



CW/LT 330 – WRITING THE SELF IN THE CITY

IES Abroad Dublin

DESCRIPTION:

How do we inhabit and engage with place? How do we live in and make sense of the contemporary city? What is the relationship between navigating the external world and understanding our interior lives? How can we use these questions to write about ourselves and our place in the world? Focusing on the use of the city in works of Irish fiction, non-fiction and poetry, students taking Writing the Self in the City will broaden their understanding of Dublin and Irish Literature and work on their creative practice through exploration of the city, relevant readings, in-depth discussions, and stimulating coursework. By reading works from a diverse range of perspectives, genres, and literary styles, students will come to consider the city as a profound and layered subject matter to be powerfully utilised in their own writing. By focusing on a particular city-related theme per week and by taking regular trips to thematically relevant areas of Dublin city, students will learn to value literature and creative writing as a means of understanding the contemporary world and their unique place in it.

CREDITS: 3 credits

CONTACT HOURS: 45 hours

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

PREREQUISITES: Students will ideally have some experience of participating in a creative writing workshop.

ADDITIONAL COST: None

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

While the instructor will present the key events/interpretations, the course is designed to encourage as much student participation as possible through seminar-style and workshop discussion.

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- Short Written Assignments – 50% (5 x 10% each)
- Portfolio Assignment 1 – 12.5%
- Portfolio Assignment 2 – 12.5%
- Portfolio Assignment 3 – 15%
- Class Contribution and Participation in Discussions – 10%

Short written assignments

Students will complete five written assignments throughout the semester, at 900 words each. These assignments are worth 10% each, for a combined total of 50%. The themes for the written assignments are as follows:

- **Short Assignment 1: First Impressions of the New City**
Students will be tasked with writing a reflective piece of creative nonfiction that focuses on the aesthetics and atmospheres of Dublin city centre. In addition to conveying their initial sense of the city, they will also be expected to show in their work an ability to reflect on the early stages of adapting to a new environment and how it compares to home.
Assignment check-in with each student: Monday of week two. **Assignment deadline:** Friday of week two.

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- **Short Assignment 2: Navigating the Self While Navigating the City**

Students will be tasked with writing a piece that blends interior experience with impressions of their time navigating the city. Their work will be expected to focus on the interactions that take place between the fluid interior worlds of the mind and the exterior world of the city they are becoming acquainted with.

Assignment check-in with each student: Monday of week three. **Assignment deadline:** Friday of week three.

- **Short Assignment 3: The Music of the City**

Students will be tasked with writing a piece that focuses on the city's soundscapes and the stories those sounds reveal. Students will be expected to visit different parts of the city and to keep an account of what sounds they encounter and to give their own impressions of what those sounds tell them about Dublin.

Assignment check-in with each student: Monday of week five. **Assignment deadline:** Friday of week five.

- **Short Assignment 4: The City at Night**

Students will be tasked with writing a piece that brings to life their experience of Dublin at night. The writing in these pieces will be expected to compare Dublin in daylight with Dublin after nightfall, with particular focus on the city's aesthetics and atmospheres.

Assignment check-in with each student: Monday of week seven. **Assignment deadline:** Friday of week seven.

- **Short Assignment 5: The American in the Irish City**

Students will be tasked with reflecting on the cultural experience of living in a city in a different country to their own. These pieces will necessitate personal writing that reflects on their encounters with non-Americans in Dublin, cultural differences, and what they have learned about home from their time spent living in a new city.

Assignment check-in with each student: Monday of week ten. **Assignment deadline:** Friday of week ten.

Portfolio assignments

Students will also complete three portfolio assignments throughout the semester. The first two assignments are worth 12.5% of the overall grade and should be 1,500 words. The final portfolio assignment is worth 15% of the overall grade and should be at least 2,000 words. The topics for the portfolio assignments are as follows:

- **Assignment 1: Sketching the New City with Words**

Students will be tasked with writing a personal essay in which they will be expected to display their ability to use language to capture their early experiences of living in and navigating their new city. Students will be assigned a particular location in Dublin city to use as a geographical reference point for their assignment.

