



SYLLABUS

Ireland Onscreen
Instructor: Michael Aronson
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Course hashtag: #irelandonscreen17
Contact Hrs: 45
Language of Instruction: English
Dublin, Ireland

Course Description:

For a small nation island Ireland has an impressive history of filmmaking and film has provided a crucial national storytelling form for Ireland and its people. The Irish have also been a dedicated audience for movies since James Joyce opened its first movie-only theater in Dublin in 1909, and Irish movie attendance has consistently ranked amongst the highest per capita in Europe.

However, over the past twenty years, and more recently during the Celtic Tiger period of rapid economic development, Irish cinema has changed dramatically, both as an industry and an art form. The Irish film sector now accommodates a wide variety of filmmaking, from experimental animation shorts to larger-budget mainstream productions with global distribution. As Ireland has transformed from an agrarian, post-colonial nation to a (post)modern, first-world state, its changing self-image has been reflected in a cinematic output that is increasingly diverse, generically, thematically and stylistically.

This course will offer an introduction to this contemporary period of Irish film history, sometimes known as the “Second Wave, focusing particularly on its most recent decade. The “Second Wave,” is historically marked by the re-forming of the Irish Film Board in 1993, and was spurred on by a number of international successes, including Alan Parker’s Dublin musical *The Commitments*, along with a reorganization of the Irish tax laws. The course will examine a range of recent films to understand the current place of Irish film in concepts of Irish culture and identity, while being attentive to both industrial and governmental structures that help determine what is made and seen.

Learning Objectives:

By end of the term, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate a strong overall knowledge of Irish national cinema
- Articulate specific knowledge of how the Irish film industry and Irish Film Board operate and approach indigenous film production
- Define key thematic and formal issues of contemporary Irish cinema
- Identify markers of cultural identity in Irish films, and explain how that identity has been reflected in and driven by Ireland’s national cinema.

Instructional methodology:

The course will be taught using a variety of pedagogical methodologies including instructor lectures, discussion both in-class and online, student presentations, and group screenings.

Course grades are as follows: A=93-99; A-=90-92; B+=88-89; B=83-87; B-=80-82; C+=78-79; C=73-77; C-=70-72; D+=68-69; D=63-67; D-=60-62; F=59 and below.

Grades will be based on a combination of written assignments, class attendance and participation in both in-class and online environments. The course students and instructors will utilize a course CANVAS site to discuss class materials, screenings and assignments.

Course work:

- 25% of the grade will be awarded for your participation in curating an Irish Short(s) Film Festival. The group assignment will include programming the festival, writing blurbs for the films, “presenting” the festival in class, and a short ‘festival introduction’ explaining your curating process and choices. **Due Week 5**
- 25% of the grade will be awarded Irish Film Scavenger Hunt. **Due week after course is completed.**
- 25% Interview a local about Irish cinema. **Due week after course is completed.**
- 15% of the grade will be awarded for the student’s critical viewing journal/blog that will include writing about all films viewed in class, at the film festival, and commercial screenings taken in by the students during their program stay.
- 10% will be awarded for student course attendance and participation in class and excursions.

Irish Short Film Festival: Due Week 5 (25%): Groups of three or four students will work together to program a thematic Irish Short(s) Film Festival.

Each team will be able to select a specific theme from the following list or come up with its own group theme (subject to approval). Suggested festival themes: Identity, History, Emigration/Immigration, Hybrid Genres, Appropriation/ Remix, Irish/Gaelic, Animation, Spirit/Religion. Your festival can be a single form (narrative, experimental, documentary) or a blend of forms.

Your festival should include six-eight Irish short films that relate to your chosen theme. The films can be drawn from any available source but the largest online collection is at the Irish Film Board website. Each student on the team should write 1-2 paragraph blurbs to accompany and contextualize two of the six films. See below for instructions on “How to Write a Film Blurb.” Each team member should also submit a short essay of 2-3 pages explaining the choice of a theme, the selection process, films that you considered but rejected (and why), the sequencing of the films, and other reflections on the programming process.

In Week Five every team will have 20 minutes to present their festival, including showing one of the six films. The preferred format for the presentation is a PowerPoint or Prezi with a slide and image for each of your six films that you briefly describe, including one or more with links to the film that you will show in class. All team members should contribute to the presentation.

The written presentation of your festival, with links to the films and your blurbs, plus your individual essays, should be submitted when your group presents Week 5.

Scavenger Hunt (25%): PDF with links is **due August 8th**, but you need to obviously do these while we're here.

In groups of 3-4 people you will go to various film-related places in Dublin and the surrounding area on your own. I will give you a list of places to find, and you **must find AT LEAST 10** of them. Once you find them you must take a picture/video of your group as proof, and then make a social media post (Instagram/Facebook preferably) with the picture and a small bit of writing in the post about the location's relevance to Irish national cinema. You must tag all members in the group, as well as: @uoregon, @uocinema, and @michaelaronson. All posts **MUST** also include the hashtag #irelandonscreen17. I'd also like you to post links to these on the UO Cinema Studies Facebook page. By **August 7th**, you **MUST** submit a **PDF** file with links to all the posts, including the team members' names at the top of the page.

