

MAKING THE IRISH AMERICAN: HISTORY, FILM, SONG, AND STORY

Coordinator: Eileen Sullivan

The study group explores the experience of the Irish in America from colonial times to the present, with background on conditions in Ireland that led to the continuing emigration. Topics include trends in numbers and characteristics of the immigrants; regional history and internal migration; family history and ties; changing importance of religion; gender roles; politics and urban life; poverty, crime and the law; ethnic ambivalence; upward mobility; Irish nationalism; and relations with other American groups. The study group tells this story through films and literature as well as through works of history, sociology, and political science. The course material sets the Irish American experience in context by considering the experience of other immigrant groups, through guest speakers and presentations by study group members.

Eileen Sullivan, Ph.D. Columbia University, teaches at Rutgers and the and just published *The Shamrock and the Cross: Irish American Novelists Shape American Catholicism* with the University of Notre Dame Press.

Readings and Films

Books to Buy:

Jay P. Dolan, *The Irish Americans: A History*, NY: Bloomsbury Press, 2008.

Paperback \$20

Robert E. Rhodes and Daniel J. Casey, eds, *Modern Irish American Fiction: A Reader*, Syracuse University Press, 1989. Includes short stories (or excerpts) from Irish American writers who concerned themselves with Irish America: Mary Doyle Curran, Finley P. Dunne, James T. Farrell, John O'Hara, Betty Smith, Mary McCarthy, J.F. Powers, Mary Gordon, and William Kennedy. Paperback \$20

Course Pack: (I may email some pieces rather than include them in the CP)

4 Essays: From "Irish American Gender and Family," "Irish Americans and Race," *The Twentieth Century* and "The 1960s to the Present" by Timothy J. Meagher, *The Columbia Guide to Irish American History*, NY: Columbia University Press, 2005 (total 50 pages)

Essay: From "The Uses of Prejudice;" "Catholics as Patriotic Outsiders" and "A Woman's Place" by Eileen Sullivan (total 25 pages)

4 essays on popular culture: From Mick Moloney, "Irish-American Popular Music;" Robert W. Snyder, "The Irish and Vaudeville;" Rebecca S. Miller, "Irish Traditional Music in the United States;" and Ralph Wilcox, "Irish Americans in Sports" (total 30 pages)

Essay: From “The Fireman on the Stairs: Communal Loyalties in the Making of Irish America” by Timothy J. Meagher (10 pages)

Stories: From James McHenry, “The Wilderness; or, Braddock’s Times, A Tale of the West; Charles James Cannon, *Bickerton; or, The Immigrant’s Daughter*; John Boyce, *Mary Lee, or the Yankee in Ireland*; Mary Doyle Curran, *The Parish and the Hill* and Alice McDermott, *At Weddings and Wakes* and *Charming Billy* (total 60 pages)

Films:

Clips to be shown in class and participants can watch entire film at home if they choose: Out of Ireland, Gangs of New York, The Molly Maguires, Angels with Dirty Faces, Going My Way, The Quiet Man, The Last Hurrah, Long Day’s Journey Into Night, The Brothers McMullen, True Confessions, Brooklyn, The Departed. My goal is to show at least one relevant film clip at each session.

***** **Syllabus - A Work in Progress** *****

Session 1. Introduction; Immigration to Colonial America: The Irish Protestants

Dolan, Chapter 1, Here Come the Irish (26 pages)

Story: James McHenry, Selections from “The Wilderness; or, Braddock’s Times, A Tale of the West” (CP) (10 pages)

Session 2. From the Revolution to the Famine: Changing Patterns

Dolan, Chapter 2, A Time of Transition and Chapter 3, The Great Hunger (50 pages)

Film Clip: Out of Ireland

Session 3. The Famine Years, 1840-1870: Constructing an Irish Catholic Identity

Dolan, Chapter 4, From Paddies to Patriots (20 pages)

Sullivan, From “The Uses of Prejudice” (CP) (10 pages)

