The Folklore of Ireland
Tufts Experimental College 0004-S
Spring 2010

ABOUT THIS COURSE

Classroom: Braker 113
Time: Monday 6:30-9:00
Instructor: Barbara Hillers
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           617-625-3797

Books & Other Readings: See Course Reading List.
Required texts are available from internet booksellers (and should be ordered promptly: They will be needed for Week 3).
Required & recommended books, as well as all other assigned readings available on Reserve at Tisch Library.

Course Work and Evaluation:
10% Class participation
35% Oral Presentations
20% Written Report
35% Final Paper

· Class Participation
Active participation in class discussion based on assigned reading.

· Oral Presentations
Students will make a couple of short-ish oral presentations (5-8 mins) on assigned topics.

· Written Report
The written report (7-8 pp.) is a short, no-frills research paper; it will typically be based on research done for an oral presentation. It is due by Week Seven (3/8).

· Final Paper
The final paper (10-12 pp.) is due by Week Fourteen (4/26).

Collaboration on special presentations is encouraged. Final Papers may be based on shared research, but should represent students' individual and original views and insights.
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COURSE SYLLABUS

Week One
Whose Folklore?
What is folklore and who are the folk? How does storytelling function in our life?

· Storytelling Potluck
Participants swap stories:
- what was the first story you remember learning; what made it memorable? Who told it, under what circumstances was it told, and why?
- what is your favourite folktale? where and how did you learn it? what do you like about it?

Week Two
The Functions of Folklore
What is the function of folk literature? An exploration of the function, or range of functions, of for the storyteller and his community.

Required Reading:
William Bascom, `Four Functions of Folklore' in The Study of Folklore, ed. A. Dundes (1965).[book on Res]
M. MacDonald Read, `The 50 Functions of Folklore,' in Traditional Storytelling Today: An International Sourcebook, ed. M. MacDonald Read (1999), 408-415. [article on Res]

· Student Presentations
Exploration of the function(s) of a particular tale (preferably chosen from Folktales from Ireland) in light of the critical reading.

Week Three
Genres of Irish Folk Literature
An introduction to the main genres of Irish folk literature: fables, tales of magic, religious tales, jokes and anecdotes, fairy legends, songs, charms, nonsense tales, rhymes and riddles.

Required Reading:
`Genres of Irish Folk Literature'* [instructor's handout]
Folktales of Ireland, #1-10, 13, 14, 16, 19, 20-25, 26-31, 46, 51, 53, 54. [book on Res]
Irish Folk Tales, #36; 38-39; 41-42 (tall tales); 12 (legend). [book on Res]

· Student Presentations
On individual Irish folklore genres: their form, function & performance context.

Week Four
Ireland and the International Context

How does Irish storytelling tradition fit into the European context? An introduction to the history of folklore collecting and folktale scholarship in Europe. What to do with ATU: the international tale type index and how to use it.

Required Reading:
Séumas Ó Duilearga, 'Note to Prospective Collectors',* Béaloideas: the Journal of the Folklore of Ireland Society 1 (1927). [instructor's handout on Res]
Richard Dorson, 'Foreword', Folktales of Ireland v-xxii.
Seán O'Sullivan, 'Introduction', Folktales of Ireland, xxxiii-xxxix.

· Student Presentation and Class Discussion
  - 'Fakelore' versus Folklore - Why does it matter?
  - Folklore as the voice of the rural proletariat vs. the lore of the 'folk' as constructed by bourgeois nationalism

Week Five

Storyteller and Storytelling Community in Ireland

Studying the storyteller: Exploring the tradition bearers' repertoire in the light of their biography, channels of transmission, and performance technique.

Required Reading:
Please have a look at one classic repertoire collection:

· Student Presentations:
  Presentations on individual storytellers and their repertoires.

Week Six


Oral performance and oral transmission. How to tell a tale: Formula, motif and theme.

Required Reading:
Georges D. Zimmermann, 'Irish Traditional Storytelling... in The Irish Storyteller (2001), 440-440-450 ($8-$11) and 471-495 ($22-$31).* [book on Res]
Primary Literature
Three Irish hero-tales told by Joe Flaherty (from *There Was a King in Ireland*, 1971, ed. Myles Dillon):

- ‘The Queen of the Island of Loneliness’* 37-51
- ‘The Giant of the Mighty Blows’* 53-76
- ‘The Knowledge of the Only Story and the Dúdán’s Sword’* 77-95

Week Seven
Psychological Interpretations of Folklore
The Folktale as narrative of personal development; some classic psychoanalytic approaches; analysis and interpretation of selected folktales.

Required Reading:

· In-Class Discussion: Interpretation of ‘The Knowledge of the Only Story’ and other tales of Joe Flaherty’s (see Week Six) as narratives of psychological development

· Student Presentations

Week Eight
Coding and Gender in Folklore
Do men and women tell different stories? Do men and women tell (and hear) the same stories differently? What can we tell from the differences between male and female storytellers' repertoires and performance styles? Can stories have a gender? The theory of coding: the hidden agendas and subversive messages of women's folklore.

