English/ID 298: Irish Mythology, Then & Now

Joel Wingard, Professor of English
Zinzendorf 304

Required books


Requirements and grades

- **Essay tests – a midterm and a final.**

  These will be take-home tests. The midterm will cover the reading, discussion, viewing, and journal writing we do over the first half of the semester and will be a discursive, expository essay on a choice of topics to be developed from that material. The final will have two parts: one, an essay like the midterm, covering the second half of what the semester; another deriving from the entire course. This part may be a creative option to the expository essay.

  The midterm will count for 20% of your overall grade; each part of the final will count 15%.

- **A response journal.**

  Dedicate a separate notebook to writing in response to the readings, viewings and class material. Write it in often and write at length. Write responses, not essays. Write to learn, to explore ideas and interactions between yourself and the course material. This writing, if done well, will constitute the majority of your learning in this course, because *writing is a way to learn* (not just – or even mainly -- a way to record and be judged on what you have learned.)

  Write at least one entry (of at least two pages each) for every class day. That schedule will give
you a chance to “cover” every reading assignment as well as daily class material and will generate around 30 entries. Additional required entries will come from a series of video and audio presentations, guest speakers and possible field trips that the course will involve.

Bring this journal to class with you always. You will write in class in it, as well as keeping out-of-class assigned writing here. Topics for test essays and ideas related to researched projects (see below) will emerge from the discourse we engage in—written, read, spoken and heard – in the coming weeks.

Your journal will be checked from time to time before you hand it in to be graded at the end of the term, and although individual entries will not be graded, you will receive a grade for the whole project as part of your class participation grade (see below). If you wish to keep your journal electronically you may do so, but the requirements to bring it to class each day and to do in-class writing still apply.

• A researched project, to be developed collaboratively with two or three classmates and presented to the entire class according to the schedule below.

A separate document will suggest some topics, or topic fields within which specific projects can be defined. But you should expect you to devise specific topics from the material we study. This assignment is a way (another way besides essay tests) to organize responses to and thoughts about that material, but also to enlarge the scope of the assigned material in a variety of specific ways.

These projects will also involve library and/or Internet research and the reading of additional texts to those assigned in this syllabus. Correct academic documentation will be required in a bibliography of sources. Class presentations should include plans for involvement of the entire class through active discussion or other participation. Research and presentation tasks will be shared among group members, with all members to be graded. All class members will participate in the evaluation process for presentations, which will be done according to the schedule indicated below. This project will account for 20% of your grade.

• Class participation

In addition to the participation called for in connection with the research presentations described above, this will comprise attendance, journal writing (as assigned), class discussion and video viewing/field trips. Taken together, these will account for 30% of your grade.
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Course description and objectives

This course offers an examination of early Irish (or Celtic) myths in their own context and in terms of the uses of those myths by modern Irish writers. The course focuses on the ways myths shaped and reflected the cultural consciousness of ancient Ireland and the ways that consciousness was reshaped from the mid-19th century into the 20th. The course will involve the study of fiction, poetry, drama, film and popular culture texts, both written and iconic. Objectives of the course are:

- Enhanced understanding of Irish mythology and of the interpenetration of myth and history
- Enhanced understanding of a “foreign” culture
- Improved literacy with respect to Irish myths and the work of selected modern Irish writers
- Strengthened reading, writing, and oral presentation skills

Required books


Projects and grades

Students in ENGL 298 will be subject to two Contracts: an Inquiry Contract and a Grade Contract.

**Inquiry Contract** – This will govern the major written assignments, the group presentations, and the course portfolio. It is a way for each student to identify a particular topic or topics for study within the overall course topic and to use written and oral assignments to learn about that topic/s. It will consist of

- An initial *Inventory* to discover and develop topics of interest
- A written *Proposal and Clarification* project to articulate and declare a topic of interest
• Two Information projects – one for an audience of peers, one for a wider academic or public audience – that present findings through close study of and/or research on the designated topic
• An oral Presentation – done in collaboration with a small group of classmates – on a related topic.

Grade Contract – This sets students’ course grades in advance. It says that each student will earn a B in the course if s/he:
• Completes all written assignments on time and satisfactorily 1
• Participates in satisfactory fashion in the group oral presentation
• Submits, on time and in satisfactory fashion, a Course Portfolio (see below)
• Earns at least a C+ grade for class participation (see below)

Students may earn an A for exceptional quality work on required assignments and for at least a B+ grade for class participation.

Class participation – In addition to the participation called for in connection with the presentations described above, this will comprise attendance (including film viewings), responsive writing, and class discussion. 3 This course will depend on your participation; it will not be a lecture course; it will be student-centered.

Course portfolio – This final project will include the Inventory, the Proposal and Clarification project, both Information projects and an outline for and summary description of the oral presentation; a selection of pieces of responsive writing; and a final written reflective statement.

Academic Honesty

The definitions and policies described in the Student Handbook, pp. 51-56, will apply in ENGL 298. It is every student’s responsibility to be familiar with and understand these definitions and policies. Any student who feels s/he does not understand them is welcome to consult with Dr. Wingard before any written work is submitted.

