Module Title: The Writings of Oliver Goldsmith

Short Name: Goldsmith

Lecturer Name and Email Address: David O'Shaughnessy. doshaug@tcd.ie

ECTS Weighting: 5

Learning Outcomes:

On successful completion of this module the student should be able to:
1. Discuss and evaluate a broad range of Goldsmith’s work.
2. Show an awareness of a range of critical approaches to Goldsmith’s work.
3. Demonstrate a sense of how Goldsmith’s work fits within the history of Irish and English literature.
4. Discuss a variety of eighteenth-century literary genres.

Course Description

A reluctant graduate of Trinity College Dublin, Goldsmith later studied in Edinburgh and Leiden before travelling around Europe. After he moved to London in 1756, he put his cosmopolitan experience to good use and began a remarkable literary career that saw him rise from a Grub Street hack to being one of the most celebrated writers of the day. Despite his early death, he produced several masterpieces in different genres, was a successful popular historian, and was heavily involved in mid-eighteenth-century periodical writing, producing reviews and essays. Goldsmith is a writer who too often fell between critical stools in the past (too Irish for the British canon and too British for the Irish canon): this course will illuminate why he is
now one of the central figures in our emerging understanding of the Irish Enlightenment as it played out in London.

The course will consider his journalism, essays, and historical writing. We will also discuss the poem that made his name *The Traveller* (1764), his acclaimed novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), and his play *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773), arguably the finest comedy of the century. We will pay particular attention to one of the great Irish poems in the English language *The Deserted Village* (1770). This remarkable poem provoked a rich range of poetic responses across the world in its immediate aftermath. We will examine these and its continuing influence on more recent writers such as Eavan Boland and Vona Groarke.

Indicative Reading List


Other primary texts to be discussed will be circulated through Blackboard.