EN4398: Reading the Irish City

Hilary Term 2016-17, Monday 11-1

Dr Benjamin Keatinge

10 ECTS

Course Description:
What has become known as the ‘spatial turn’ in the humanities has alerted us to the ways in which the spaces we inhabit are produced by culture. These seminars take as their starting point the premise that Irish writing since the end of the nineteenth century (the massive exception of Joyce not withstanding) has defined itself predominantly in terms of versions of the pastoral, and this in turn has had implications for the ways in which it has been possible to write the city as an Irish space. The central avenue in this module runs through the question of how literature produces space, and how this occurs differently across literary forms (fiction, poetry, drama). However, there will be diversions down sidestreets to encounter writing and memory, the flaneur, psychogeography, modernity and the mediations of culture. There will be glances at visual culture, as well as excursions into history and architecture, all with a view to sketching an outline map of the Irish city in literature. The course will address some of the following topics: Belfast and the Troubles, the Celtic Tiger and its aftermath, crime in the modern Irish city, the urban/rural divide in Ireland, family/community and their discontents in the modern Irish city.

Learning Outcomes:

- To develop an understanding of contemporary Irish writing in relation to urban cultures and themes
- To achieve an understanding of spatial theory and an ability to use it in producing critical readings
- To develop an awareness of the sociology and politics of the Irish city as presented in contemporary Irish writing
- To enhance an awareness of generic specificity by exploring texts from a range of genres which deal with urban themes

Assessment:

Mid-term Research Exercise: 2,000 words - 30%
End of term Essay Assignment: 4,000 words - 70%

Primary Texts:

Kevin Barry, City of Bohane (Vintage, 2011)
Ciaran Carson, Belfast Confetti (Gallery Press, 1989)
Anne Enright, The Gathering (Vintage, 2007)
Stuart Neville, *The Twelve* (Vintage, 2009)
Mark O’Rowe, *Terminus* (Abbey Theatre, 2007)

**Secondary Reading:**
Merlin Coverley, *Psychogeography* (Harpenden, 2007)
Phil Hubbard and Rob Kitchen, eds, *Key Thinkers on Space and Place* (Sage, 2011)
Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (University of Minnesota Press, 1994)
Doreen Massey, *For Space* (University of Minnesota Press, 2001)
Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (University of Minnesota Press, 2001)

Additional details of critical texts relating to Irish urban cultures will be provided at the start of the course and supplementary materials will be uploaded on Blackboard.