Required Reading:

· Student Presentation
Examples of coding or gendered discourse in a woman storyteller's repertoire.

Week Nine
Spring Break!

Weeks Ten and Eleven: The Form and Function of Fairy Legends

Week Ten
This World and the Otherworld
Folk legend versus folktale. Fairy legend and belief: Who are the fairies? Who believes in fairies?

Criticism:
Máire Mac Neill, `Introduction,’* Síscéalta ó Thír Chonaill - Fairy Legends from Donegal, eds. Ó hEochaídh et al. (Dublin 1977), 17-28. [article on Res]

Primary Material:
O'Sullivan, `People of the Otherworld', Folktales #26-38
Seán Ó hEochaídh, Síscéalta: Fairy Legends from Donegal #1-17* (1977)
Bab Feiritéar, `Fairy legends' (tr. Hillers)

Week Eleven
The Function of Fairy Legends
Fairy belief as tool for dealing with reality. The moral, message, or social use of fairy legends. Bridget Cleary and the Clonmel murder case.

Required Reading:

· In-class Discussion: Why did Bridget Cleary die?

· Student Presentation
The moral, message, or social use of a fairy legend of the student's choice.

Week Twelve
Religious Tales and Legends: Conservative or Subversive?
An exploration of subversive elements in religious tales, including didactic, humorous and irreverent religious tales. Why is this genre embraced by women storytellers? Case study of `The Woman Who Went To Hell'.

Required Reading:
· O'Sullivan, `Saints and Sinners' Folktales #20-25
· A Case Study: `The Woman Who Went To Hell'
  - Five versions of `The Woman Who Went To Hell’,* told by Peig Sayers, Tadhg Ó Guithín, Máire Ruiséal, Bab Feiritéar, and Pat Minahan. [instructor's handout on Res]
· Student presentation on Bab Feiritéar's religious tales

**Week Thirteen**  
No Class - PATRIOTS DAY

**Week Fourteen**  
The Irish Travellers: Folklore of Marginalized Groups

Travellers’ folklore and folklore about travellers: `us' and `them'. The marginalization of a group and the group's response. Compensatory functions of storytelling; folklore as affirmation of identity and survival.

**Background and Critical Reading:**
- Bairbre Ó Floinn, `Storytelling Traditions of the Irish Travellers,'* Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing vol. iv, 1263-1270. [article on Res]

**Primary Texts:**
- Lady Augusta Gregory, `The Wandering Tribe,'* Poets and Dreamers (1903) [chapter on Res]
- `Why the Tinker Keeps Travelling': Four versions of an etiological legend* [instructor's handout]
- `Jack the Highway Robber,'* To Shorten the Road, 53-61. [book on Res]

· Student Presentations  
The lives and storytelling/singing repertoires of Irish travellers

· Video Viewing: Alen MacWeeney's award-winning documentary *Travellers.*

**Week Fifteen (Céilí)**  
Subversive Nonsense: The Folklore of the Playground

Why are children's games and rhymes full of sex, violence and candy? The Fourth Function of Folklore: bawdy and irreverent rhymes, jokes & tales of children — and adults. Wrapping it all up: So what is folklore all about?

**Critical Reading:**
- Donna Lancelo, `Rudeness and Defining the Line between Child and Adult', At Play in Belfast: Children's Folklore and Identities (2003), 48-83. [Chapter on Res; BB]

**Primary Material:**
- Maggie Kerr Peirce, `Rude Rhymes', Keep the Kettle Boiling (1983), 51-60. [Book on Res; BB]
- Iona & Peter Opie, `Parody and Impropriety', The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren (1987), 87-97. [Book on Res; BB]
Special Presentation:

· Céili: Folklore in action - Tell a tale, crack a joke, sing a song, bring your tin whistle, or put on your tap-dancing shoes....
Required Texts
Folktales of Ireland, Seán O’Sullivan (1966) **** T; Res
International Folkloristics: Classic contributions by the founders of folklore, ed. A. Dundes (Lanham, Maryland, 1999) *** Res
The Burning of Bridget Cleary: A True Story, Angela Bourke (2000) **** T; Res

Recommended
Storytelling in Irish Tradition, Seán Ó Súilleabháin (1973; out of print) *** Res
Irish Folktales, ed. Henry Glassie (1985) ** Res
The Study of Folklore, Alan Dundes (1965) ** Res

Recommended for special assignments (and for pure enjoyment!)
The Tailor and Ansty, Eric Cross (1942) * Res
My Man Jack: Bawdy Tales from Irish Folklore, ed. M. J. Murphy (1989; out of print) * Res
To Shorten the Road, ed. Ben Kroup (1978; out of print) * Res
There was a King in Ireland, ed. Myles Dillon (1971)* Res

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1 T = Tisch Library (regular circulation); Res = Tisch Course Reserves.