



Contemporary Irish Horror Syllabus

Let's get this out of the way: Like the last two terms, summer term 201 will be yet another experiment in pandemic pedagogics. I look forward to experimenting with new forms of (online) teaching, but I will need your help. Please keep in touch, take part in the Zoom classes, and use the forum for asynchronous coursework (study questions, book reviews – tasks specified below). Most importantly, please let me (and the other course members) know if something does not work for you or if you have different ideas about how to do things. Let's do this together!

class:

- **Tuesday, 12:15-13:45 [online]**

As Zoom is not the perfect medium for everyone (and some of you might struggle with technical issues) the seminar will combine synchronous Zoom classes and asynchronous sessions (see schedule & tasks below).

contact:

- **[office: 4.154 IG-Farben-Haus]**
- **e-mail:**
- **office hours:** Thursday, 9:00-10:30 (and on appointment) – please send me an e-mail for the Zoom link.
- **twitter:** @susannegruss (#IrishHorrorMS)

resources:

- **OLAT:**

literature:

- You need to **buy** the following primary texts & make sure that you have (streaming) access to the following films (listed in the order of discussion in class):

- | | |
|---|--|
| (1) Seamus Deane, <i>Reading in the Dark</i> (1997) | (5) David Freyne, <i>The Cured</i> (2017) |
| (2) Marina Carr, <i>By the Bog of Cats</i> (1998) | (6) Sarah Davis-Goff, <i>Last Ones Left Alive</i> (2019) |
| (3) Brian O'Malley, <i>The Lodgers</i> (2017) | (7) Deirdre Sullivan, <i>Perfectly Preventable Deaths</i> (2019) |
| (4) Patrick McCabe, <i>Winterwood</i> (2006) | |

Please make sure that you have read at least *Reading in the Dark* and *By the Bog of Cats* by the beginning of term!

- Apart from these longer primary texts, all **other texts** that are mandatory reading are available on OLAT.
- Please check the **bibliography** for further references (full bibliographical details, further reading).

course description:

In German advertising, Ireland is still represented by peaceful green hills and friendly red-haired people keen on folk music and a pint (or two) of Guinness at the local pub. But Ireland has always had a penchant for the dark – the Sidhe (the Irish fairy folk) are quite unpleasant creatures, and Irish history offers an extensive range of horrific events writers have taken up ever since the late nineteenth century. From British colonisation to the Famine, from the Northern Irish Troubles to the grim fates of women in the Catholic Magdalene Laundries, Irish history provides much food for horror literature and the gothic. This is reflected in a recent surge of gothic and horror literature and film, a trend we will explore in this class. We will read Seamus Deane's novel *Reading in the Dark* and Marina Carr's play *By the Bog of Cats* as early examples of this trend, and then turn to twenty-first-century examples to explore the worlds of Irish horror, Irish gothic, and the Irish zombie apocalypse (that this class needs a CN for violence and graphic content is obvious, I hope).



e-mail and Zoom etiquette:**- e-mail:**

Please give me some time to answer your **e-mails** (up to 3 or 4 days). I will not write e-mails after 8pm or on weekends. As I teach four different classes, it would be very helpful if the class you are taking with me appeared somewhere in the body of your e-mail.

Zoom:

The usual: Please **mute yourself** if you are not talking. If you feel uncomfortable talking into the camera (or if you have connection issues), feel free to use the **chat** to contribute to class discussions.

I obviously will not (and cannot) force anyone to turn on their **camera** when we zoom but would still kindly ask you to do so (or drop me a brief note at the beginning of term explaining why you would rather not). Yes, staring at yourself onscreen can be cringeworthy, but if we want to use Zoom to create a **seminar experience**, being able to see each other's faces and nonverbal communication just makes everything so much easier for me (and you). Imagine trying to keep a discussion going while staring into a void of black rectangles.

Most of us will zoom from our **private spaces** – this means that my kids might make an appearance at some point (sorry). Zoom bombing family members, flatmates or pets are always welcome! Added bonus: you get to eat and drink during classes (as long as you have muted yourself, see above).

Our Zoom seminar should be a **safe space** for everyone. Recording (parts of) sessions or taking (and posting) screenshots is an absolute no-go. All material shared onscreen will be made available to you on OLAT.

I am not exempt from the occasional **technical blip** – please be patient if I freeze and simply carry on with your discussion. Like the terminator, I will be back, promised.

