

Fresher Module Description 2026-27

Full Name: Cultures of Retelling

Lecturers: Dr Rosie Lavan (Convenor), lavanro@tcd.ie; Dr Mary Grace Albanese; Dr Seán Hewitt; Prof Chris Morash; Prof Bernice Murphy; Dr Björn Quiring; Prof Eve Patten

ECTS Weighting: 5 ECTS

Semester Taught MT/HT: HT

Year JF/SF/JS/SS: JF SH

Learning Aims:

Writing in 1997, the critic Derek Brewer asserted: “An enormous amount of human discourse, far beyond what is self-evidently fictional, is inevitably at least in part a re-telling [...] Complete originality would be incomprehensible.” This team-taught module examines ‘cultures of retelling’ in literary studies, tracing relationships between texts and their various retellings across the boundaries of form, genre, media, context, language, and tradition. Through attention to fiction, drama, poetry, film, and television, it explores processes such as adaptation, translation, intertextuality, and the formation of ‘culture-texts’, as well as the forces which inform and determine these processes. In so doing it will introduce students to a diverse range of texts, authors, contexts, and critical and theoretical principles, prompting distinctive and broad-ranging discussions of what retellings reveal about the place and function of literature, and literary criticism, in cultures and societies through time.

Module Content:

- 1 Introduction: Defining ‘Cultures of Retelling’ [Dr Rosie Lavan]
- 2 Alice Oswald, *Memorial* [RL]
- 3 Jean Cocteau, *The Infernal Machine* [Prof Chris Morash]
- 4 Heiner Müller, *Hamletmachine* [Dr Björn Quiring]
- 5 Columbus, ‘Carta a Luis de Santángel’ and Adam Garnet-Jones, ‘History of the New World’ [Dr Mary Grace Albanese]
- 6 Jonathan Coe, *What a Carve-Up!* [Prof Eve Patten]
- 7 Reading Week
- 8 Graham Greene, *The Third Man* [RL]
- 9 Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid’s Tale* [Prof Bernice Murphy]

10 Shirley Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House* [BM]

11 Robert Glück, *Margery Kempe* [Dr Seán Hewitt]

12 Conclusions and exam preparation [RL]

Learning Outcomes:

On successful completion of this module, students should have:

- Developed a clear sense of the different interpretations of ‘retelling’ this module advances, and recognised how these processes of retelling shape the way we read and respond to texts
- Explored a diverse range of significant texts, with sensitivity to their different forms, genres, media, contexts, languages and traditions
- Gained appreciation for the ways in which writers and texts work across boundaries of form, genre, media, context, language and tradition, and reflected carefully on the principle of comparison in literary studies
- Considered a range of critical and theoretical perspectives on the texts and issues covered, and developed confidence in engaging with, deploying, and critiquing such perspectives
- Identified connections between texts and issues encountered here with those raised in the study of English to date
- Attained and enhanced skills in literary analysis which will support and enable advanced studies in English and cognate disciplines in subsequent years of the degree

Assessment Details:

- Number of Components: One
- Name/Type of Component(s): Exam (two-hour)
- Word Count of Component(s): N/A
- Percentage Value of Component(s): 100%

Preliminary Reading List:

Over the course of the lectures detailed reading suggestions will be provided to help students focus their research on individual texts and authors. To begin to explore some of the issues raised by this module, the following books are recommended. (Please note that many of these are in the field of adaptation studies, and through them students will encounter principles which are applicable to their studies of all these texts beyond those which might be strictly defined as ‘adaptations’.)

Mireia Aragay ed., *Books in Motion: Adaptation, Intertextuality, Authorship* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2005).

Derek Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature*, new edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017).

Jorgen Bruhn, Anne Gjelsvik and Eirik Frisvold Hanssen, *Adaptation Studies: New Challenges, New Directions* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

Deborah Cartmell, *The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen* (Cambridge University Press, 2012): **available online via the Library catalogue**

Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan, *Screen Adaptation: Impure Cinema* (Bloomsbury, 2010): see especially Part 1, 'A History of the Relationship between Film and Literature': **available as an e-book on Library PCs**

Paul Davis, 'Retelling *A Christmas Carol*: Text and Culture-Text', *The American Scholar* 59:1 (Winter 1990), 109-115.

Umberto Eco, *The Open Text* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

Kamilla Elliott, *Theorizing Adaptation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

Yvonne Griggs, *The Bloomsbury Introduction to Adaptation Studies: Adapting the Canon in Film, TV, Novels and Popular Culture* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016): **available as an e-book on Library PCs**

Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 2nd edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).

Thomas Leitch ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University 2017).

Angela McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change* (London: Sage, 2009).

Simone Murray, *The Adaptation Industry: The Cultural Economy of Contemporary Literary Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

Matthew Reynolds, *The Poetry of Translation: From Chaucer and Petrarch to Homer and Logue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

John Stephens and Robyn McCallum, *Retelling Stories, Framing Culture: Traditional Story and Metanarratives in Children's Literature* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

Marina Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and their Tellers* (London: Vintage, 1994).

Students are also encouraged to explore issues of the journal *Adaptation*:
<https://academic.oup.com/adaptation>

It is also available online via the Library website (just search for it in the catalogue and follow the link): Two articles from early issues of the journal by the critic Thomas Leitch are of general relevance and interest and will be provided on Blackboard:

- Leitch, 'Adaptation Studies at a Crossroads', *Adaptation* 1:1 (2008), 63-77.
- Leitch, 'Adaptation: The Genre', *Adaptation* 1:2 (2008), 106-120.

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.**