

Option title:	Irish short fiction
Lecturer:	Paul Delaney
Email address:	delanep@tcd.ie
ECTS weighting:	10
Semester taught:	HT 2026
Year:	SS

Learning Outcomes:

On successful completion of this module students should be able to:

1. Identify the principal characteristics of the short-story form as it has been practised in the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries.
2. Situate this knowledge in a broader historical, cultural and literary context.
3. Employ a range of interpretive strategies, using an advanced critical vocabulary, to engage in a close reading of a select body of texts.
4. Evaluate those texts in oral and written presentations, and transfer discipline specific competencies to cognate subjects and related professions.

Option Learning Aims:

‘We may not be very good at economics or honest politics, but we certainly know how to write a short story.’ So *The Irish Times* commented late in 2010, on the publication of Anne Enright’s anthology, *The Granta Book of the Irish Short Story*. This Option considers the basis for this claim, tracing the genre of short fiction in Ireland from the early decades of the twentieth century to the present.

Building on aspects of the JF ‘Irish Writing’ module, this Option explores stories by key prose writers of the post-independence years; it also engages with major writers of the mid-to-late twentieth century, before concluding with classes on some of the most distinguished short-story writers writing today. In essence, the module argues for an understanding of a short-story tradition which is vibrant and diverse, productive and challenging.

Option Content:

This module will explore selected texts from a range of authors; stories will be made available through Blackboard. Students interested in reading ahead might consider Anne Enright's anthology *The Granta Book of the Irish Short Story* (2010) and Sinéad Gleeson's selection *The Art of the Glimpse: 100 Irish Short Stories* (2020). Older anthologies, including Benedict Kiely's *The Penguin Book of Irish Short Stories* (1981), Frank O'Connor's *Classic Irish Short Stories* (1985), and William Trevor's *The Oxford Book of Irish Short Stories* (1989), remain in print and retain significance.

In recent years, Faber & Faber has produced (almost) biennial volumes of contemporary Irish short fiction, highlighting some of the best writing today; two anthologies were edited by the late David Marcus (2005 and 2007), and further books have been edited by Joseph O'Connor (2011), Kevin Barry (2013), Deirdre Madden (2015), and Lucy Caldwell (2019). Sinéad Gleeson's award-winning anthologies, *The Long Gaze Back* (2015) and *The Glass Shore* (2016), are two other excellent places to start.

Seminars will be arranged as follows:

1. Liam O'Flaherty
2. Frank O'Connor
3. Mary Lavin
4. Elizabeth Bowen
5. John McGahern
6. Edna O'Brien
7. Reading Week
8. William Trevor
9. Éilís Ní Dhuibhne
10. Claire Keegan
11. Lucy Caldwell
12. Kevin Barry

Assessment: Mid-term essay (2,000 words [30% weighting])

End-of-term essay (4,000 words [70% weighting])