- And, as a general rule: **Be kind (to yourself, to each other, and to me).**

course performance & requirements:

- Apart from preparing the **compulsory reading**, please stick to the tasks detailed in the course schedule below.
- I expect you to take part in class **regularly** and **actively**, both in synchronous and asynchronous sessions. As indicated below, I will use your activity in the forum to track participation. Communication is key, so talk to me if you are struggling.
- For **asynchronous sessions**, I have indicated the tasks I expect you to cover over the week in the schedule below. This should not take more time than the 90-minute course slot (plus the time you would normally take to read/prepare for class).
- Instead of an oral presentation, **each** of you is expected to write at **least two 1½–2 page book reviews**. Please write an academic review focussing not only on plot, but also on the Irish horror context of the seminar. Please hand in the book reviews on the date specified in the schedule below. I will read them and send you feedback (this might take a while). For those of you who do not need a term paper but an **assignment**, please revise and slightly extend your book reviews (2x **3 pages**) and hand them in by the end of term at the latest.

term paper:

- If you need to write a term paper for this course, please stick to the department's style sheet and attend the Zoom session on term papers.
- You can, of course, use ideas developed in your book reviews as part of your term paper – see the book reviews as an exercise in academic writing.
- Developing a topic **independently** and coming up with a suitable **thesis** is part of your assignment. Please talk to me/chat with me as soon as possible – I will not accept & grade your term paper if I have not talked to you about your topic.



 mandatory reading / viewing

 to do

 background reading (optional)

01 13.04.21 *organisation, tools* (Flinga, Padlet, Perusall)

Zoom

(Irish) horror

to read / to do:

/

tasks:

- Please have a quick look at the forum **before we start** and introduce yourself (including your pronouns) – if you want to, you can also upload a selfie and/or a picture of your workspace. And if you have a pet, upload a pic for us (pretty please).
- prep for class**: Think about what you know about **horror** (literature/film) – historically, academically, etc. Have you come across any **Irish horror** specifically?

02 20.04.21

Zoom

Seamus Deane, Reading in the Dark (1997) 1

reading response – gothic, horror & entrapment

to read / to do:

- read the novel 
- hand in a 1½–2 page **book review** (you need to write two for the seminar) 
- C. del Río, “Metaphors of (Un)Truth: Figuring the Past in S. Deane’s *Reading in the Dark*” (113-124) 

tasks:

- reading prompt**: Read the novel with a focus on **gothic / horror elements**.
- prep for class**: What do you know about **Irish (literary) history**? Have a brief look at a literary history if you have the time (Declan Kiberd has a chapter on Deane), we will try to contextualise the novel before we start discussing it.
- Please take the **minute paper** (link in today’s OLAT session) for some feedback – I will upload a compilation of your answers, and we will discuss open questions at the beginning of our next synchronous session.

03 28.04.21

Seamus Deane, Reading in the Dark (1997) 2

cultural memory – the Troubles

to read / to do:

- O. Feeney, “How did the Troubles Begin & Who Was Involved?” (*The Troubles Podcast*, <https://shows.acast.com/the-troubles-podcast/>) 
- R. F. Garrat, “(7) Return of the Dead: Seamus Deane’s *Reading in the Dark*” (in *Trauma & History in the Irish Novel: The Return of the Dead*, 97-112) 
- S. Regan, “‘Sacred Spaces’: Writing Home in Recent Irish Memoirs & Autobiographies” (in Brewster & Parker, *Irish Literature Since 1990*, 232-249) 

tasks:

- Listen** to Feeney’s **podcast** (link in today’s OLAT session). If you have some time on your hands, explore some of the other episodes of *The Troubles Podcast* for more context.
- Read & comment on **Garrat’s chapter** (Perusall, link in today’s OLAT session).
- Answer the **forum question** & engage with the others’ entries – there will be an open question for every asynchronous week of this seminar (I will use your forum posts to track participation). In an extra thread, I will prompt you to think about **discussion questions** for next week – this way you can contribute to the structure of our synchronous sessions.
- Please take the **minute paper** (link in today’s OLAT session) for some feedback.

Note that this asynchronous session will probably take you a bit longer as you learn how to navigate Perusall and the forum. It will become easier as term progresses, I promise!

We will evaluate your experience of this asynchronous session at the beginning of our next (Zoom) session.



