



## **Exploring Irish Theatre and Performance (DT 3115)**

### **Module Description**

This module allows JYA Students to explore Irish theatre and performance, through both classroom-based and practical activities. Students form an understanding of the distinctive characteristics of Irish theatre, analysing works by writers from W.B. Yeats to Martin McDonagh and beyond. They consider critically the history of Irish theatre through hands-on archives-based activities and they develop practical skills by engaging in workshops that cover acting, direction, and more. No prior experience of Irish theatre is needed; nor is it necessary to have any experience with acting or other forms of theatre practice.

### **Practical Work**

Each class session will incorporate group discussions and also practical work as a means of engaging with each weekly text and theme. Students will be given the opportunity to: engage in staging tableaux; improvisation; acting; directing and dramaturgical script analysis over the course of this module. Students will build on their practical work throughout the course of the module. Practical work will take place each week, in groups, in advance of the final practical exam. Rehearsal time will be built into the class schedule in the latter weeks of the course.

### **Course Aims**

- Make use of a detailed understanding of the distinctive characteristics of Irish theatre, thereby forming a deeper appreciation of the relationship between nationality and literature/performance.
- Display and deploy knowledge of elementary archives-based activities, using dedicated training activities at the NUI Galway Archives Reading Room, and including both print and digital resources.
- Make use of new skills in acting and/or direction and/or dramaturgy and/or design, with specific reference to how such practical skills have developed in an Irish context.
- Show evidence of an ability to write analytically about Irish theatre from both historical and practical perspectives.

### **Course Texts**

Students are expected to read each week's assigned text (and any additional readings set by instructors) in advance of that week's class. All texts can be accessed through Drama Online (available through the NUI Galway library website) or in the Harrington Anthology *Modern and Contemporary Irish Drama* (Second edition). The week eleven text will be made available by the course instructors.



## Course Outline

### Week One: (7<sup>th</sup> Sept)

Introduction (CM & TOB)

**WEDNESDAY CLASS ONLY – NO MONDAY CLASS THIS WEEK.**

### Week Two:(12<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup> Sept)

The founding of the Abbey Theatre and Exploring the Archives. (TOB)

\*This week will include a tour to the theatre archives in the James Hardiman Library and workshop on how to use the archives.

### Week Three: (19<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup> Sept)

W.B. Yeats, Lady Augusta Gregory and J. M. Synge. (TOB)

Texts: *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* and Synge: *Riders to the Sea* (Texts available in Harrington Anthology)

### Week Four: (26<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> Sept)

Sean O'Casey and the Foundation of the Irish Free State. (TOB)

Text: Sean O'Casey: *Juno and the Paycock*. (Text available in Harrington Anthology)

### Week Five: (3<sup>rd</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> Oct)

Samuel Beckett - Challenging Theatrical Perspectives (CM)

Text: Samuel Beckett: *Waiting for Godot*. (Available on Drama Online)

### Week Six: (10<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> Oct)

Tom Murphy - Dealing with the Diaspora (CM)

Text: Tom Murphy: *A Whistle in the Dark* (Available on Drama Online)

### Week Seven: (17<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> Oct)

New Perspectives on Northern Irish Theatre I - Field Day (TOB)

Text: Brian Friel: *Translations* (Text available in Harrington Anthology)

### Week Eight: (24<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> Oct)

New Perspectives on Northern Irish Theatre II - A Feminine Renaissance (CM)

Text: Christina Reid – *The Belle of Belfast City* (Available on Drama Online)

### Week Nine: (2<sup>nd</sup> Nov)

Marina Carr - Radical Representations of Femininity. (CM)

Text: Marina Carr: *By the Bog of Cats*. (Text available in Harrington Anthology)

**NO CLASS ON MONDAY THIS WEEK DUE TO BANK HOLIDAY**

### Week Ten: (7<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> Nov)

Martin McDonagh - Representing Ireland Abroad. (TOB)

Text: Martin McDonagh: *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (Available on Drama Online)



**Week Eleven: (14<sup>th</sup> 7 16<sup>th</sup> Nov)**

New Paradigms in Contemporary Irish Theatre (CM)

Text: ANU Productions: *The Boys of Foley Street* (Available from Course Instructor)

**Week Twelve: (21<sup>st</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>)**

Practical Assessment (CM & TOB)

**Assessment:**

**In-Class Participation: 10%**

**Mid-Term Archival Report (30%):** Each student will engage with the Theatre Archives in the Hardiman Library to research one of the chosen texts on this course. The student will identify a performance (or performances) of one of the texts on the course and will report on its significance in relation to the given themes. The word count of this assignment is 700 words

**Practical Presentation (20%)**

The performances will be staged in the final class(es). The audience will be your classmates and the two course instructors.

- You will be divided into groups.
- Each group selects a scene from any of the plays on the course. That scene must have a sufficient number of roles for everyone to act in a role or part-take as director, dramaturg etc.
- The duration of the scene should be no more than ten minutes.
- You are NOT being marked on your acting skills; rather, the objective is to demonstrate what you have learned about the original staging conventions of the play.
- One of the key skills being assessed here is team work. For that (and other) reasons, each of the groups will receive one overall grade, based on the overall performance of each ensemble

**Critical Reflection (40%)**

In your critical reflection, you will be asked to write a 1,000 word essay in which you reflect critically upon your performance, drawing on secondary material. Students will address their practical performance as practical research. Students will address what theatrical or performance themes, histories and conventions their project engaged with and will reflect on how their performance responded to these themes, histories and conventions. Students will also reflect on what interested them in this particular aesthetic approach, and how the group approach informed the performance. Finally students will analyse what they discovered about the ideas, themes or performance techniques mobilised in their performances.