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1 “on time” ordinarily means that work is submitted, whether physically or electronically, on the assigned due date and time; late work will be subject to penalty if arrangements for its being submitted late are not approved in advance by Dr. Wingard.
2 “satisfactory” means complete, purposeful and reasonably correct as to grammar, mechanics, spelling and formatting; students will be allowed, without penalty, one rewrite of work judged unsatisfactory.
3 “discussion points” are awarded to students for speaking voluntarily in class; (at the same time, students are expected to be ready to respond to questions and situations presented by the instructor); these points, together with attendance and “on time” and “satisfactory” points, will form a numerical basis for Class Participation grades.
### Assignment schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week I</th>
<th>Course introduction. <strong>Inventory-taking</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M 1/10 – F 1/14</td>
<td>Introductions to Smyth, Jackson, and Glassie books</td>
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<td>Introduction to Ellis, chapter on “Early Irish Society,” definition of “myth” (handouts).</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week II</th>
<th>selected entries from Smyth</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T 1/18 – F 1/21</td>
<td><em>A Celtic Miscellany</em> (selections ~ stories of heroes)</td>
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<td>Storyteller Tom Egan</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week III</th>
<th><em>A Celtic Miscellany</em> (selections ~ stories of mad Sweeney and fairy lore)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M 1/24 – F 1/28</td>
<td>Video: “Michael Quirke, Woodcarver-Storyteller of Sligo”</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week IV</th>
<th>readings in Celtic Christianity (handouts)</th>
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<tr>
<td>M 1/31 – F 2/4</td>
<td><strong>Proposal and Clarification project due</strong></td>
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<tr>
<th>Week V</th>
<th><em>Irish Folk Tales</em> (selections)</th>
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<tr>
<td>M 2/7 – F 2/11</td>
<td>Film: “The Secret of Roan Inish”</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week VI</th>
<th><em>Irish Folk Tales</em> (selections)</th>
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<tr>
<td>M 2/14 – F 2/18</td>
<td><em>The Playboy of the Western World</em></td>
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<th>Week VII</th>
<th><em>The Yeats Reader</em> (selected poems)</th>
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<tr>
<td>M 2/21 – F 2/25</td>
<td>Film: “The Playboy of the Western World”</td>
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<tr>
<td>(midterm)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week VIII</th>
<th><em>The Yeats Reader</em> (selected poems)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M 2/28 – F 3/4</td>
<td><strong>Information project I due</strong></td>
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- Spring break
- Sa 3/5 – Su 3/13

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<tr>
<th>Week IX</th>
<th><em>The Yeats Reader</em> (selected plays)</th>
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<tr>
<td>M 3/14 – F 3/18</td>
<td>Irish entertainment night (TBA): optional extra credit</td>
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* This is a general and tentative schedule. I will make more detailed assignments at each class meeting. Some changes may become necessary.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Events</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week X</td>
<td><em>The Yeats Reader</em> (selected plays)</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 3/21 – Th 3/24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week XI</td>
<td>Heaney, <em>Sweeney Astray</em> (on reserve)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tu 3/29 – F 4/1</td>
<td>Film: “Into the West”</td>
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<td>Week XII</td>
<td>Friel, <em>Dancing at Lughnasa</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>M 4/4 – F 4/8</td>
<td><strong>Information project II due</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week XIII</td>
<td><strong>Presentations 1 &amp; 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>M 4/11 – F 4/15</td>
<td>Film: “Dancing at Lughnasa”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week XIV</td>
<td><strong>Presentations 3 &amp; 4</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M 4/18 – F 4/22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week XV</td>
<td><strong>Presentations 5 &amp; 6</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exams</td>
<td><strong>Portfolios due, TBA</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>M 5/2 – Sa 5/7</td>
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<tr>
<td>May Term</td>
<td>Irish Mythology Tour</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 5/10 – Tu 5/24</td>
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Assignment schedule*

Week I
M 1/13 – F 1/17
Course introduction. **Inventory-taking and Inquiry Contract**
*textbook Introductions and arrangements, incl. Handouts.
*Ireland and the Irish* (Chapter 9)

Week II
T 1/21 – F 1/24
*A Celtic Miscellany* (selections ~ stories of heroes)
*Ireland and the Irish* (Chapter 1)

Week III
M 1/27 – F 1/31
*A Celtic Miscellany* (selections ~ stories of mad Sweeney, & fairy lore)
*Ireland and the Irish* (Chapter 2)
Video: “Michael Quirke, Woodcarver-Storyteller of Sligo”

Week IV
M 2/3 – F 2/7
*Ireland and the Irish* (Chapter 3)
Proposal and Clarification paper due

Week V
M 2/10 – F 2/14
*Irish Folk Tales* (selections)
*Ireland and the Irish* (Chapter 4)

Week VI
M 2/17 – F 2/21
*Irish Folk Tales* (selections)
*Ireland and the Irish* (Chapter 5)
Film: "The Secret of Roan Inish"

Week VII
M 2/24 – F 2/28
*Ireland and the Irish* (Chapter 6)
The Yeats Reader (selected poems)

Week VIII
M 3/3 – F 3/7
The Yeats Reader (selected poems)
*Ireland and the Irish* (Chapter 7)
Information paper I due

Week IX
M 3/17 – F 3/21
The Yeats Reader (selected plays)
Film: “Into the West”
Week X
M 3/24 – F 3/28

The Yeats Reader (selected plays)

Week XI
M 3/31 – F 4/4

Heaney, Sweeney Astray

Information paper II due

Week XII
M 4/7 – F 4/11

Friel, Dancing at Lughnasa

Week XIII
M 4/14 – Th 4/17

Presentations 1 & 2

Film: “Dancing at Lughnasa”

Week XIV
Tu 4/22 – F 4/25

Presentations 3 & 4

Week XV
M 4/28 – F 5/2

Presentations 5 & 6

Film: “Conan the Barbarian”

Final exams
M 5/5 – Sa 5/10

Portfolios due, TBA