English 342/Film 415
Contemporary Irish Theater and Film
Spring, 2010

Texts (all on reserve or hand-outs):

Anthony Roche, Contemporary Irish Drama: From Beckett to McGuinness
John P. Harrington, ed., Modern and Contemporary Irish Drama
Eamonn Jordan, ed. Theatre Stuff: Critical Essays in Contemporary Irish Theatre
Lilian Chambers, Ger FitzGibbon, and Eamonn Jordan, eds, Theatre Talk: Voices of Irish Theatre Practitioners
James MacKillop, ed., Contemporary Irish Cinema
Martin McLoone, Irish Film: The Emergence of a Contemporary Cinema
Ruth Barton, Jim Sheridan: Framing the Nation
Gerald C. Wood, Conor McPherson: Imagining Mischief

Schedule

Part One: Backgrounds

January 19: Introduction to Ireland and Course
Films: From Druid/Synge, Riders to the Sea
Outside Viewing: Druid/Synge, Playboy of the Western World
Topics: Brief description of Ireland’s geography, climate, and history; traditional Irish theater; Ireland and Stereotypes

February 2: The Shadow of Samuel Beckett
Films: Endgame (Conor McPherson, 2000)
Outside Viewing: Waiting for Godot (Michael Lindsay-Hogg, 2001)
Topics: Beckett’s style and themes, Post-Modernism and Beckett, Beckett’s Influence

February 9: Indigenous Irish Film
Films: Poitin (Bob Quinn, 1975) and Traveller (Joe Comerford, 1982)
Outside Viewing: Man of Aran and The Quiet Man
Topics: Definition of Indigenous Film, Comparison with American tradition, Development of European and International Film Sensibility

February 16: Cinema and the Celtic Tiger
Films: *Guiltrip* (Gerry Stembridge, 1995) and *Last of the High Kings* (David Keating, 1996)


Outside Viewing: *A Love Divided* (Syd McCartney, 1999)

Topics: The Celtic Tiger, New Irish Themes, Youth Culture

Journal Submission #1

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Part Two: Distinctive Voices in Contemporary Theater and Film

February 23: Jim Sheridan

Films: *In the Name of the Father* (Jim Sheridan, 1993)


Outside Viewing: *My Left Foot* (Jim Sheridan, 1989)

Topics: Irish family life, rural and urban; Politics and Cinema; Jim Sheridan and Irish History

March 2: Brian Friel and Marina Carr


Outside Viewing: None


March 9: Neil Jordan


Topics: Irish Politics and Cinematic Traditions, Gender Issues in Contemporary Ireland, The Achievement of Neil Jordan

March 16: SPRING BREAK

March 23: Sebastian Barry, Tom Murphy, and Thomas Kilroy


Outside Viewing: None
Topics: Politics and Humanism, Beckett’s Influence, The Achievement of Murphy and Kilroy

March 30: Conor McPherson as Playwright and Screenwriter
Outside Viewing: *Ailsa* (Breathnach, 1994, from story by Joe O’Connor)
Topics: McPherson and the Monologue, Bending Genre in Film, *The Weir* and McPherson’s Emergence as Major Playwright
Journal Submission #2

Part Three: Crossing Over, Theater into Film

April 6: Playwrights and Collaboration, Brian Friel and Frank McGuinness
Plays/Films: *Someone to Watch Over Me* (Frank McGuinness, 1992) and *Dancing at Lughnasa* (Pat O’Connor, 1998, from screenplay by Frank McGuinness)
Outside Viewing: *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* (John Quested, 1974, from Friel screenplay)

April 13: Mark O’Rowe
Readings: None
Topics: Monologues, Crime Drama and Ireland, Ireland and History

April 20: McPherson, Adaptation and Collaboration
Outside Viewing: *The Eclipse* (Conor McPherson, 2009, from screenplay by McPherson and Billy Roche) and *Trojan Eddie* (Gillies MacKinnon, 1996, from screenplay by Billy Roche)
Topics: McPherson and the Monologue, Adaptation of Own Works, Conor McPherson as Filmmaker
Journal Submission #3

April 27: Martin McDonagh
Readings: None
Outside Viewing: *The Pillowman* in Phoenix Theater (April 29-May 1)
May 4: Enda Walsh

**Plays/Films:** The New Electric Ballroom and Disco Pigs (Kirsten Sheridan, 2001, play and screenplay by Enda Walsh)


**Outside Viewing:** Hunger (Steve McQueen, 2008, from screenplay by McQueen and Enda Walsh)

**Topics:** Adolescence in Ireland, The Problem of Language, Imagining Irish History

May 11: Final Exam: Very Recent Irish Theater and Film

**Film:** Garage (Lenny Abrahamson, 2007, from screenplay by Mark O’Halloran)

**Reading:** Elaine Murphy, Little Gem

**Outside Viewing:** None

**Focused Journal, Submission #4, with critique**

Course Requirements

1. We will follow the Humanities Division attendance policy. Three absences= warning; 5-failure.
2. My office is in HH 104, where I have office hours: 9-11 & 1-3 TR. My office phone number is 471-3284.
3. All assignments are due on the dates noted in the class schedule. Late work will be marked down one letter grade for each day late.
4. The instructor may need to modify the schedule and/or requirements during the semester. You will be responsible for any of the changes announced in class.
5. When we use numerical scores in the class, we will use the following scale:

   - A 90-100
   - B 80-89
   - C 70-79
   - D 60-69
   - F Below 60

6. Your grade will be calculated by averaging the focused journal submissions, each counting 25%.

7. This class will be based on respect for individual feelings, points of view, and ideas. Therefore, you will be asked to behave appropriately, demonstrating your ability to listen to and care for others. If you do not fulfill this requirement of the course, the instructor reserves the right to remove you from class and you will be held responsible for all class work.

8. Any student with a special documented disability (learning, sight, hearing, mobility, etc.) which may affect class activities should contact Dr. Rebecca Van Cleave, ext. 3268; Life Directions Center, Baker room 317. Students will have to provide appropriate documentation.

9. No extra credit will be given in this class.

The Journal
The journal is designed as (1) personal reflection on your reading and viewing, (2) way you and your instructor can keep in dialogue (a form of chat room), and (3) means of raising areas of inquiry outside the classroom.

Each week I will give you topics involving class work, both from the previous session and future ones, the readings, and outside viewings. You are to write a personal response, using class work as supporting evidence and raising questions for me and your classmates about our work.

The journal entries will be taken up 4 times during the semester and graded on (1) your distinctive personal voice, (2) the originality of your responses, (3) the details with which you support your ideas/arguments, and (4) your growing understanding of contemporary Irish theater and film.

The final exam will be the 4th of these submissions supplemented by a personal critique of the class and your journals written in class.

Course Objectives

1. Familiarity with representative works of recent Irish plays and films.
2. Ability to identify the major artists in those works.
3. General understanding of recent Irish history, cultural trends, and issues.
4. Analysis of single work, placing it in the historical and critical contexts developed in the course.
5. Recognition of major issues in collaboration and adaptation.