Assignment check-in with each student: Monday of week four. **Assignment deadline:** Friday of week four.

- **Assignment 2: Recognising the Old in the New**

Students will be tasked with putting contemporary Dublin into a larger perspective by writing through the lens of the city's recent and distant history. Aided by thematically relevant in-class readings, students will be assigned to visit redeveloped areas of the city to research and write about the relationship between the city's past and its present-day form.

Assignment check-in with each student: Monday of week nine. **Assignment deadline:** Friday of week nine.

- **Assignment 3: The City Outside and the City Within**

Students will be tasked with writing a reflective piece in which they explore the personal journeys they have embarked on while living and studying in Dublin city. In this piece, students will be expected to reflect on their overall perceptions of living in Dublin, any personal changes they may have identified during the semester, and how they believe they will remember Dublin, both in the near and distant future.

Assignment check-in with each student: Monday of week eleven. **Assignment deadline:** Friday of week twelve.

Assessment of papers and presentations will be based upon:

- **Structure:** presents a coherent argument that addresses the question from start to finish; structure is clear and organised; writing is clear and error-free
- **Content:** offers evidence of relevant reading and research; demonstrates a capacity to apply learning to situations
- **Evidence of Critical Thought:** demonstrates a capacity to critically evaluate arguments and theories; can offer a well-presented counter-argument
- **Creativity:** makes an original contribution to the topic; presents material in an interesting or unique way that is particularly useful to the reader

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Identify the diverse ways a range of Irish authors have written all aspects of the city by reading and analysing works of non-fiction, fiction, and poetry
- Compare and contrast historical and contemporary perspectives to construct a comprehensive narrative of the city
- Apply thematic and stylistic choices in their own written work that reflect a deeper understanding of the role place plays in how we perceive ourselves and one another
- Deconstruct, reflect upon, and produce creative work from their perceptions of the city and their unique place in it

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Class attendance is mandatory. The IES Abroad Dublin Centre Attendance Policy will apply in all instances.

CONTENT:

Week	Content	Readings & Assignments
Week 1	• <i>The City as a Literary Device</i> In this class, we will consider the city not just as a geographical location in our work, but as a fluid and significant force of literary life and character. Aided by readings that focus specifically on the significant and compelling role cities can play in literature, discussions will focus on the early perceptions the students have of the city of Dublin and how we might give verbal shape to those perceptions in our writing.	• Kevin Barry, <i>Granta 135: New Irish Writing</i>, pg. 7-16 (9 pages). • Jon McGregor, <i>Winter Papers #1</i>, pg. 63-67 (4 pages) • Kerrie O'Brien, <i>Illuminations</i>, pg. 4-20 (26 pages).

Week	Content	Readings & Assignments
Week 2	<i>How We See and Write the New City</i> This class will focus on how we perceive, make sense of and articulate the contemporary city. By reading excerpts from thematically relevant novels, students will become acquainted with the diverse ways in which young Irish authors have used Dublin as a focal point in their fictions and, in doing so, develop ways of approaching the writing of the modern city in their own work.	- Louise Nealon, <i>Snowflake</i>, pg. 47-55 (8 pages). - Sally Rooney, <i>Normal People</i>, pg. 50-60 (10 pages). - Megan Nolan, <i>Acts of Desperation</i>, pg. 7-16 (9 pages). Short assignment #1 due
Week 3	<i>Psychogeography and the City</i> This class will reflect on the interior psychological experiences navigating a city can inspire. With discussions focusing on theories of psychogeography and thematically relevant readings, students will foster a deeper understanding of how to write about the psychology of inhabiting and moving through the space of the new city.	- Karl Whitney, <i>Hidden City: Adventures and Explorations in Dublin</i>, pg. 142-173 (31 pages). - Kevin Barry, <i>Winter Papers #1</i>, pg.76-81 (5 pages). - Colin Ellard, <i>Places of the Heart – The Psychogeography of Every Day Life</i>, pg.11-29 (18 pages). Short assignment #2 due
Week 4	<i>The City Then and the City Now</i> This class will use historical perspectives to put contemporary Dublin into new and nuanced contexts. In addition to engaging with thematically relevant readings, students will embark on a field trip to historically relevant areas of the city and discuss the many ways in which the city's distant and recent history can contribute to their writing.	- John Banville, <i>Time Pieces: A Dublin Memoir</i>, pg. 11-36 (25 pages) - Lisa Marie Griffith, <i>Stones of Dublin</i>, pg. 5-20 (15 pages) - Ferdia Mac Anna, <i>The Irish Review #10</i>, pg.14-30 (16 pages). Portfolio assignment #1 due