*****Written option:** If you don't do social media or do smart phones, you will go to these locations, take a photo as proof, and then write **50-100 words** about the sites' relevance to Irish cinema. I want you to, in a word processing software, list the group members' names at the top of the page, place the photo on the page, and write your 50-100 words. You will do this for **EACH** location in one document. You will then hand this in as a **PDF file**. You may **ALSO** write each location as a blogpost, if you choose to have a blog and utilize it.

Interview a Native about Irish Cinema (25%): Due August 8th

While in Ireland I want you to engage with and talk to the locals. What better way to learn about what Irish national cinema means to Irish cultural identity than to interview a local about Irish cinema?

For this project, you must get out of your comfort zone and interview someone from Ireland about their perceptions of their national cinema; **you cannot interview your host family or faculty/staff of the program!!!** You need to meet someone and strike up a conversation. You must ask them **7-10 OPEN ENDED questions** (i.e. "Can you explain how you think the rest of the world perceives Ireland based upon its films?" NOT "Do you think Irish film impacts how the world perceives the Irish?" Or, "Can you explain how the Irish tradition of storytelling has impacted Irish film?" NOT "Has the Irish tradition of storytelling impacted Irish film?").

You want to conduct this interview after you've had a few weeks here and made some **NEW** friends, as well as learned about Irish culture and film.

You have three options for this:

- 1) Video: If your interviewee will allow it, videotape the interview and produce a short, 3-5 minute edit. It can be very simple (text/titles that have the questions), or more complex (b-roll footage, etc.). You can shoot this on a smartphone, point and shoot camera, or a camera made available through the program. This will require **SOME** basic editing skills. I will ask that you post it to YouTube or Vimeo and share the link

with me. This should be **3-5 minutes**.

- 2) Podcast: If your interviewee will allow it, record the audio of the interview and edit into a “podcast” type project. You will obviously have to record yourself as well. Try to make this sound as clean as possible, but use any means you have to make it sound good (use Creative Commons licensed Irish music OR record some LIVE Irish musicians, record clips from films mentioned in the interview, etc.). I will ask that you post it to YouTube or Soundcloud and share the link with me. This should be **3-5 minutes**.
- 3) Article: Use the interview and write a short article based upon it. This should include quotes and paraphrasing from the interview, as well as some research. You want to find a theme or thread that glues the piece together. Flex your writing skills here. This CANNOT just be a transcript of the answers; I want a story. This should be **3-5 pages** and grammatically correct. Please email to me as a **PDF file**: aronson@uoregon.edu

Viewing Journal: Due Week 4 (15%), but I will potentially ask to see your progress throughout the program.

As a cinephile I watch films -- usually several each week -- and these films range widely in period, country, genre, etc. I keep a small "Moleskine" book, and try to spend at least 10 minutes taking a couple of pages of notes during/after each film. Rather than summarize plot or character, my notes tend to record moments and details, often “small striking moments,” and any ideas that they may spark. When I revisit these cryptic notes a few weeks, months or years later, I'm always startled by how much of importance and interest I forget about a film. More than anything, these notes serve to refresh my memory of the film and the ideas generated by my encounter with it.

For every film that you watch during our program please create a journal entry. This can be done in whatever form that you find easiest, handwritten in an actual journal, typed into a doc, or put up online in a personal blog. For each film provide the following basic information:

Title

Year

Genre/Form

Director (along with any other credits important to your interaction with the film)

Where/When you saw the film

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1: A Short History of Ireland and its Cinema

Screening: *Blazing the Trail: The O'Kalems in Ireland* (2011)
Irish Cinema Ourselves Alone (1996)
The Quiet Man (1952)

Reading: Bierman, "What The Quiet Man Said"
Rocket, "The National in the International"
Rockett, Gibbins, Hill *Cinema & Ireland*, pages 95-114

Week 2: From First to Second Wave: The Costs of an Irish Film Industry

Screening: *The Crying Game* (1992)
Poitin (1977)
I Went Down (1997)

Reading: O'Connell "Irish Film Board," in *New Irish Storytellers*
McGinn "Two Short Decades: A Brief History of Short Film in Ireland"

Week 3: Export/Import(ant): The Global Market for Irish Films and Subjects

Screening: *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* (2006)
Michael Collins (1996)

Reading: Loach, "Our Times of Trouble" in *Bright Lights Film Journal*
Foster, "The Red and The Green," in *The Dublin Review*

Week 4: Center & Periphery: The Celtic Tiger and its aftermath

Screening: *What Richard Did* (2012)
Breakfast on Pluto (2005)

Reading: Ging, "Cinema Under Celtic Tiger"

Week 5: A Catchy Tune: Selling Irish Film/Music

Monday & Thursday will be reserved for group Short Film Festival presentations.

Screening: *Good Vibrations* (2013)
The Commitments (1992)
Once (2007)

Reading: Marita, "Sounding Different Notes"
Smyth, "Bringing It All Back Home? The Dynamics of Local Music Making in the Commitments"

Useful Reference Books

R. Barton *Irish National Cinema* (Routledge 2004)

Martin McLoone, *Irish Film: The Emergence of a Contemporary Cinema* (Macmillan 2000)

Diog O'Connell *New Irish Storytellers* (University of Chicago Press 2010)