“Fact and Fiction Since the Famine: The Stories and History of the Irish in America”
FRSEM-UA 619
Linda Dowling Almeida
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Wednesday 11:00 a.m. to 1:45 p.m.
Glucksman Ireland House Room 101
Office Hours: Wednesday 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. and by appointment
Fall 2017

Texts:
All Souls, Michael Patrick McDonald
Charming Billy, Alice McDermott
Doubt, John Patrick Shanley
Remembering Ahanagran: Storytelling in a Family’s Past, Richard White

Purpose:
This course will examine what the stories of a people can tell us of their past and their influence on the present. We will take an interdisciplinary look at the history of the Irish who settled in American cities in the mid-nineteenth century and explore how this immigrant group established foundation communities that became the model for the immigrant groups who followed them to America. Using their own words through novels, film, memoir, and oral histories to complement the historical record we will investigate who the Irish are and the impact they have had on the urban landscape and American culture.

Course Requirements:
We meet once a week, attendance is mandatory and will be considered in the determination of final grades, along with class participation, the readings, and smaller writing assignments that stem from the class readings and discussion.
Work is assigned on a weekly basis and is outlined in the syllabus distributed at the start of the semester. The syllabus is also available on-line throughout the semester as are most readings, special assignments, and announcements for the class.
To improve students’ writing skills and prepare them for the final project, students will have the option to rewrite Essay #2 or Essay #3 after the initial submission based on comments from the professor to improve the essay for a better grade. All books are available at the bookstore, but feel free to use library loans or purchase the texts elsewhere. All other articles/readings will be found on line in NYU Classes. All class submissions must be typed, double-spaced and meet the page/word count assigned for each project. Submissions will be graded on content, writing clarity, strength of argument, evidence and narrative cohesion.

Grade Distribution and Due Dates:
Essay #1 – 10%, September 20 (3 pages – 750 words)
Essay #2 – 15%, October 11 (5 pages -- 1,250 words)
Final Project Proposal -- October 14
Essay #3 –15%, November 1 (5 pages – 1,250 words)
Essay #4, Film review –15%, November 22 (3-5 pages – 750-1,250 words)
Oral presentation, 5%, November 29
Final Project – 30%, December 13 (10 pages – 2,500 words)
Attendance and Participation – 10%

**Week 1**
**September 6**
**Introduction**

Class:
What is objective of the course.
Discuss semester projects, expectations.
Review History of Irish in America 1600-1900
Read Mary Anne Sadlier’s *Bessy Conway: The Irish Girl in America*
Peter Finley Dunne: Mr. Dooley, selected essays

Read for September 13:
“Miss Margaret’s Emily Dickinson,” Aife Murray (33 pages)
Annie O’Donnell selected letters on line (10 pages)
Margaret Lynch Brennan essays on domestics on line
“Ubiquitous Bridget: Irish Immigrant Women in Domestic Service in America, 1840–1930,” *MIA*, on line (pp. 332-353)

**Week 2**
**September 13**
**The Irish in America**

Class:
Who are the Irish in America?
Review experience of late 19th Century Irish and Irish Americans in US and their emerging institutions.
Examine Annie O’Donnell’s life in the context of Margaret Lynch Brennan’s Aife Murray’s essay.

Visit to Merchants’ House Museum

Read for September 20:
From Ireland’s Allies:
Miriam Nyhan Grey, “Dr. Gertrude B. Kelly and the Founding of New York’s Cumann na mBan, pp. 75-90
Terry Golway, “John Devoy and the Easter Rising,” pp. 21-30

**Essay #1 due: September 20**
Prompt: Drawing on the readings and our museum visit, discuss some of the challenges faced by immigrants transitioning from life in rural Ireland to life in urban America.
3 pages double spaced
Week 3
September 20
Emerging Voices: Taking Control of the Narrative
Class:
Review Museum visit
Consider position of Irish American community at turn of twentieth century and their voices in American institutions.
Look at Irish activism leading up to WWI

Essay#1 Due

Assignment:
Read for September 27:
Richard White, Remembering Ahanagran, (Introduction, Chapters 1, 4, 5)

Prepare two discussion prompts for class based on the readings.
Submit them to Prof. Almeida by Monday night, September 26.

