

TERM: Fall 2025

COURSE NUMBER & CATEGORY: ENGL 4600: Electives: Topics in Lit

COURSE TITLE: At the Center of Controversy: Irish Drama

SECTION TIMES/DAYS: MW 11:50 am-1:30 pm

INSTRUCTOR: Prof. Molly Youngkin

COURSE DESCRIPTION/PRINCIPAL TOPICS:

In 1897, William Butler Yeats, Isabella Augusta Gregory, and Edward Martyn proclaimed a new vision for Irish drama, proposing to “bring upon the stage the deeper thoughts and emotions of Ireland” and show that “Ireland is not the home of buffoonery” (Harrington ix). This course traces the development of Irish drama from 1897 to the present, in order to better understand the establishment, rise, and current status of one of the most important national dramatic traditions.

We will read plays by Yeats, Gregory, John Millington Synge, George Bernard Shaw, Sean O'Casey, Samuel Beckett, Brian Friel, Conor McPherson, and Marina Carr. We will examine the literary elements used by these playwrights as they negotiated how (and whether) to accurately represent the lives of Irish people, and we will examine how the various political and cultural pressures on Ireland shaped the literary representations produced by these playwrights.

You will be expected to participate in class discussion; complete take-home midterm and final exam; produce a short research project to prepare for the final project and a final project, a content-rich website for one of the authors we are studying. Required textbook: Harrington, John P., ed. *Modern and Contemporary Irish Drama*. 2nd ed. W. W. Norton & Co., 2009. ISBN 9780393932430

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By examining a specific genre within a specific national/historical context, students learn that historical contexts and genre traits sometimes remain the same and sometimes change over time.

By studying the tradition of Irish drama, students learn that literary traditions other than British and American traditions are valued and that perceived hierarchies shape the literary canon.

CLASS LEVEL RESTRICTION:

Junior/Senior Only

RECOMMENDED/PREREQUISITES:

N/A

COURSE ATTRIBUTES:

OLD CURRICULUM

- GENRES (LD)
- HISTORIES (LD)
- AUTHORS (UD)
- CRITICAL/THEORETICAL (UD)
- COMPARATIVE (UD)
- CREATIVE/ARTISTRY

CORE ATTRIBUTES:

N/A

NEW CURRICULUM

- DISCIPLINARY RESEARCH (LD)
- HISTORY OF LIT, MEDIA, AND CULTURE (LD)
- READING AND WRITING GENRES (LD)
- THEORY, POWER, AND RHETORIC (LD)
- PRE-1800 (UD)
- CREATIVE ARTISTRY (UD)
- RACE, INTERSECTIONALITY, AND POWER (UD)
- UPPER-DIVISION ELECTIVE (UD)
- 5000-LEVEL SEMINAR (UD)