Fall 2019

HSS 403-101: Modern Irish Drama

Jon Curley

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HSS403(101) Literature Seminar: Modern Irish Drama 1900-2000

R 6:00- 8:50
CKB126

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Course Description
This course is a comprehensive survey of Irish dramatic literature from the turn of the twentieth century to roughly its end, examining the emergence of a drama attempting to shape, interrogate, transform, or subvert conceptions of national, cultural, and personal identity across colonial and postcolonial history. The performance of certain ancient Irish myths and stories paralleled sociological and historical probings of society, blurring in myriad representations the unstable boundary between realism, anti-realism, and fantasy. Our exploration will begin with Yeats, Lady Gregory, and the legacy of the Irish Literary Revival, finishing with the plays of Marina Carr, Martin MacDonagh, and Conor McPherson, some of the leading lights in the new generation of contemporary Irish drama.

Requirements
You are expected to keep up with the reading in the texts and complete all assigned exercises. Classroom participation is essential; more than three absences will result in serious academic trouble. I will ask that you bring responses to particular texts under discussion each week and compile a weekly writing journal based on your writing experience, classroom reactions, and any other thoughts related to Irish dramatic literature.

Also:

Essay One 20 points
Essay Two 25 points
Oral Presentation 15 points
Performance
(Monologue or Dialogue) 10 points

Weekly writings/postings 15 points

Class Participation/Attendance 15 points

**This course uses CANVAS as a crucial academic resource. Be sure to check it regularly for information and materials pertaining to our class directives.**

**Required Texts**

*The Beauty Queen of Leenane and Other Plays*, Martin MacDonagh (Vintage, 1998)

There might be a required Class Component: Performance of Conor McPherson’s *Dublin Carol* at the Irish Repertory Theater (132 West 22nd Street, New York, NY 10011): $25

**Course Outline**

Primary texts are listed first; secondary sources second. Texts marked with * are optional.

**Week One**

9/5

Introduction: The Histories of Ireland and the Irish Dramatic Imagination

**Week Two**

9/12

W.B. Yeats & Lady Gregory, *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*
W.B. Yeats, *At the Hawk’s Well*

Lady Gregory, *Spreading the News, The Rising of the Moon*

Lady Gregory, “Our Irish Theatre;” “A Note on *Spreading the News*”
W.B. Yeats, “An Irish National Theatre;” “An Introduction to My Plays” + all four essays under the heading **On Theater in Ireland** (pp. 594-622)

**Week Three**

9/19
J.M. Synge, *Riders to the Sea; The Playboy of the Western World*

J.M. Synge, “Preface to *The Playboy of the Western World*”
Paige Reynolds, “The First Playboy”; Ben Levitas, [*The Playboy of the Western World*]

**Week Four**

9/26

George Bernard Shaw, *John Bull’s Other Island*


**Week Five**

10/3

Sean O’Casey, *Juno and the Paycock*

**Read All O’Casey Background Criticism**

**Week Six**

10/10

Samuel Beckett, *Krapp’s Last Tape*

**Read All Beckett Background Criticism**

**Week Seven**

10/17

Brian Friel, *Translations*

**Read All Background Criticism**

**ESSAY ONE DUE**

**Week Eight**

10/24

Roundtable Discussion: “Irish Drama in Perspective”

Film (T.B.A.)

**Week Nine**
10/31 Marina Carr, *By the Bog of Cats*

**Read All Carr Background Criticism**

Week Ten

11/7

Martin McDonagh, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane; The Lonesome West*

Locate your own McDonagh criticism, profiles, interviews and bring to class to discuss

Week Eleven

11/14

Conor McPherson, *The Weir*

**Read All McPherson Background Criticism**

Week Twelve

11/21

Essay 2 Brainstorming Session

Oral Presentations/Performances

Week Thirteen

11/26 (N.B. Tuesday—Our Thursday Class Meets)

Oral Presentations/Performances

**November 28 – December 1: Thanksgiving Recess: NO CLASSES**

Week Fourteen

12/5

Oral Presentations/Performances

Last Day of Class

**ESSAY TWO at Cullimore 409 by 6pm on Thursday, 12/12**