History and Memory in Modern Irish Writing

Hilary Term 2017
10 ECTS

Course description
This module seeks to explore constructions of the past in modern Irish fiction, memoir, poetry, and drama. Beginning with key theoretical examinations of the traditional opposition between objective history and subjective memory, it will then consider how Irish writers of the past forty years have represented both personal and collective histories. It will explore the literary implications of attempts to represent memory, through attention to issues including form, style, genre, and affect. Informed, and hopefully enhanced and provoked, by wider debates around the commemorative focus in contemporary Irish culture and society, the module will also introduce students to both well-established and emerging critical discussions in these areas.

Aims and outcomes
On successful completion of this module, students will have:

1. Become familiar with diverse engagements with, and representations of, history and memory in modern Irish literature
2. Further developed analytical skills in close reading texts from a range of genres
3. Engaged with different relevant theoretical and critical arguments, and become increasingly confident in challenging or extending them
4. Assessed and critiqued the ways in which contexts are brought to bear on literary texts

Assessment
- Commentary: 2000 words (30%)
- Essay: 4,000 words (70%)

Course outline
Week 1 Introduction
Week 2 John Banville, Doctor Copernicus (1976)
Week 5 Ciaran Carson, The Star Factory (1997)
Week 6 Eavan Boland, Object Lessons (1994) and selected poems
Week 7 Reading week
Week 8 Brendan Kennelly, Cromwell (1983)
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<tr>
<th>Week 9</th>
<th>Bernard O’Donoghue, selected poems and prose (1980s-2010s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Tom Murphy, <em>Famine</em> (1968)</td>
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<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Brian Friel, <em>Faith Healer</em> (1979)</td>
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<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Enda Walsh, <em>Ballyturk</em> (2014)</td>
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