

## HL 3034 Irish Literature: Modernism to the Contemporary (January 2017)



Sinead O'Connor, *I am Stretched on your Grave:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dHNUrPzQYaw>

Lisa Hannigan, *We the Drowned:*

[v=61YTUlymA4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=61YTUlymA4)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?>

**Introduction:** In an attempt to grasp some of the enormous diversity of subject matter, artistic distinction, and historical range, this course will offer detailed explorations of Irish mythology, philosophy, literature, film and music. Beginning with the idea that Irish artistic and intellectual endeavour is both distinctively Irish and, simultaneously, unmistakably European, we will investigate a variety of questions related to this idea. For example, what does one mean by distinctively Irish? Why has an island of circa 5-6 million people produced, per capita, among the highest number of Nobel prizes in Literature, and has made such an enormous contribution to Anglophone literature, European philosophy since the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, and modern music, especially in recent decades. What makes Ireland European, apart from the fact that European Modernism looks extremely different without the contributions of Yeats, Joyce, Beckett, George Moore, and Flann O'Brien? Such questions, and many more will be considered in an attempt to locate a sense of the "Irish mind", if such a thing actually exists.

### Formative feedback

Feedback is central to this course. Students will receive both written and verbal feedback from the lecturer about their presentations. They will also receive both written and verbal feedback in response to their proposals, as the lecturer will return each proposal individually. The lecturer will also receive digital copies of their final essays so that extensive feedback on both grammar, style and content can be provided.

The Book Of Kells (circa 8<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.)



### Core Texts

1. Dermot Healy, *A Goat's Song*
2. Flann O'Brien, *The Poor Mouth*
3. Aidan Higgins, *Bornholm Night-Ferry*
4. Brian Friel, *Dancing at Lughnasa* (provided)
5. John Banville, *The Sea*
6. Sebastian Barry, *The Secret Scripture*
7. Anne Enright, *The Gathering*

\*Miscellaneous other readings will be made available

**Music:** Van Morrison, *Astral Weeks* and *No Guru, No*

*Method, No Teacher*

**Films:** *The Crying Game*/*The Butcher Boy*/*A Company of Wolves*/*Breakfast on Pluto* (all dir. Neil Jordan)

**Poetry:** Seamus Heaney (handouts)

**Drama:** (handouts)

**Short Fiction:** Selected Short stories (provided)

### Method of Instruction

3 Hour Seminar

**Approach:** Contextual presentation by the instructor forms the central focus of the seminar, in which students are encouraged to participate, ask questions, discuss amongst themselves. The presentation involves some theoretical comments about the author of the text we are working on, the period, and the major theoretical concepts that have significance for the author/text. Students are encouraged to participate freely in this period of the class. Presentation is always supplemented by multi-media resources (audio/visual interviews, supporting material, music, paintings, commentaries, and/or historically-relevant information).

Class discussion can happen at any point during the three-hour period – although in some seminars specific discussion-linked tasks are set. Presentations, group discussions are used where appropriate.

### Course Assessment

**Continuous Assessment:** 50 %

Research Essay 30%

Abstract 10%

Participation 10%

**Final Examination:** 50 %

Lecturer	Office Room No.	DID	E-mail Address
Neil Murphy	HSS-05-58	65921690	camurphy@ntu.edu.sg

### Seminar Schedule

Week No.	Topics	Readings
1 Jan 11	<b>Lecture 1: Introduction to Ireland/Irishness/Constructions of Irishness – and Irish literature</b>	Handouts
2 Jan 18	<b>Lecture 2: Ireland and Modernism</b>	Selected readings by Yeats, Joyce and Beckett
3 Jan 25	<b>Lecture 3: Postmodern unmaking and Irish Culture</b>	Flann O'Brien, <i>The Poor Mouth</i>
4 Feb 1	<b>Lecture 4: Neil Jordan – Film and Fiction</b>	Selected films by Neil Jordan
5 Feb 8	<b>Lecture 5: Fiction and the Forms of Memory</b>	Dermot Healy, <i>A Goat's Song</i>
6 Feb 15	<b>Lecture 6: Van Morrison</b>	Van Morrison, <i>Astral Weeks</i> and various others.

7 Feb 22	<b>Lecture 7: The Irish Short Story</b>	Handouts
8 March 1	<b>Recess</b>	
9 March 8	<b>Lecture 8: Brian Friel</b>	Brian Friel's <i>Dancing at Lughnasa</i>
10 March 15	<b>Lecture 9: The Reconstruction of Reality</b>	Aidan Higgins, <i>Bornholm Night-Ferry</i>
11 March 22	<b>Lecture 10:  Reconstructions of the Past</b>	John Banville, <i>The Sea</i>
12 March 29	<b>Lecture 11: Madness and telling tales</b>	Sebastian Barry, <i>The Secret Scripture</i>
13 April 5	<b>Lecture 12: Anne Enright</b>	<i>The Gathering</i>
14 April 12	<b>Lecture 13: Conclusion</b>	

### Primary Reference Material

Richard Kearney, *Navigations: Collected Irish Essays 1976-2006*. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2006.

Richard Kearney, *Postnationalist Ireland*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Richard Kearney, *Transitions: Narratives in Irish Culture*. Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1988.

Donoghue, Denis. *We Irish: Essays on Irish Literature and Society*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986.

Denis Donoghue, *The Practice of Reading*, Yale 1998.

Declan Kiberd, *Irish Classics*, Harvard Uni Press, 2001.

Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, Vintage 1995.

*Irish University Review*, Special issue/John Banville Spring/Summer 2006 (in HSS library)

*Review of Contemporary Fiction*, Flann O'Brien Centenary Essays, Fall 2011. (Literature Online)

**\*\*There is an extensive body of secondary reading material on Irish writing in the library, as well as a lot of author-specific books (Yeats/Beckett/Banville/Jordan/Friel etc). In addition the library has holdings of the Irish University Review and the Canadian Journal of Irish Studies (Paper copies), while the literature databases, Literature Online, Project Muse and JSTOR will all have a wide range of relevant journals and articles.**



**Jack B. Yeats (1871-1957)**  
*For the Road*