- 04** 04.05.21 *Marina Carr, By the Bog of Cats (1998)*
Zoom **reading response – rewriting the bog (and Medea)**
to read / to do:
- read the play 
 - hand in a 1½–2 page **book review** (you need to write two for the seminar) 
 - D. J. Gladwin, “Staging the Trauma of the Bog in Marina Carr’s *By the Bog of Cats*” (387-400) 
 - K. O’Brien, “Re-envisioning ‘Woman’: Medea as Heroine in Versions by Brendan Kennelly & Marina Carr” (online) 
- tasks:
- reading prompt:** Read the play with a focus on the depiction of the **bog** / of **femininity & witchcraft**.
 - prep for class:** Look up the myth of **Medea**. Have a quick look at the **discussion questions** posted in last week’s forum.
 - Please take the **minute paper** (link in today’s OLAT session) for some feedback.
- 05** 11.05.21 *some theory*
gothic, gothic horror (film)
to read / to do:
- M. Bragg, “Gothic” (*BBC In Our Time*, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0054792>) 
 - J. Fennell, “(1) Introduction: In Defence of Fear” (*Rough Beasts* 1-22) 
 - R. Barton, “(3) Ireland of the Horrors” (*Irish Cinema in the Twenty-First Century*) 
 - K. Newman, “Irish Horror Cinema” (3-11) 
 - J. Killeen, “Irish Gothic: A Theoretical Introduction” (12-26) 
- tasks:
- Listen** to Bragg’s **podcast** and watch my short **video** on **gothic** (links in today’s OLAT session). Do let me know if you have any questions about the video.
 - Read & comment on **Fennell’s introduction** (**Perusall**, link in today’s OLAT session).
 - Answer the **forum question** and engage with the others’ entries. Post **discussion questions** for next week.
 - Read **Barton’s chapter** in preparation for your viewing of *The Lodgers*.
 - Please take the **minute paper** (link in today’s OLAT session) for some feedback.
- 06** 18.05.21 *Brian O’Malley, The Lodgers (2017)*
Zoom **viewing response – ghosts & haunted houses**
to read / to do:
- watch the film 
 - E. Radley, “Violent Transpositions: The Disturbing ‘Appearance’ of the Irish Horror Film.” (109-123) 
- tasks:
- viewing prompt:** Watch the film with a focus on the trope of the **haunted house** & other **gothic/horror plot elements**.
 - prep for class:** Which **haunted house novels/films** do you know? Make some notes about the meanings/uses of these haunted mansions. Have a quick look at the **discussion questions** posted in last week’s forum.
 - Please take the **minute paper** (link in today’s OLAT session) for some feedback.



07 25.05.21 *Patrick McCabe, Winterwood (2006) 1*
reading response – Irish identity & masculinity

to read / to do:

- read the novel 
- A. Sheehan, "A Postmodern Crisis of Irish Masculinity – Patrick McCabe's *Winterwood* (2006)" (103-113) 
- hand in a 1½–2 page **book review** (you need to write two for the seminar) 
- S. Peterson, "Homeward Bound: Trauma, Homesickness, & Rough Beasts in O'Brien's *In the Forest* & McCabe's *Winterwood*" (40-58) 
- M. Fitzpatrick, "An Interview with Pat McCabe" (53-59) 

tasks:

- reading prompt:** Read the novel with a focus on the depiction of **(Irish) identity** and **masculinity** (for today) and on **monstrosity** for next session.
- Answer the **forum question** and engage with the others' entries. Post **discussion questions** for next week.
- Read & comment on **Sheehan's article** (**Perusall**, link in today's OLAT session).
- Watch my **video** on **McCabe's *The Butcher Boy*** (link in today's OLAT session). Do let me know if you have any questions!
- Please take the **minute paper** (link in today's OLAT session) for some feedback.

08 01.06.21 *Patrick McCabe, Winterwood (2006) 2*
Zoom
shape-shifting monsters

to read / to do:

- J. Fennell, "(8) Breeding Breaks Out: Shape-Shifters, Cryptids, and Cunning Animals" (*Rough Beasts* 186-210) 
- J. Hermansson, "Strange Masks of Adapted Identities in Patrick McCabe's *Winterwood* and *The Holy City*" (n.p.) 

tasks:

- prep for class:** Read the chapter by Fennell and **take notes**. How does McCabe's novel relate to the history of shape-shifting monsters depicted by Fennell? Have a quick look at the **discussion questions** posted in last week's forum.
- Please take the **minute paper** (link in today's OLAT session) for some feedback.

09 08.06.21 *some more theory*
from A(bjection) to Z(ombies)

to read / to do:

- J. Kristeva, from *Powers of Horror* (1-9) 
- S. Abbott, "(3) The Cinematic Rising: The Resurgence of the Zombie" (*Undead Apocalypse* 62-92) 
- B. Creed, "Kristeva, Femininity, Abjection" (64-70) 

tasks:

- Read & comment on **Kristeva's chapter** (**Perusall**, link in today's OLAT session), then watch my **video** on **abjection** (link in today's OLAT session). Do let me know if you have any questions!
- Read the chapter by Abbott and **take notes** on the (filmic) history of zombies.
- Answer the **forum question** and engage with the others' entries.
- Please take the **minute paper** (link in today's OLAT session) for some feedback.