Week	Content	Readings & Assignments
Week 5	<i>Soundscapes of the Contemporary City</i> This class will consist of reflecting on the sensory experience of the city, with particular attention paid to the sounds of the city and what they reveal about it. Aided by readings from sensory-focused texts, discussions will centre on sound – both natural and man-made – and the ways they can be interpreted and accommodated in creative writing.	- James Joyce, <i>Ulysses</i>, pg. 58-71 (13 pages). - June Caldwell, <i>Room Little Darker</i>, pg. 43-57 (14 pages). - Ronan Sheehan, <i>Dublin: The Heart of the City</i>, pg. 141-150 (9 pages). Short assignment #3 due
Week 6	<i>The Hidden City</i> This class will focus on the areas of a city that are not always immediately visible. In addition to engaging with thematically relevant texts, students will take a field trip to lesser-known areas of Dublin city and learn the value of looking for new stories in hidden places.	- Karl Whitney, <i>Hidden City: Adventures and Explorations in Dublin</i>, pg. 116-141 (25 pages). - Rob Doyle, <i>This is the Ritual</i>, pg. 18-31 (13 pages). - Nuala O'Connor, <i>Dublin: Written in Our Hearts</i>, pg. 215-217 (2 pages).
Week 7	<i>The Hauntology of the City</i> This class will reflect on the past's persistence in the present and the role it plays in how we inhabit and experience the city. By acknowledging aspects of the city where the line between the past and present is sometimes blurred, students will discover that a more nuanced comprehension of the city's lesser-considered features can inspire their writing in new and compelling ways.	- Eavan Boland, <i>A Poet's Dublin</i>, pg. 12-24 (12 pages). - Mark Fisher, <i>Ghosts of My Life</i>, pg. 6-25 (19 pages). - Paula Meehan, <i>Dharmakaya</i>, pg. 25-31 (6 pages). Short assignment #4 due
Week 8	<i>The People of the City</i> This class will consist of discussing the contemporary city's demographics and how it shapes our view of the city. Discussions will centre on the interactions students have had with permanent residents of Dublin, what those interactions have taught them about the city, and how they might work these learnings into their writing.	- Roddy Doyle, <i>The Barrytown Trilogy</i>, pg. 141-152, 347- 356 (20 pages). - Dermot Bolger, <i>Other People's Lives</i>, pg. 14-20 (6 pages). - Tadhg Coakley, <i>The First Sunday in September</i>, pg. 87-105 (18 pages).

