

Irish Studies

Founded by Irish Diocesan priests in the early part of the 20th century, in Chatham, New Brunswick, St. Thomas University has had a long standing spiritual, intellectual and emotional connection with a vital, unique and living Irish cultural tradition. Settled by pre-Famine Irish, the province of New Brunswick boasts one of the oldest indigenous Irish populations in North America. Furthermore, only the province of Quebec accepted more Irish Famine refugees during the Great Hunger of the 1840's, when over 30 000 immigrants passed through the ports of Saint John, Saint Andrews and the Miramichi. Today, St. Thomas University both acknowledges and honours the sacrifice and contribution of these early Irish migrants through many of its university programs; not least among these are: Catholic Studies, Human Rights, Religious Studies, Social Work, Education, English, Criminology, History, Philosophy and Political Science. Most of these programs highlight the social justice concerns of the Catholic Church and the legacy of Irish priests, nuns and laypeople who historically made up the faculty, administration, student body, and alumni of St. Thomas. The Irish Studies program seeks to complement the concerns of these programs while, at the same time, it acknowledges the voices, past and present, of the Irish who first sought to bring this education to their own displaced people as well as to the citizens of the wider world.

The Irish Studies program is an interdisciplinary liberal arts program. It is designed to provide students with the opportunity to explore the heritage, culture, history, religion, politics, literature, fine art, and film of both the people of Ireland, and the communities of its Diaspora.

IRSH-2003. Art of the Golden Age: the Book of Kells (FNAR)

In this course students will study the artistic and cultural legacy of the Irish illuminated manuscript the Book of Kells. A Fine Art component of the course includes studio instruction in Celtic design, drawing, and illumination.

IRSH-2006. Introduction to Irish Studies

A general introduction to Irish society and culture. This course will provide an overview of the unique characteristics of the island and its people. Students will have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with aspects of Ireland's land, cultural development, economy, politics, and literature.

IRSH-2113. Visualizing Irish Culture Through the Arts

This course will examine the broad influence of the arts on Ireland through the history of Irish poetry, painting, drama, music, architecture, religion, fiction, and film. Prerequisite: IRSH 2006 or permission of the instructor.

IRSH-2173. Introduction to the Irish Language I

Students will study the Irish Language, learning through exercises the four language learning skills: speaking, reading, writing and listening. There will an emphasis on the Irish spoken currently in Ireland today, supplemented by insights into modern Irish society and culture. Students will also learn about the linguistic composition of Ireland as a bilingual nation and how the Irish-speaking community has survived and continues to survive amidst a large dominant Irish-Anglophone majority. No previous knowledge of Irish is required.

IRSH-2183. Introduction to the Irish Language II

A continuation of IRSH 2173. This course will follow on from the first semester, building on students' knowledge of the Irish language. The course will focus on topics practical to students to practise their Irish and also if they find themselves in a real-life situation in Irish-speaking Ireland (e.g. making enquiries, interests, sport, food and drink, asking directions). The course will focus on the four skills of speaking, writing, reading and listening. Students will develop their speaking ability, as well as their ability to converse. Students will continue to learn more about Irish culture on this topic-by-topic basis throughout. Prerequisite: IRSH-2173.

IRSH-2193. Themes in the Cultural History of Ireland

This course is an introduction to specific topics in Irish Cultural History. Topics will vary from year to year and may include immigration, women in Irish society, popular culture, consumerism, the diaspora, music and the arts, etc.

IRSH-2463. Irish Literature (ENGL)

This course is a survey of the major figures in twentieth century Irish literature including W.B. Yeats, James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, and Seamus Heaney. The Irish nationalism is a central focus. The course also includes a film component and features director/auteurs such as Neil Jordan and Jim Sheridan. The impact of the Irish diaspora on the literature and film of America is also considered, with special reference to Eugene O'Neill.

IRSH-3213. Lines Of Vision: Landscape, Art, and Irish Writing

By studying the great Irish sagas, this course examines Irish Identity with reference to "physical" Ireland (the physical island and 'image' productions thereof). It will highlight specific and emblematic examples of the interdependence and cross-fertilization of Irish Culture by comparing great mythic texts with landscape, theatre, painting, and musical arts. This focus on Irish sagas, mythology, and folklore, and their relationship with location and space, landscape and place, deepens the understanding of Ireland/Irish Culture. Prerequisite: IRSH-2006 or permission of the instructor.

IRSH-3423. Modern Irish Drama (ENGL)

In this course students will study selected plays from the major Irish dramatists of the 20th century.

IRSH-3483. Irish Film (ENGL)

This course will study native Irish culture and the culture of the Irish diaspora. Students will view films of high realist auteurs as well as adaptations of novels, short stories, and plays to the big screen.

IRSH-3693 Irish Film II (ENGL)

In this course students will study native Irish culture and the culture of the diaspora through the medium of film. The course continues to explore the themes outlined in Irish Film I, but there is a more sustained concentration on films produced from the 1980s to the present.

NOTE: Not all courses listed are offered each year. Please consult with the Department Chair for more information about current and planned course offerings.