Week 4
September 27
Immigrant memory and it’s impact on life in America
Richard White and his family history
Oral History

Class:
Student led discussions on White.
Discuss the value of immigrant memory and the transition to life in America.
Topics include Memory/Oral History as a Resource/propaganda tool, the value of family stories to ethnic identity.
Screen Sleuthing Mary Shanley

Assignment for October 4:
Charles Fanning, “These Traits Endure,” Irish Voice in America, pp. 312-357

Week 5
October 4
Post War WWII
The changing world of Irish America

Class:
Discuss True Confessions and the changing themes in Irish American culture
Discuss final paper and possible topics
Reading for October 11:
Daniel Hartigan memoir, pp. 1-30
Maeve Brennan, *New Yorker* Short Stories, to be assigned

Reading Assignment for 10/18:
*Charming Billy* (280 pp.) by Alice McDermott

Essay Assignments:
1. Essay #2 Essay #2 Due 10/10 -- 5 pages double spaced -- 1,250 words
   Discuss ways in which the Irish transition from an immigrant community to an ethnic community in the 20th century.
2. Consider topics for final project. Submit topic proposal to Professor Almeida by 10/17 for approval and before 10/25 trip to library.
Your final paper must address some aspect of Irish American history/culture/identity between 1845 and today.
Since we are dealing with fact and fiction you can incorporate novels, films, plays into your study, but they must be examined in light of the reality the fiction references.
You can examine an event, such as the Easter Rising, an institution such as the Catholic Church, a profession such as law enforcement or the priesthood or domestic workers in the 1880s vs domestic workers in the 1950s. You can compare films or books on the broad topics and time periods, ie immigration in the 1920s vs the 1980s.
You must include some primary sources in your research. If you are stuck on an idea or just are interested in an area, but don't know how to formulate it into a paper topic, let me know and I can help you crystalize your thoughts.

Week 6
October 11

1950s Ireland and Spike in Immigration to US
Maeve Brennan

Essay #2 Due

Prompts for October 18 class due October 17.

Proposal for final project due October 17.

Essay #3: Pick an author and discuss how he or she uses the Irish experience in America to tell a story that is unique to the community. What is unique about the story and how successful is the effort; why or why not.
Due: November 1
**Week 7**
**October 18: Telling Stories the Way We Remember Them**

Class: Discuss *Charming Billy*
McDermott’s technique and different points of view
Discuss 1950s immigrants to US.
Discuss Final project and what is expected

Read for October 25:

**Week 8**
**October 25: Late 20th Century Irish Immigration**
**Bobst Visit**

Class:
Part 1 --
Discuss New Irish Migration

Part 2 --
Visit to Library
Introduction to library services and search engines. Begin to research final paper topic.

Assignment:
Read for November 1:
*All Souls* (263 pp.) by Michael Patrick MacDonald

**Week 9**
**November 1**
**Boston Bussing Crisis: Class, Race and Politics**

Class:
Discuss *All Souls*
Discuss impact of memoirs ; difference between memoir and fiction; memoir and autobiography.

Assignment:
Read *Doubt: A Parable* (73 pp.) by John Patrick Shanley
Read Tom Shelley, “Twentieth Century American Catholicism and Irish Americans,” *MIA*, pp. 574-609 on line.
Week 10
November 8
The Irish in the Church: Vatican II and post-War Catholicism

Class:
Discuss Doubt
Catholic Church in the post-War period

Read for November 15:
Kevin Kenny, “Labor and Labor Organizations,” MIA, 354-363
Each student assigned an interview transcript from Joe Long collection, approximately 20-30 pp. each

Assignment for November 22:
Film Reviews by Students
Prompt: “How reliable is film as a reflection of a community?”
Written, 3-5 pages due 11/22
Oral, class presentations, 11/29
Films include: On the Waterfront, Doubt, Going My Way, Brothers McMullen
Students assigned to specific films in class

Week 11
November 15
Labor

Class, Part I:
Discuss Labor and Community issues/articles – Kenny, Fisher, Meagher
Excerpts from James Fisher, On the Waterfront, introduced in class

Class, Part II:
Tour of West Side/post war community
Joe Long’s neighborhood

November 22
Thanksgiving holiday
Film review due.

Week 12
November 29
Film Critiques

Class:
Student presentations of film critiques (November 22 assignment)

Reading for December 6
Stephen Erie, Rainbow’s End, Chapters 5, pp. 140-190 and Chap. 6, pp. 191-235
George Washington Plunkett, “I Seen My Opportunities and I Took ’Em.”: An Old-Time Pol Preaches Honest Graft, selected readings on line

**Week 13**  
**December 6**  
The Irish and Politics: Then and Now

**Week 14**  
**December 13**  
Final Projects Due

Class:  
Present final projects