Week	Content	Readings & Assignments
Week 9	<i>The Nocturnal City</i> This class will consider the experiential differences between navigating a city during the day and navigating it at night. By engaging with readings that specifically focus on experiencing a city after nightfall, students will learn how to consider and write with nuance about the transformation a city undergoes at night.	- Nick Dunn, <i>Dark Matters – A Manifesto for the Nocturnal City</i>, pg.7-17 (10 pages). - Brian J. Showers, <i>The Bleeding Horse and Other Ghost Stories</i>, pg.10-25 (15 pages). - Roisin Kiberd, <i>The Disconnect</i>, pg.28-44 (16 pages). Portfolio assignment #2 due
Week 10	<i>Memories of the City</i> This class will focus on the role memories play in how we experience the present and how those same memories influence how we navigate the city. In addition to engaging with thematically relevant readings, students will be requested to consider the role their memory plays in how they perceive and write in detail about the city.	- Christine Dwyer Hickey, <i>The House on Parkgate Street and Other Dublin Stories</i>, pg. 5-14 (9 pages). - Karl Geary, <i>Montpellier Parade</i>, pg. 1-12 (12 pages). - Christy Brown, <i>Collected Poems</i>, pg.60, 131 (2 pages). Short assignment #5 due
Week 11	<i>The U.S. City Vs The Irish City</i> This class will encourage students to reflect on the differences and similarities with home that they have encountered during their time in Dublin. Students will learn to extract and weave into their written work meanings from the differences and similarities they have identified during time in Dublin.	- J.P. Donleavy, <i>The Ginger Man</i>, pg. 7-17 (10 pages). - Peter Sirr, <i>Intimate City: Dublin Essays</i>, pg. 24-31, 42-47 (12 pages). - Deirdre Madden, <i>Dublin: Written in Our Hearts</i>, pg. 27-39 (12 pages).
Week 12	<i>The City Within</i> This concluding class will consist of discussions that centre on new perspectives on how we inhabit space and what they tell us about ourselves. Students will be given the opportunity to give voice to their experience of living in Dublin and how writing at length about it over the semester has contributed to these perspectives and their growth as writers.	- Emilie Pine, <i>Ruth and Pen</i>, pg.74-83 (9 pages). - Christopher Nolan, <i>Dam-Burst of Dreams</i>, pg. 42-43 (2 pages). - Mark O'Connell, <i>A Thread of Violence</i>, pg. 4-12 (8 pages). Portfolio assignment #3 due

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Banville, John. *Time Pieces: A Dublin Memoir*. Dublin, Hachette, 2016.
- Boland, Eavan. *A Poet's Dublin*. New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 2016.
- Bolger, Dermot. *Other People's Lives*. Dublin, New Island Books, 2022.
- Brown, Christy. *Collected Poems*. Exeter, David & Charles, 1982.
- Caldwell, June. *Room Little Darker*. New York, Apollo, 2018.
- Coakley, Tadhg. *The First Sunday in September*. Cork, Mercier Press, 2018.
- Donleavy, J.P. *The Ginger Man*. London, Abacus, 1997.
- Doyle, Rob. *This is the Ritual*. London, Bloomsbury, 2017.
- Doyle, Roddy. *The Barrytown Trilogy*. New York, Vintage, 2013.
- Dunn, Nick. *Dark Matters: A Manifesto for the Nocturnal City*. London, Zer0 Books, 2016.
- Dwyer Hickey, Christine. *The House on Parkgate Street: & Other Dublin Stories*. Dublin, New Island Books, 2013.
- Fisher, Mark. *Ghosts of My Life*. London, Zer0 Books, 2014.
- Geary, Karl. *Montpellier Parade*. New York, Catapult, 2017.
- Joyce, James. *Ulysses*. New York, Vintage, 2022.
- Kiberd, Roisin. *The Disconnect*. London, Serpent's Tail, 2021.
- Marie Griffith, Lisa. *Stones of Dublin*. Cork, The Collins Press, 2014.
- Meade, Declan, editor. *Dublin: Written in Our Hearts*. Dublin, Stinging Fly Press, 2025.
- Meehan, Paula. *Dharmakaya*. North Carolina, Wake Forest University Press, 2002.
- Nealon, Louise. *Snowflake*. London, Bonnier Books, 2021.
- Nolan, Christopher. *Dam-Burst of Dreams*. Sussex, Littlehampton Book Services Ltd, 1981.
- Nolan, Megan. *Acts of Desperation*. London, Jonathan Cape, 2021.
- O'Connell, Mark. *A Thread of Violence*. London, Granta, 2023.
- Pine, Emilie. *Ruth & Pen*. London, Hamish Hamilton, 2022.
- Rausing, Sigrid, editor. *Granta 135: New Irish Writing*. London, Granta, 2016.
- Rooney, Sally. *Normal People*. London, Faber and Faber, 2019.
- Sheena, Ronan. *Dublin: The Heart of the City*. Dublin, The Lilliput Press, 2016.
- Showers, Brian J. *The Bleeding Horse and Other Ghost Stories*. Cork, Mercier Press, 2008.
- Sirr, Peter. *Intimate City: Dublin Essays*. New York, Gallery Books, 2021.
- Whitney, Karl. *Hidden City: Adventures and Explorations in Dublin*. London, Penguin, 2015.