

A Taste of Irish Literature

Fall 2026 (Sept. 18 and Oct. 2-31)

Thursdays 10-12 in Berkeley Golden Bear Center, Suite 365

Prof. Stephanie Wells

This course offers a sampling of the lyrical voices of 20th- and 21st-c. short fiction, drama, and poetry to explore the social and political flavor of Ireland's national identities. (The course is offered in conjunction with OLLI's October trip to Ireland and Northern Ireland.) The texts move through a variety of Irish historical events through the lenses of its citizens, soldiers, mothers, and artists. With the exception of Brian Friel's *Translations*, texts will be available on the course dashboard as PDFs.

The following readings may eventually be edited for brevity, but the tentative reading list looks like this:

Week 1 (Sept. 18)

Poems:

William Allingham, "The Faeries (A Child's Song)"

Emily Lawless, "After Aughrim"

Carroll Malone, "The Croppy Boy"

Eva Gore-Booth, "The Little Waves of Breffny"

W. B. Yeats, "The Stolen Child," "The Lake Isle of Innisfree," "Who Goes with Fergus"

Play:

W. B. Yeats and Lady Gregory, "Cathleen ní Houlihan"

No Class Sept. 25

Week 2 (Oct. 2)

Play:

George Bernard Shaw, "O'Flaherty V.C."

Poems:

Padraig Pearse, "I Am Ireland / Mise Eire"

Winifred Mary Letts, "The Deserter"

Stories:

James Joyce, "Araby," "The Dead"

Week 3 (Oct. 9)

Poems:

W. B. Yeats, "Easter, 1916," "No Second Troy," "The Wild Swans at Coole," "The Second Coming," "The Gyres," "Sailing to Byzantium," "The Circus Animals' Desertion," "Adam's Curse"

Play:

Brian Friel, *Transitions*

Week 4 (Oct. 16)

Stories:

Fiona Barr, "The Wall Reader"
John Montague, "The Cry"
Mary Beckett, "A Belfast Woman"

Poems:

Eavan Boland, "It's a Woman's World," "Quarantine," "Mise Eire," "Irish Poetry," "The Emigrant Irish," "Mother Ireland," "Colony"

Week 5 (Oct. 23)

Poems:

Seamus Heaney, "Traditions," "Digging," "Blackberry-Picking," "Bogland," "Punishment," "Two Lorries," "Clearances," "The Skunk," "Station Island"
Louis MacNiece, "Dublin"
Patrick Kavanaugh, "Epic"

Stories:

William Trevor, "The Distant Past"
Colum McCann, "Everything In This Country Must"

Week 6 (Oct. 31)

Stories:

Eilis ní Dhubhne, "Midwife to the Fairies," "Sex in the Context of Ireland," "At Sally Gap"

Poems:

Theo Dorgan, "Kilmainham Gaol, Dublin, Easter 1991"
Paul Muldoon, "Milkweed and Monarch," "At Tuam"
Nuala ní Dhomhnaill, "Parthenogenesis," "Mo Mhister Dorcha/My Dark Master"
"Labysheedy/The Silken Bed"
Mebdh McGuckian, "The Dream-Language of Fergus"
Michael Coady, "Watching 'The Dead' in the Living Room"