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# VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY

## COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES

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**CENTER FOR IRISH STUDIES**



IRISH STUDIES  
COURSE  
DESCRIPTIONS  
SPRING 2026



**CENTER FOR IRISH STUDIES**



### **Minor in Irish Studies**

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Villanova University hosts the Center for Irish Studies. The minor in Irish Studies is open to students from all colleges, and our interdisciplinary program features courses from seven departments. Irish Studies faculty research and teach through a range of disciplines. The Center facilitates courses in anthropology, art history, economics, history, language studies, literature, philosophy, political science, studio art and theatre.

Fifteen credits are required to complete the minor, of which six credits are core requirements: a 3-credit literature survey in English and a 3-credit survey in History. Students may structure and focus five of the many Irish Studies electives into a unified program of study that works with the student's overall goals. The Irish language (Gaelic) two-course sequence can fulfill the College of Arts and Sciences language requirement. Study-abroad courses taken in Ireland may be used for the minor.

### **Major in Irish Studies**

Irish Studies offers a major as a specialization in the Department of Global Interdisciplinary Studies (GIS). The 31-credit major in Irish Studies provides an interdisciplinary and comparative approach to deepen students' understanding of the history, culture, religion, politics, literature, languages, and society of Ireland and produce an in-depth research thesis. Students may sign up for the GIS major and choose their Irish Studies (GIST) specialization through the Department of Global Interdisciplinary Studies in 36 Garey Hall. The GIS Chair and the Director of Irish Studies will work closely with students to develop individual interests, abilities, and career goals while fulfilling their major.

**All courses listed here are 3.0 credit unless otherwise noted.**

## Spring 2026 Course Descriptions

### **ENG 1975: Women in Irish Literature & Film**

**TR 4:00 – 5:15pm**

**Dr. Rena Potok**

This course will explore the particular experience of being an Irish woman in political, domestic, religious, and social spheres by taking a deep dive into works of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>-century Irish literature and film. Our sustained examination of these texts will unpack the many roles that women occupy (and resist) in Irish literature and film: symbol of Ireland; queens, hags, and fairies; incarcerated bodies; bearers of trauma and memory; rebels, migrants, Travelers, and more. The course prioritizes teaching students to become more perceptive readers of literature and to hone critical thinking and writing skills, by crafting a variety of analytical essays and informal reflections.

Our readings will include literary works generated from the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland – the two political and geographic spaces that constitute the island of Ireland. Materials will include short stories, poems, and plays by Eavan Boland, Rosaleen McDonagh, Claire Keegan, Éilís Ní Dhuibhne, and Melatu Uche Okorie (among others); and films such as *Float Like a Butterfly*, *The Magdalene Sisters*, *Silent Grace*, and *Wildfire*. These works of literature and film will guide us in a discovery of key topics in the history, memory, and lived experience of Irish women: mythic female figures and modern fairy tales; trauma and memory under colonial and religious authority; incarceration and resistance; family and friendship; migration, exile, and return; Traveler culture; and stories of contemporary Ireland. Woven through these stories are their historic and cultural contexts: British colonialism, the Great Irish Famine, the Troubles, post-conflict Ireland and Northern Ireland, and the Celtic Tiger boom and bust.

In the course of our reading, viewing, discussion, and writing, we will look closely at the relationship between nationalism, feminism, gender, and Irish culture. And we will consider how these works might create new intersections between the fields of Irish studies and gender studies. Attributes: Irish Studies, Gender & Women's Studies (GWS)

### **GIS 5011-002: Conflict and Comedy**

**TR 1:00 – 2:15pm**

**Dr. Cera Murtagh and Dr. Jonathan O'Neill**

Scholars have written about comedy as a device that can be used to explore taboo subjects from a distance. Some literary scholars have described the ability to laugh as an act that can break down barriers. Irish author, Brendan Behan, writes that authors can introduce subversive material while an audience is laughing. This course will explore the use of comedic responses to conflict situations, most notably in Ireland/Northern Ireland, but also in other comparable case studies. Taking an intersectional lens, the course will consider the use of comedy amidst overlapping constructions of ethnicity, race, nationalism, gender and class, among others, in conflict societies. What does it mean to produce comedy in response to topics that were considered taboo, and to what extent can it fuel, or transform, violent conflict? Through comedy, the course

seeks to equip students with a deeper understanding of conflict, its causes and potential solutions.

Attributes: Irish Studies, PSC, GIS, Peace & Justice, (TBD: Diversity)

### **HIS 2612: Ireland Since 1800**

**TR 4:00 – 5:15pm**

**Dr. Craig Bailey**

This course provides an introduction to Irish history. The course begins with an overview of Early Modern Ireland to establish the background and context necessary to understand and evaluate later developments. The major issues and events covered include the formation of ethnic and religious identities and the conflicts between developing groups in the 16th and 17th centuries, and the political conditions in the 18th century that led to the Act of Union.

The second section of the course, Pre-famine Ireland through the Great Famine, examines the conditions of everyday life in the early 19th century and the structures and institutions that shaped them. We will consider the lives of the poor, the rise of rural or "agrarian" violence, the expansion and limits of the state in Irish society, Catholic struggles for equality and the development of a national system of education. This history of early-19th century Ireland will provide crucial context that will help us evaluate and understand The Great Famine and its major impact upon Irish society.

The final section of the course covers the post-famine period to the early twentieth century. We will follow the tortuous path of Irish nationalism as it developed over this period and consider how its collision with unionism shaped the conflicts of the early twentieth century that eventually resulted in the partition of Ireland.

Attributes: Irish Studies

### **IS 1112: Irish Language II**

**Lec: TR 08:30-09:45am**

**Drill: M 08:30-09:20am OR 09:35-10:25am**

**Dr. Jonathan O'Neill, Prof. Mike Malloy**

-OR-

### **IS 1112: Irish Language II**

**Lec: TR 02:30-03:45pm**

**Drill: M 10:30-11:40am**

**Dr. Jonathan O'Neill, Prof. Mike Malloy**

Continuing groundwork in Irish (Gaelic), including oral proficiency, aural comprehension, and reading knowledge; for students with no prior knowledge of Irish. Supplementary language laboratory work and oral drills.

Attributes: Irish Studies

**THE 3030: Modern Irish Drama****TR 1:00 – 2:15pm****Dr. Bess Rowen**

The dawn of modernism occurred at a key moment in Ireland's history. It is neither accident nor secret that Ireland's fight for independence from England coincided with an explosion of nationalist modernist writing, particularly in the theatre. This course will trace the key plays from the turn of the 20th century through the century's conclusion, paying particular attention to those works that deal with the fight for Irish independence. This seminar will involve both literary and performance analysis and will provide opportunities for either a final paper or a final performance. No previous performance experience required.

We will be discussing the plays that helped create a dynamic tradition in Irish theatre and stagecraft—they range in time-period, style, and theme, but all represent aspects of Irish culture and people in circumstances ranging from the mundane to extreme. As we read across Irish theatre history, we will chart the changing concepts of Ireland as a country, Irish people as a group, and Irish representation as a concept. These plays are not merely literature, so we will also be considering both embodied responses and staging possibilities. Tracking these plays through political and social history alongside theatre history brings up rich questions about what occurs in and between silence and storytelling, language and stagecraft, violence and sensory deprivation, burdened history and fresh beginnings, linguistic minimalism and lyrical wonder.

Attributes: Irish Studies, English