forms of fiction and memoir, as a means of understanding transformation of personal material into creative form. Students will be encouraged to draw on contemporary examples of censorship in discussion.
Readings & Assignments	James Joyce - 'An Encounter' in <i>Dubliners</i> Edna O'Brien - <i>Country Girls, Part Two</i> and pp. 79-161 in <i>Country Girl: A Memoir</i>

Session 6	
Topics	Guided Tour of MoLi
Readings & Assignments	Kate O'Brien, <i>A Bus from Tivoli</i>

Session 7	
MID-TERM BREAK	

Session 8	
Topics	Defining the Moment: Critical and Cultural Writing
Activity	This class will look at the way in which traditional Irish culture has been reinterpreted by contemporary storytellers in a variety of genres for entertainment and political purposes. Assignment 4: Object Writing (750 words)
Readings & Assignments	Martin McDonagh, <i>The Cripple of Inishmaan</i> Seamus Heaney, <i>Bog Poems</i>

Session 9	
Topics	Shamrocks and Shamroques: Contemporary Cultural Semiotics
Activity	This class will focus on the semiology of everyday life. It will discuss the way in which cultural symbols have been used to tell the story of Ireland, and the different ways this story has been told across media and for corporate ends. Students will discuss the idea of the city as a cultural text, from its architecture to its street signs to its graffiti.
Readings & Assignments	Roland Barthes, 'Wine and Milk', 'Steak and Chips', in <i>Mythologies</i> Stephen Smith - <i>Dublin You Are</i>

Session 10	
Topics	Cultural Criticism in Practice: Theatre
Activity	This class will look at the way in which theatre and live performance in particular has performed a critical role in the mediation of the Irish cultural narrative. Students will be introduced to different types of performance texts and be offered the tools for watching and interpreting a live performance. We will also look at a

	variety of different critical reviews of material we have read/seen as part of the curriculum, and discuss strategies of cultural engagement.
Readings & Assignments	Enda Walsh - <i>The New Electric Ballroom</i> Jocelyn Clarke, 'Uncritical Conditions' in <i>Theatre Stuff</i>

Session 11	
Topics	Cultural Criticism in Practice
Activity	Field Study: Theatre Trip (E.g. Performance of <i>The New Electric Ballroom</i> at The Gate Theatre) https://www.gatetheatre.ie/whats-on/
Readings & Assignments	Assignment 5: Critical Review of the Performance (750 words)

Session 12	
Topics	Myth and Politics
Activity	We will meet at the <i>Seamus Heaney Exhibition</i> at Bank of Ireland, Westmoreland Street Entrance at 9.55 https://www.nli.ie/exhibitions-events/exhibition-seamus-heaney-listen-now-again This class will look at the function of mythological narrative in interpreting the political reality of The Troubles.
Readings & Assignments	Seamus Heaney - <i>Whatever You Say, Say Nothing</i> https://www.rte.ie/archives/exhibitions/1982-seamus-heaney/1989-northern-ireland-troubles/606459-changes-in-northern-ireland/ Links to an external site. Seamus Heaney - <i>Punishment</i> https://allpoetry.com/poem/11645373-Punishment-by-Seamus-Heaney Susan McKay - <i>Easter in Ardoyne</i> https://thedublinreview.com/article/easter-in-ardoyne/ Final Portfolio: Students will bring a draft of their performance review to class for workshop. Students will be asked to share their own reviews, and discuss the work of their peers.

Session 13	
Topics	Self as Story: Real Life and Narrative Literature
Activity	This class will discuss how personal narratives are used for political ends. Using three different contemporary texts, it will look at the relationship between personal and political narratives, with particular attention to the voices of women and marginalized communities.

Readings & Assignments	Sinead Gleeson, <i>Blue Hills and Chalk Bones</i> from <i>Constellations</i> Emer O'Toole, <i>Girls Will be Girls</i> (Excerpts) <i>The Queen of Ireland</i> (2015) Horgan, Connor (Dir.) [DVD] Blinder Films: Dublin
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Session 14	
Topics	Final Class
Activity	Final Portfolio: facilitator will provide feedback and notes on presenting final project. They will discuss the stages and strategies of writing and drafting, as well as develop visual material to complement their writing.

Session 15	
Topics	Final Portfolio: Storytelling Session
Activity	Students will present two of their five writing projects orally to faculty and peers in a venue chosen to give them experience of working with an audience (function room or an event space).

Section III: Academic Policies and Standards

Academic Policies

Students are expected to review and understand all CEA CAPA student policies, including our [Academic Policies](#) and [Engagement Policy](#). CEA CAPA reserves the right to change, update, revise, or amend existing policies and/or procedures at any time. Additional requirements that may be associated with a specific course or program are addressed in the term syllabus.

Student Learning & Development Objectives

CEA CAPA has identified [Student Learning and Development Objectives \(SLDOs\)](#) for all programs in all locations: content in context, navigating differences, power and equity, critical thinking and intellectual curiosity, career and professional development, and sustainability and migration. These are meta-level learning objectives that transcend coursework and are infused across all elements of program delivery, beyond specifics of course offerings, addressing student learning holistically and framing it a larger learning context.