

**Module Title: Violence and Contemporary Irish Fiction**

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10 ECTS

Junior Sophister Option

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**Module Description:**

'With the possible exception of greenness', wrote David Lloyd in 1992, 'no quality has more frequently and repetitiously been attributed to Ireland than violence'. This module explores the representation of violence in Irish fiction in the past three decades. Students will be asked to analyse a range of texts, engaging with the key historical and literary contexts behind each writer's approach to violence. Focusing initially on 'political' violence and its legacies in contemporary Ireland, the module expands to include representations of other forms of violence – domestic, structural, epistemic – and examines their intersections with race, class, gender, and religion. It will also critically engage with theorizations of violence, 'terrorism', and the body, as well as literary responses to these phenomena. Dealing with subgenres such as crime fiction and the bildungsroman, the module will assess how fiction approaches 'violence' of various kinds and through various modes of writing.

**Learning Outcomes**

On the completion of this module, students will have:

- LO1:** Developed insight into a range of conceptual approaches to violence in contemporary Irish fiction.
- LO2:** Demonstrated a nuanced understanding of how violence is represented in contemporary Irish literary culture.
- LO3:** Identified and analysed qualities and conventions of fiction and related these to the texts studied in the module.
- LO4:** Articulated their understanding of the relationship between form, theory, and context in a written argument that incorporates close reading.

**Learning Aims / Objectives**

This module has been designed to:

- LO1:** Enable students to apply a range of theoretical lenses to the representation of violence in contemporary Irish fiction.
- LO2:** Support students to recognize and analyse various manifestations of violence as they feature in contemporary writing from Ireland.
- LO3:** Advance students' understanding of genre conventions and of formal and generic traditions and style.
- LO4:** Refine students' capacity for close reading; develop and evidence their thinking in written form.

**Assessment:** Reading Reflection / Blog (20%), 200-300 words per week, continuous Essay (80%), 4000 words.

## Reading List

**Week One:** Mary Costello, *Titanic Town* (1993)

**Week Two:** Dermot Healy, *A Goat's Song* (1994)

**Week Three:** Seamus Deane, *Reading in the Dark* (1996)

**Week Four:** Eoin McNamee, *The Blue Tango* (2001)

**Week Five:** Anne Enright, *The Gathering* (2007)

**Week Six:** Donal Ryan, *The Spinning Heart* (2012)

**Week Seven:** READING WEEK

**Week Eight:** Eimear McBride, *A Girl Is a Half-formed Thing* (2013)

**Week Nine:** Anna Burns, *Milkman* (2018)

**Week Ten:** Melatu Uche Okorie, *This Hostel Life* (2018)

**Week Eleven:** Louise Kennedy, *Trespases* (2022)

**Week Twelve:** Wendy Erskine, *The Benefactors* (2025)

Most of these are available in the library, but further instructions and uploaded content will be provided on Blackboard.

## Suggested Secondary Reading

Maria Beville and Deirdre Flynn, eds, *Irish Urban Fictions* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

Elleke Boehmer and Dominic Davies, eds, *Planned Violence. Post/Colonial Urban Infrastructure, Literature and Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

Brian Cliff, *Irish Crime Fiction* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

Fionnuala Dillane, Naomi McAreevey, and Emilie Pine, eds, *The Body in Pain in Irish Literature and Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

John Wilson Foster, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Irish Novel* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Patrick Grant, *Literature, Rhetoric and Violence in Northern Ireland, 1968-98: Hardened to Death* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2001).

Liam Harte, *Reading the contemporary Irish novel, 1987-2007* (London, Wiley-Blackwell 2014).

David Lloyd, 'Violence and the Constitution of the Novel', *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment* (Dublin: Lilliput, 1993), 125-162.

Claire Lynch, "'Everything not saved will be lost': Videogames, Violence, and Memory in Contemporary Irish Fiction', *Irish University Review* 47.1 (2017), 126-142.

Caroline Magennis, *Sons of Ulster: Masculinities in the Contemporary Northern Irish Novel* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010).

Patricia Malone, 'Measures of obliviousness and disarming obliqueness in Anna Burns' *Milkman*', *Textual Practice* 36:7, 1143-1174.

Michael McAteer, ed., *Silence in Modern Irish Literature* (Amsterdam: Brill, 2017).

Tom Walker, "'something in the making": The Troubles and the Singularity of Northern Irish Literature', in Peter Herman, ed., *Terrorism and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 303-319.