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## IRSH 380.01: Topics in Irish Studies

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Edna O'Brien in 1966. Her first seven novels were banned in Ireland, where they were considered too scandalous.  
Credit Evening Standard/Getty Images.



“ ... there was some backlash and I really suffered with that play. I had someone cut my picture out of the paper and draw horns and different symbols on it and send it to me.”  
Patricia Burke Brogan at the sculpture by Mick Wilkins to the Magdalene women at Forster Street. Photo Credit: *Irish Times*

## IRSH 380: Irish Women Writers

**Instructor:** Dr. Erin Costello Wecker  
**Office:** Liberal Arts 220  
**Phone:** (406) 243-4410  
**Office Hours:** T/Th: 11:00am-12:30pm  
**Email:** erin.wecker@umontana.edu  
**Classroom:** HS 411  
**Meeting days/time:** Tuesday and Thursday 9:30am-10:50am

### Course Description:

Many courses on Irish literature are dominated by the writing of men. This course shifts the focus and places the work of Irish women writers at the center of our inquiry. Women were often seen as emblems of nation and motherhood; this course disrupts that binary to include Irish women as literary creators. To do this we will survey a range of Irish women's writing including poems, novels, short stories, plays, cultural history, and literary criticism. To enhance our study, we will look to film and stage adaptations to explore the process of translating a written text into a visual or graphic format. We will discuss social, political, and cultural developments such as the formation of an Irish identity for the newly independent nation, women's role in post-independent Ireland, the literary trope of woman-as-nation, and issues of gender, sexuality and ethnicity in the “new Ireland.”

This class is designed to provide students with the rhetorical knowledge and cultural perspectives necessary to be successful writers at the college level and more specifically within the field of Irish Studies. This course emphasizes the importance of critical thinking, reading, and composing in an academic context. To do this, students will explore research practices within the field of Irish Studies and related disciplines (such as feminist rhetorical practices, women's and gender studies, postcolonial studies, etc.) and successful composing methods to bring these insights to the page. Students will expand their purview by examining the literary, historical, national, and gender contexts for

interpreting Irish texts. The writing assignments in this course are aimed at increasing students' fluidity at composing literary criticism, rhetorical analysis, and literature reviews through a series of scaffolded, reflective writing inquiries. Students will learn to identify and enact key features of discipline specific writing such as summary, analysis, and argumentation by studying primary and secondary sources. Students will also focus on organization, clarity, and mechanics through a systematic series of revisions.

One of the more exciting elements of teaching this course is the diversity of knowledge we all bring to the classroom. With that said, no prior study of Irish literature is necessary for this course. Please feel welcome to ask questions as we build knowledge together.

## Required Course Texts

Edna O'Brien, *Down by the River*

Patricia Burke Brogan, *Eclipsed*

Mary Costello, *Titanic Town*

Eavan Boland, *A Woman Without a Country*

Additional readings will be posted on Moodle as PDFs

## Course Reserves

*The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* (volumes 1-5)

Volumes 1-5 will be on reserve in Mansfield Library for the entire semester. They are on a 2-hour, unrestricted hold, which means you may take them outside of the library. If you need more than 2 hours you are welcome to make photocopies of material in this collection.

To check these books out you will need the course name and number (IRSH 380: Topics in Irish Studies: Women Writers)

## IRSH 380 is an Approved Writing course. The university learning outcomes include:

- Use writing to learn and synthesize new concepts
- Formulate and express opinions and ideas in writing
- Compose written documents that are appropriate for a given audience or purpose
- Revise written work based on constructive feedback
- Find, evaluate, and use information effectively
- Begin to use discipline-specific writing conventions
- Demonstrate appropriate English language usage

## Participation in University Assessment

- All courses, including this one, that are approved writing courses participate in the University-wide Program-level Assessment (UPWA). Therefore, this course requires an electronic submission of an assignment stripped of your personal information to be used for educational research and assessment of the writing program. Your papers will be stored in a database. This assessment in no way affects either your grade or your progression at the university.

## General Class Expectations:

- All reading assignments will be completed by the assigned date.
- All writing assignments must be turned in on time.
- **All major assignments must be typed. Please use 12 point Times New Roman font, double-space, and 1 inch margins on all sides.**
- Please use MLA 8<sup>th</sup> edition citation format.

