

Module Title: Class in Twenty and Twenty-First Century Irish Literature

Dr Stephen O'Neill

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10 ECTS

Senior Sophister Option

Hilary Term 2025

Module Description:

This course explores literature written from a range of class perspectives in Ireland, north and south. It considers how writers from different classes have approached representation across novels, memoirs, poetry, short stories, and essays, drawing upon a growing body of scholarship on class identity and cultural production in Ireland. Taking a long perspective, it will ask students to consider not only how class affects the production of cultural texts but also how the reception and interpretation of literature is informed by, amongst other factors, cultural capital and the socioeconomic background of a reader. Beginning with an introductory session which looks at the Irish revolution from distinct class perspectives, this module then develops into a historicist understanding of class as it is represented in literature. It asks students to critically examine the representation of class across a century of Irish writing, and to consider intersections with other forms of identity and allegiance.

Learning Outcomes

On the completion of this module, students will have:

- LO1:** Developed insight into a range of conceptual approaches to class in Irish literature.
- LO2:** Demonstrated a nuanced understanding of how class shapes cultural production in Ireland.
- LO3:** Identified and analysed the ways that class informs representation in Irish literature.
- LO4:** Articulated their understanding of the relationship between class and literature in a written argument which includes close reading.

Learning Aims / Objectives

This module has been designed to:

- LO1:** Enable students to apply a range of theoretical lenses to the representation of class in Irish writing.
- LO2:** Support students to recognize and analyse tropes, forms, and genres in representations of class in Irish writing.
- LO3:** Developed students' capacity to communicate their arguments in written and spoken form at an appropriate critical level.
- LO4:** Build students' knowledge of the historical and cultural contexts of class in Ireland as well as relevant theories for understanding these.

Assessment: Essay (1000%), 5000 words.

Preliminary Reading List

Week One: Elizabeth Bowen, *The Last September* (1929); Frank O'Connor, 'Guests of the Nation' (1931)

Week Two: Kate O'Brien, *The Land of Spices* (1941)

Week Three: Christy Brown, *My Left Foot* (1954)

Week Four: James Plunkett, *Strumpet City* (1969)

Week Five: Mary Beckett, *A Belfast Woman* (1980)

Week Six: Nell McCafferty, *Peggy Deery: An Irish Family at War* (1988)

Week Seven: READING WEEK

Week Eight: Robert McLiam Wilson, *Eureka Street* (1996)

Week Nine: Paula Meehan, *Cell* (1999)

Week Ten: Pat Boran and Chiamaka Enyi-Amadi, *Writing Home: The 'New Irish' Poets* (2019)

Week Eleven: Michael Magee, *Close to Home* (2023)

Week Twelve: Scott McKendry, *Gub* (2024)

Most of these are available in the library, but further instructions and uploaded content will be provided on Blackboard.

Suggested Secondary Reading

Biagini, Eugenio F., and Mary E. Daly, eds, *The Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland*. Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Breen, Richard, Damian F. Hannan, David B. Rottman, and Christopher T. Whelan. *Understanding Contemporary Ireland: State, Class and Development in the Republic of Ireland*. Springer, 2016.

Cleary, Joseph, *Outrageous Fortune: Capital and Culture in Modern Ireland*. Field Day, 2007.

Drisceoil, Donal Ó, and F. Lane. *Politics and the Irish Working Class, 1830–1945*. Springer, 2005.

Lane, F. *Politics, Society and the Middle Class in Modern Ireland*. Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2009.

Lynch, Claire, *Irish Autobiography: Stories of Self in the Narrative of a Nation*. vol. 7, Peter Lang, 2009.

McGlynn, Mary M. *Narratives of Class in New Irish and Scottish Literature: From Joyce to Kelman, Doyle, Galloway, and McNamee*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Pierse, Michael, ed., *A History of Irish Working-Class Writing*. CUP, 2017.

Pierse, Michael, *Writing Ireland's Working Class*. Palgrave: 2011.

Sailer, Susan Shaw. *Representing Ireland: Gender, Class, Nationality*. University Press of Florida, 1997.

Villar-Argáiz, Pilar. *Irishness on the Margins: Minority and Dissident Identities*. Springer, 2018.