Stories: From Charles James Cannon, *Bickerton; or, The Immigrant’s Daughter* and John Boyce, *Mary Lee, or the Yankee in Ireland* (CP) (15 pages)

Film clip: Gangs of New York

Session 4: The Famine Years, 1840-1870: Constructing an Irish Catholic Community

Meagher, “Irish American Gender and Family” and “Irish Americans and Race” (CP) (30 pages)

Sullivan, From “Catholics as Patriotic Outsiders” and “A Woman’s Place” (15 pages)

Meagher, From “The Fireman on the Stairs: Communal Loyalties in the Making of Irish America” (10 pages)

Session 5. The Turn of the Twentieth Century: Building a Fortress, Remembering the Past

Dolan, From Chapter 5, *The Catholic Irish* (20 pages) and Chapter 8, *Nation Among Nations* (10 pages)

Stories: Selections from Finley P. Dunne, “Mr. Dooley’s Neighborhood” *Reader* (5 pages) and Mary Doyle Curran, *The Parish and the Hill* (CP) (13 pages)

Film clip: Long Day’s Journey Into Night

Session 6. Becoming American 1920-1960: Ethnic Ambivalence and Upward Mobility

Dolan, Chapter 9, *Up from the City Streets* (20 pages)

Stories: James T. Farrell, “Studs;” John O’Hara, “Mort and Mary;” Mary McCarthy, “Yonder Peasant, Who is He?” Mary Doyle Curran, “Mrs. Reardon’s Gamble” *Reader* (34 pages)

Film clips: *Angels with Dirty Faces*, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, *Brooklyn*

Session 7. Becoming American 1920-1960: Labor and Politics

Dolan, Chapter 6, *Born to Rule* and 11, *City Hall and the Union Hall* (45 pages)

Stories: Edwin O’Connor, “A Grand Day for Mr. Garvey” *Reader* (10 pages)

Film clips: *The Molly Maguires*, *The Last Hurrah*

Session 8. Becoming American 1920-1960: The Church

Dolan, Chapter 10: *Irish Catholicism’s Golden Age* (15 pages)

Stories: F. Scott Fitzgerald, “Benediction;” J.F. Powers, “Bill;” and Flannery O’Connor, “A Temple of the Holy Ghost” *Reader* (total 25 pages) and Alice McDermott, *At Weddings and Wakes* (CP) (20 pages)

Film clip: *Going My Way*

Session 9. Mireya Perez on Immigration Experience of Latinos through fiction of Sandra Cisneros

Session 10. Becoming American: The Irish in American Popular Culture

Mick Moloney, “Irish-American Popular Music” (CP) (10 pages)

Robert W. Snyder, “The Irish and Vaudeville” (CP) (4 pages)

Rebecca Miller, “Irish Traditional Music in the United States” (CP) (5 pages)

Ralph Wilcox, “Irish Americans in Sports” (CP) (10 pages)

Film clips: *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, *Riverdance*, *The Quiet Man*

Session 11. Becoming American: Poverty, Violence, Crime, and Redemption

Dolan, From Chapter 12, “The Triumph of the Irish” (5 pages)

Meagher, From “The Twentieth Century” and “The 1960s to the Present” (CP) (10 pages)

Stories: Brendan Gill, *The Cemetery*; Pete Hamill, *The Gift*, *Reader* (14 pages)

Film clips: *Southie*, *True Confessions*, *The Departed*

Session 12: 1960 - Present: Succeeding and/or Disappearing

Dolan, from Chapter 12, *The Triumph of the Irish* (15 pages)

Meagher, From “The Twentieth Century” and “The 1960s to the Present” (CP) (10 pages)

Stories: William Kennedy, “Billy Phelan’s Greatest Game;” Mary Gordon, “The Neighborhood” *Reader* (20 pages) and Alice McDermott, *Charming Billy* (CP) (10 pages)

Film clips: *The Brothers McMullen*