

Policy Statement, Modern Irish Literature, Fall 2014

Professor Margot Gayle Backus

Office: Roy Cullen 236-A

MW 10:30-noon

Office Hours: MW 1-2 and by appointment

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I. Course Materials

Texts

Angela Bourke, *The Burning of Bridget Cleary*

Karen Steele, *Women, Press and Politics*

Mary Trotter, *Ireland's National Theaters*

Padraic O'Conaire, *Exile*

The Collected Writings of Lady Augusta Gregory

J.M. Synge, *The Playboy of the Western World*

W.B. Yeats, *The Collected Poems*

James Joyce, *Dubliners* and the first three episodes of *Ulysses*

Sean O'Casey, *The Plough and the Stars*

Statement of Purpose

This course is designed to introduce a broad cross section of modern Irish literature and culture, from the late nineteenth-century milieu and the writing of the Celtic Twilight to the Irish Literary Renaissance, and through the emergence of Irish literary modernism. The works we will read grapple with women's issues, class and linguistic divisions, sexual identity, and the turbulent history of Irish nationalism.

The course will emphasize two basic skills: careful, appreciative reading of literature, and critical writing exploring literature analytically, in relationship to its social and historical context. I will provide a sense of Irish history and the Irish literary tradition through a series of short lectures. Course time will be spent discussing the assigned texts. These discussions may take place in assigned small discussion groups or as a class. For each small discussion I will designate a group member to summarize group discussion for the class as a whole, so that small group discussions help to elicit general discussion.

Assignments and Grading

There are two modes of writing in this class: informal and formal. Informal writing will take the form of reading notes and weekly online posts. Formal writing assignments include a short (2-4 pp.) close reading of a poem, and a longer critical essay that will incorporate published literary criticism. For the long final essay I will assign a proposal, an annotated autobiography, a 4-5 pp. draft, and a revised 8-10 pp. essay on some aspect of identity in one or more works of modern Irish literature.

Reading Notes and Class Participation

Your informal writing will take the form of weekly reading notes that will allow you to formulate contributions to in-class discussions of the reading, and emailed responses to weekly discussion questions.

In-class and online discussion/participation and reading notes will account for 25% of the final grade.

The Short Essay

The short essay focuses on the central skill of literary criticism – the ability to read a piece of writing carefully, and to show how its elements work together to create certain effects, certain meanings, to create connections or disturbing dissonances, to create a sense of harmony or turmoil, to argue for a certain reading of particular historical events, or of particular human experiences. The short essay will determine 20% of your final grade.

The Formal Essay

The formal essay represents a central goal of this course; a lot of your in-class and out of class course work will be directed toward its production. I am requiring you to turn in both a formal proposal and a first draft. The proposal should describe what elements of which text or texts you wish to discuss, the perspective you will bring to your reading, and either a specific question you mean to answer in your draft, or a thesis that you plan to support. It must include an annotated bibliography describing three to five sources that you plan to use in writing the formal essay.

The proposal and annotated bibliography will determine 10% of your final grade. The draft you submit will determine 15% of your final grade. The final essay will determine 30% of your final grade.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. I will take roll with every class meeting. Students may permissibly miss up to four class meetings without penalty.

I reserve the right to drop any student who misses four or more classes within the first four weeks; I start counting absences on the second class meeting.

If a student misses five or six class meetings, his or her final grade will be reduced by one half grade per absence. Students missing more than six class meetings will receive an F for the course.

The Final Grade Breakdown:

Class Participation:25%

Short Essay: 20%

Proposal:10%

Draft: 15%

Final Essay: 30%

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's ideas, construction, organization, words or phrases in one's writing. It does not matter if the material came from a published scholar, your roommate, or the Encyclopedia Britannica. Material obtained on the web MUST be cited correctly just like any other outside source; if ideas or words that originated with someone else are included in your work without acknowledgement, that is plagiarism. Avoid it by acknowledging the source of all ideas, words or organization in your writing that did not originate with you. In my classes, students submitting work with phrases or ideas that are not theirs without acknowledging their debt with quotation marks and correct bibliographic citation WILL receive an F for the assignment and may (depending on the severity of the offense) receive an F for the course. The University of Houston offers first-time plagiarism offenders the opportunity to sign a document that waives their right to a departmental hearing if they acknowledge that they plagiarized and accept the penalty applied by the instructor. Second-time offenders may not sign such a waiver; their offense will be considered in a formal university hearing and they may be put on probation, suspended, or expelled.

Plagiarism is against the rules of all learning communities because it short circuits learning. Learners can only develop if they actually struggle at their own level. Misrepresenting your skills ultimately cheats you, since by doing it you prevent your professors and peers from offering feedback to you as you are, thus cheating yourself of the feedback and guidance you need.