

LT362: Premodern to Postcrash: Ireland in Short Fiction



Catherine Toal

Email: c.toal@berlin.bard.edu

Office Hours: 12:15-14:00 Tuesdays

Irish literary prose has certain familiar themes—rural deprivation, political conflict, religious division, the dominance of the Catholic church, emigration. It has recognizable phases in its English-language traditions: the dominance of literature written by the Anglo-Irish landowning class in the eighteenth- and nineteenth centuries, the emergence of modernist experiments against the realist novel in the twentieth, and later oscillations between varieties of realist craft and more radical narrative forms. This course looks at the modes of writing found in the classic Irish short story as well as the development of more ambiguous genres crossing boundaries between life-writing and fiction, poem and narrative. We address the main developments of Irish history, the central works of modern Irish literature, the notable recent renewal of the literary scene since 2015, and the connections between Irish writing and other traditions: European, Anglo-American and postcolonial. Along the way, we explore the current preoccupations in Irish writing, and how these resonate with or depart from past motifs. Writers discussed include Elizabeth Bowen, Frank O'Connor, Edna O'Brien, John McGahern, Eugene McCabe, Sean O'Reilly, Claire Keegan, Colin Barrett, Wendy Erskine, Louise Kennedy, Nicole Flattery.

Week One

Monday, January 26

Elizabeth Bowen, “Summer Night”

Wednesday, January 28

Seán Ó Faoláin, “The Trout”

Week Two

Monday February 2

Frank O’Connor, “My Oedipus Complex”

Wednesday February 4

Michael McLaverty, “The Road to the Shore”

Week Three

Monday February 9

Mary Lavin, “Lilacs”

Wednesday February 11

Maeve Brennan, “An Attack of Hunger”

Week Four

Monday February 16

William Trevor, “Death in Jerusalem”

Wednesday February 18

William Trevor, “The Dressmaker’s Child”

Week Five

Monday, February 23

Edna O’Brien, “Irish Revel”

Wednesday February 25

Edna O’Brien, “Sister Imelda”

Week Six

Monday March 2

John McGahern, “High Ground”

Wednesday March 4

Eugene McCabe, “Music at Annahullion”

Week Seven

Monday March 9

Anne Devlin, “Naming the Names”

Wednesday March 11

Éilís Ní Dhuibhne, “Midwife to the Fairies”

Midterm paper due Friday March 13, 10pm

Week Eight

Monday March 16

Colm Tóibín, “A Priest in the Family”

Wednesday March 18

Anne Enright, “Night Swim”

Week Nine

Monday March 23

Sean O'Reilly, “Curfew”

Wednesday March 25

Keith Ridgway, “Shame”

Spring Break March 30-April 7

Week Ten

Wednesday April 8

Louise Kennedy, “The End of the World is a Cul de Sac”

Week Eleven

Monday April 13

Claire Keegan, “Men and Women”

Wednesday April 15

Claire Keegan, “Night of the Quicken Trees”

Week Twelve

Monday April 20

Wendy Erskine, “Bildungsroman”

Wednesday April 22

Kevin Barry, “See the Tree, How Big It's Grown”

Week Thirteen

Monday April 27

Colin Barrett, “The Ways”

Wednesday, April 29

Lucy Caldwell, “All the People Were Mean and Bad”

Week Fourteen

Monday May 4

Oisín Fagan, “Getting the Fruit”

Wednesday May 6
Nicole Flattery, “Abortion: A Love Story”

Final Paper Due Wednesday May 13, 10pm

Course Requirements:

Attendance at all classes, full preparation of weekly readings and participation in class discussion, and two mid-term papers, one due at the end of week 7 (3500 words), and one due in completion week (3500 words). Assessment is distributed as follows: essays: 50%, class presentations, 20% and class attendance and participation, 30% No use of phones or computers is allowed in class, and no use of AI is allowed in the preparation of essays. Policies on attendance, accommodations and late submission of work are outlined in more detail below.

Course Texts

Students are asked to purchase *The Granta Book of the Irish Short Story*, edited by Anne Enright. The sources for other texts will be outlined in the first seminar session.

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Accommodations

Bard College Berlin is committed to inclusion and providing equal access to all students; we uphold and maintain all aspects of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 3 of the German Disability Equality Act of April 27, 2002 (Federal Law Gazette I p. 1468). If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, Atticus Kleen, (accommodations@berlin.bard.edu) to request an official accommodation. Requests for accommodations should be made as early as possible to ensure adequate time for coordination and planning. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and may require advance notice to implement.

If you have already been approved for accommodations with the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, please arrange to meet with me outside of class so that we can develop an implementation plan. Students may face extenuating circumstances related to various personal or external factors, which impact their academic performance. While these circumstances often do not fall within the legal framework of Disability Accommodations, Bard College Berlin is committed to supporting students experiencing such circumstances. A student needing a short extension or a replacement assignment because of an extenuating circumstance is encouraged to make arrangements directly with instructors if possible. If further support is needed, please visit the [Bard College Berlin Accessibility page](#). Questions about this process can be directed to James Harker (j.harker@berlin.bard.edu) or Maria Anderson-Long (m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu).

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences will not affect the participation grade or require documentation. Bard College Berlin may not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

Punctuality

Punctuality is essential. Lateness will also affect the participation grade.

Class Etiquette

No use of phones or computers is allowed or should be necessary in this seminar. .

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where a professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it should be submitted by the new deadline agreed upon by both parties. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours. Students will receive feedback for their course work during and at the end of the semester. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.