- All homework must be typed.
- Attend class.
- Actively, vocally, and appropriately participate in class discussion.

## Grading Policy

Participation	10%
Common Ground Presentation	10%
Conference Paper	20%
Field Day Anthology Assignment	20%
Annotated Bibliography	15%
“Major, Major” Seminar Paper	25%

Students enrolled in IRSH 380 are graded by the traditional letter grade A, B, C, D, F.

## Major Assignments

**Common Ground Presentation (1 page):** At the start of each class, a group of 2-3 students, will begin our conversation on the assigned reading by offering commentary and guiding discussion questions for the class to grapple with. Presenters will be asked to consider the literary, historical, national, and/or gender contexts needed for us to understand the texts assigned for the day. Presenters should prepare a handout with a brief outline detailing the relevant research, textual support from the assigned reading, and the discussion questions.

**Conference Paper (4-6 pages):** To accompany the Common Ground Presentation (CGP), you will also write a conference paper about one of the texts you do your CGP on. Conference papers will be due two weeks after your CGP so you are welcome to use class discussion to inform your analysis. This paper should focus on one of the themes or issues you found most compelling in the text. To bolster your claims you must include one secondary source that I have not assigned for class reading. I encourage you to use the sources assigned by me if they contribute to your argument, but these sources do NOT count as your additional source. This assignment will receive formal, written feedback from me and you are required to revise this essay.

**Film Critique Assignment (4-5 pages):** To accompany the literature we will be reading this semester, we will also be watching films that offer insight into the same thematic strands. This assignment will offer you the chance to review and critique one of the assigned films in connection to our class discussions and readings. This assignment will receive formal, written feedback from me and you are required to revise this essay. (a more detailed assignment is posted on Moodle and will be discussed in class)

**Annotated Bibliography (2-4 pages):** The annotated bibliography must include a minimum of five, secondary sources discovered in the process of your own research. Your annotated bibliography will include a brief summary of the source, analysis of the source (credibility, etc.), and a rationale for how you intend to use this source in your seminar paper. You are welcome to choose any topic related to the course and we will have ample time to discuss and conference your ideas as they develop.

**The “major, major” Seminar Paper (8-10 pages):** The crowning jewel of the semester is 8-10 page seminar paper. For the scope of this assignment, you are welcome to focus on a topic of your choosing related to the course content; please pay particular attention to the literary, historical, national, and/or gender contexts of the texts we studied this semester. Using the research methods practiced all semester, this paper should highlight a critical awareness of your topic through the incorporation of diverse sources. A more detailed explanation will be distributed in class. During the last two weeks of the semester all students must meet with me to conference their work-in-

progress seminar paper. During our individual conferences, I will offer each writer strategies for revision, additional sources of research, and content analysis.

## Plagiarism Policy

If I suspect that something a student has written has been plagiarized, in full or in part, intentionally or unintentionally, I take the following actions:

- I alert the student of areas of the text that are suspicious
- the student receives no credit on the paper, pending failure, and it is up to him/her to prove that he/she turned in original work
- each student is asked to provide me with hard copies of the research she/he used in writing the paper
- if the student cannot provide documentation of her/his research, the student will fail the paper

\*these measures are also put into action when a paper is poorly cited. When a student brings his/her research to me I use the time to talk with them about citation and make sure that they understand how and when to cite in the future.

In the case that the student is unable to provide evidence of his/her original work, or in the case that I have evidence that the student has intentionally plagiarized his/her work:

- the student will automatically fail the given assignment
- the student may fail the course unless, at my discretion, I offer alternative assignments and/or conditions
- I may pursue a plagiarism citation unless, at my discretion, I offer alternative assignments and/or conditions
- the student may receive alternate assignments, etc. to avoid failure. In this instance, all conditions must be met. I need to see evidence of excellent work and effort, and work must be completed on time.
- all other previously established conditions in the class (i.e. attendance, participation, homework grades, etc.) still stand and can still cause a student to fail the course
- in the case of blatant or egregious offenses, I will not negotiate against course failure and will pursue a University Citation of Plagiarism