“The Art of Fiction: The Irish Short Story”

English 325

Fall Semester, 2023: 9.30-10.45 AM. In Person.

"The Irish Short Story" has two primary goals:

* The first is geographically general: to think through and to define the genre of the short story. How is a short story different from a novel? How do short stories differ from anecdotes, fairy tales, parables, or legends? When did short story writing become popular? What worldview can and can't they express?
* The second goal of our course is more geographically specific: to think about the short story as it pertains to Ireland, a country known for the short story. Many Irish writers (James Joyce, Oscar Wilde, William Trevor, Frank O'Connor, Mary Lavin and Elizabeth Bowen) are considered experts in and pioneers of the genre. Is there something about Irish culture, or the culture of small nations, that favors the short story form over the novel? Is there a connection between vestiges of an oral society and a briefer form of prose? Or might an ironic, detached, ambiguous view of authority favor the short story?
* In short, our primary goal is to read and interpret some beautiful, poignant, and very enjoyable short stories from Ireland over the last two centuries.
* The stories include, but are not limited, to pieces by: Maria Edgeworth, William Carleton, Sheridan Le Fanu, Oscar Wilde, James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, Liam O’Flaherty, Frank O’Connor, Mary Lavin, Elizabeth Bowen, William Trevor, Roddy Doyle, and Sally Rooney.
* We will also read a chapter or two a week from an Irish history text book. Learning the key dates and movements in Irish history will not only provide better context for the stories we read, but it will also allow us to think about how fiction and history intertwine.