

Sophister Module Description Template 2021-22

Full Name: Back on the Farm: Kavanagh, McGahern, Heaney

Short Name: Back on the Farm

Lecturer Name and Email Address: Nicholas Grene, ngrene@tcd.ie

ECTS Weighting: 10

Semester Taught: HT

Year: SS

Module Content:

Patrick Kavanagh, *Selected Poems*, Tarry Flynn

John McGahern, *Amongst Women*, *That They May Face the Rising Sun*, *Creatures of the Earth* (selected short stories)*

Seamus Heaney, *New Selected Poems 1966-1987*, *New Selected Poems 1988-2013*, *Stepping Stones* (selected sections)*

This material will be scanned and posted on Blackboard.

Learning Outcomes: On successful completion of this module students will be able to:

- Show their knowledge of the farming background of all three writers
- Analyse the significance of farming practices within the texts studied
- Relate the treatment of farming in Kavanagh, McGahern and Heaney to the social and cultural contexts of their time
- Apply the skills developed in this module to the reading of other texts

Learning Aims:

The land has featured prominently in modern Irish literature, not surprisingly given that Ireland remained a largely agricultural country up until the middle of the twentieth century. Many writers from a farming background or one generation away from it have made literary capital out of working the land. In so far as being a professional writer generally involves an urban base, farm writing is often retrospective – hence the title of this module ‘Back on the Farm’. Its aim is to explore the imaginative constructions of the farm and farming by three of Ireland’s major writers. Patrick Kavanagh made his experience as a small farmer in Monaghan central to his work; John McGahern drew both on childhood memories of farm work and his later life living on a farm in his home territory of Leitrim; Seamus Heaney, who never lived full-time on the land after he left for boarding-school at the age of twelve, yet mined farming recollections throughout his whole poetic career. This module will be taught

entirely through seminars with suggested discussion topics and critical reading posted in advance on Blackboard.

Assessment Details:

- 3 essays
- 2 short essays, 1 longer essay
- 2 x 1000 words, 1 x 4000 words
- 2 short essays = 40%, 1 longer essay = 60 %

Preliminary Reading List:

The following are standard critical texts on the three authors studied which you may like to read in advance:

Antoinette Quinn, *Patrick Kavanagh: Born-Again Romantic* (Gill and Macmillan, 1991)

Denis Sampson, *Outstaring Nature's Eye: the Fiction of John McGahern* (Lilliput, 1993)

Neil Corcoran, *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney* (Faber, 1998)

Please note:

- Curricular information is subject to change.
- Information is displayed only for guidance purposes, relates to the current academic year only and is subject to change.