

Fresher/Sophister Module Description Template 2025-26

Full Name: Past and present: Irish theatre since 1964

Short Name: Past and present

Lecturer Name(s) and Email Address(es): Nicholas Grene, ngrene@tcd.ie

ECTS Weighting: 10

Semester Taught: Michaelmas Term

Year: Junior Sophister

Module Content:

Brian Friel, *Philadelphia Here I Come!* (1964); Christina Reid, *Tea in a China Cup* (1983); Tom Murphy, *Bailegangaire* (1985); Donal O'Kelly, *Catalpa* (1995); Marina Carr, *By the Bog of Cats* (1998); Elizabeth Kuti, *The Sugar Wife* (2005); Enda Walsh, *The Walworth Farce* (2006); Mark O'Rowe, *Reunion* (2024); Michael West, *Freefall* (2009); David Ireland, *Cyprus Avenue* (2016); Nancy Harris, *The Beacon* (2019)..

Learning Outcomes:

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

- Show detailed knowledge of Irish theatre in the period 1964-2025
- Analyse the theatrical forms of the plays studied
- Assess the nature of the engagement with the past by the playwrights
- Evaluate the performance techniques used in production
- Apply the skills developed in this module to the reading of other plays

Learning Aims:

1964 is often considered a key date in the history of Irish theatre with the first production of Brian Friel's *Philadelphia Here I Come!* The sixty years since then has been a period of modernisation and secularisation in Ireland, but with the political violence in the North acting as a recurrent reminder of the legacy of the country's troubled history. It has also been a period in which Irish theatre has diversified, with the establishment of companies such as Druid in Galway in 1975, Field Day in Derry in 1980, and alternative theatres such as Rough Magic in Dublin in 1984. Irish playwrights in this time have looked for new ways of dramatising the past in the light of the present: the past of individuals, of families and of the nation as a whole. The aim of this module is to explore some of the most significant texts of the period both for their experimental theatrical forms and for their engagement with past and present. The syllabus is a provisional one because the plays chosen will be varied to allow for the inclusion of current productions; the analysis of performance as well as published texts will be one dimension of the module, which will be taught entirely through seminar discussion on the basis of suggested themes posted in advance on Blackboard.

Assessment Details:

- 2 essays
- Short essay of 1500 words, longer essay of 4500 words
- 35%/65%

Preliminary Reading List:

The following books will provide a context for the module:

Nicholas Grene, *Irish Theatre in the Twenty-first Century* (Oxford University Press, 2024)

Eamonn Jordan and Eric Weitz (eds.), *Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Irish Theatre and Performance* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018)

Patrick Lonergan, *Irish Drama and Theatre Since 1950* (Methuen Drama, 2019)

Charlotte McIver and Ian C. Walsh, *Contemporary Irish Theatre* (Springer Nature 2024), open access <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-55012-6>

Martin Middeke and Peter Paul Schnierer (eds.), *Methuen Drama Guide to Contemporary Irish Playwrights* (Methuen Drama, 2010)

Nicholas Grene

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.