



Summer in England, Scotland and Ireland

EH 378H/ IS 305H Irish Culture and Identity

Professor: Janet Morgan Haavisto, Ph.D.

Course Description:

This course is designed to encourage a clearer understanding of the influence the Irish have exerted on the world and on themselves through their attempts to define “Irishness.” We will examine the characteristics that the Irish have traditionally prized and validated. These characteristics have led the British through imperialism and even into post-colonialism. Contemporary Britons, however, live in a very different world—one in which they have moved from a position of perceived superiority in a time in which “the sun never set on the British Empire” to a world in which their economy is more tenuous and their cultural makeup includes many groups (Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Indians, Asians, Africans, and yet more) who see themselves as “British.” This is a far cry from the Anglo-Saxon/Celtic prototype of earlier centuries. Through literature and cultural studies, we will examine efforts to redefine “Britishness” for the twenty-first century, along with the issues that must be addressed by all of the constituents in the enterprise.

At the end of the course students will be able to:

1. discuss the issues involved in the effort to define “Irishness”;
2. define “devolution” and discuss the impetus for it as well as the ramifications of it for the parties involved and engage in the debate about the efficacy of it;
3. discuss the likely impacts on the Irish of their definition of themselves as a result of the Republic of Ireland’s entry into the European Union;
4. distinguish among terms, such as, “Ireland,” “Scotch Irish,” “United Kingdom,” “Great Britain,” “England,” “Briton,” “British,” “Celtic,” “Anglo-Saxon” “Gaelic”;
5. explain how early legends helped define the characteristics commonly attributed to the “Irish”;
6. discuss the impact of cultural diversity on the inhabitants of the Ireland and Northern Ireland and how such cultural diversity complicates effort to define “Irishness”;

7. discuss the issues of racism plaguing Ireland and the difficulties racism causes in the effort to define “Irishness”;
8. distinguish among such terms as “Britishness,” “Englishness,” “Welshness,” “Scottishness,” “Irishness” and discuss why distinctions are made among such terms;
9. discuss the significance of “orange” and “green”;
10. discuss some writers and their literature and the perspectives they shed on the issues of “Irishness” and on attempts to accommodate Irish of many national and ethnic backgrounds;
11. discuss the history and extent of Irish immigration and its effects on the development of the U.S.A.;
12. explore why in the effort to redefine themselves both strong identification with the United States and anti-Americanism figure into the Irish effort to position itself in the world of the twenty-first century.

Texts:

Online Selections

Selections from The CAIN Project. University of Ulster

The History Place website—“The Irish Potato Famine”

James Joyce, “Araby”

Frank O’Connor “First Confession”

Frank O’Connor “My Oedipus Complex”

James Plunkett “Janey Mary”

Jim Smyth “The Men of No Popery: The Origins of the Orange Order”

Jonathan Swift “A Modest Proposal”

John Millington Synge *The Aran Islands*

John Millington Synge *Riders to the Sea*

William Butler Yeats *Purgatory*

William Butler Yeats “Easter 1916”

Course Requirements:

- Attendance at all on-site events and discussions is required.
- Participation in all all on-site events and discussions is required.
- Reading journal for reflections on the reading assignments.
- You will maintain a daily journal throughout the course. In it you will record evidence you find of “Irishness,” including evidence of uneasy accommodations of the notion. As you progress, you will find that your understanding of the issues involved in defining the term will both broaden and deepen. You will want to reflect on how your readings and experiences have affected your perceptions. You will also want to note the attitudes and comments you encounter about citizens of the United States, including who

demonstrates the attitudes and makes the comments and whether they presume a definition of Americans as “Celts” or “Anglos.”

- You will write a paper in which you examine one aspect of Ireland or Northern Ireland and its people. We will discuss the parameters of that project in class.
- You will have assignments at each of our field trip sites.

Schedule of Readings: Please read as many of the selections as possible before the trip. In any case, you will want to have read Synge’s *The Aran Islands* and *Riders to the Sea* beforehand.

Grading:

Research Paper—including insight; organization; proper documentation of primary and secondary sources; accurate spelling, grammar, and syntax; depth of research; on-time submission; etc. 25 points

Journal entries—including insight and thoughtfulness, quality of entries, on-time submissions of entries when requested 25 points

Participation—including insight, interest in discussions, civility (not participating in side conversations during group discussions, politeness to fellow discussants, etc.) 25 points

Excursion Assignments and Reading journal entries—including insight, on-time submissions, response to the prompts (as opposed to writing entries that fail to address the issues in the prompts), quality of writing (itemized above under paper) 25 points