- 10 15.06.21 *David Freyne, The Cured (2017)*
infection & survival
to read / to do:
- watch the film 
 - G. Peaty, "Infected with Life: Neo-supernaturalism & the Gothic Zombie" (102-115) 
 - J. Fennell, "(9) The Undead Generations: Zombies, Vampires, and the Corporeal Undead" (158-185) 
 - W. Mooney, "The Cured, dir. by David Freyne" (158-161) 
 - R. Luckhurst, "The Public Sphere, Popular Culture & the True Meaning of the Zombie Apocalypse" (68-85) 
- tasks:
- Read & comment on **Peaty's article** (Perusall, link in today's OLAT session), then **watch** "A Short History of the Zombie Film" (<https://youtu.be/kkwz1ia1B74>).
 - viewing prompt**: Watch the film with a focus on how the tropes of **infection, survival** and **guilt** are connected.
 - Read the chapter by Fennell and **take notes** on the (literary) history of the Irish zombie.
 - Answer the **forum question** and engage with the others' entries. Post **discussion questions** for next week.
 - Please take the **minute paper** (link in today's OLAT session) for some feedback.
- 11 22.06.21 *Sarah Davis-Goff, Last Ones Left Alive (2019) 1*
Zoom
reading response – genre
Term Papers
to read / to do:
- read the novel 
 - hand in a 1½–2 page **book review** (you need to write two for the seminar) 
 - think about your **term paper** – hand in a topic/idea/short abstract if you already have one 
- tasks:
- reading prompt**: Read the novel with a focus on **genre** (for this week) and **cultural memory** (for next session).
 - prep for class**: Look up definitions of the **coming-of-age** novel and the **quest** narrative. Have a quick look at the **discussion questions** posted in last week's forum.
 - Please take the **minute paper** (link in today's OLAT session) for some feedback.
- 12 29.06.21 *Sarah Davis-Goff, Last Ones Left Alive (2019) 2*
the Famine & cultural memory – zombie fungi
to read / to do:
- C. Ó Gráda, "Famine, Trauma & Memory" (121-143) 
 - A. Tenga & Kyle William Bishop, "Introduction: The Rise of the Written Dead" (2-11) 
- tasks:
- Brush up your knowledge on the **Great Famine**, then read & comment on **Gráda's article** (Perusall, link in today's OLAT session).
 - Watch my **video on zombie fungi** (link in today's OLAT session). Do let me know if you have any questions!
 - Answer the **forum question** and engage with the others' entries.
 - Please take the **minute paper** (link in today's OLAT session) for some feedback.



- 13** 06.07.21 *Deirdre Sullivan, Perfectly Preventable Deaths (2019) 1*
folk horror
to read / to do:
- read the novel 
 - A. Paciorek, "Folk Horror: From the Forests, Fields & Furrows. An Introduction" (12-19) 
 - hand in a 1½–2 page **book review** (you need to write two for the seminar) 
 - A. Scovell, "(1) Hours dreadful and things strange" (*Folk Horror* 1-10) 
- tasks:
- reading prompt:** Read the novel with a focus on **folk horror** (for this week) and **witchcraft** (for next session).
 - Read **Paciorek's chapter**, then watch "**Folk Horror: More Than Just a Film Genre**" (<https://youtu.be/9XkqcAEaR1w>) – take some notes about the **definition** of folk horror.
 - Answer the **forum question** and engage with the others' entries. Post **discussion questions** for next week.
 - Please take the **minute paper** (link in today's OLAT session) for some feedback.
- 14** 13.07.21 *Deirdre Sullivan, Perfectly Preventable Deaths (2019) 2*
Zoom witchcraft 2 – coming-of-age 2
round-up & open questions
to read / to do:
- A. Scovell, "(6) 'Sumer-Is-Icumen-In': Modern Folk Horror" (*Folk Horror* 165-186) 
- task:
- prep for class:** Read **Scovell's chapter** and take some notes about the use of witchcraft in twenty-first-century folk horror. Have a quick look at the **discussion questions** posted in last week's forum.

Easter Egg: Finished reading the complete syllabus? Well done! Now please log on to OLAT (see link above), sign into the course, go to the forum (thread 00) and post your favourite meme to let me know that you are done.



Literature

primary literature

please note: bibliographical details are for the editions of primary texts I use

- Carr, Marina. 2004 [1998]. *By the Bog of Cats*. London: Faber & Faber [Kindle file].
- Davis-Goff, Sarah. 2019. *Last Ones Left Alive*. London: Tinder Press.
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- McCabe, Patrick. 2007 [2006]. *Winterwood*. London: Bloomsbury.
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secondary literature

- Abbott, Stacey. 2017. *Undead Apocalypse: Vampires and Zombies in the Twenty-First Century*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Barton, Ruth. 2019. *Irish Cinema in the Twenty-First Century*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Bloom, Clive. 2007 [1998]. *Gothic Horror: A Guide for Students and Readers*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Botting, Fred. 2013. *Gothic*. London: Routledge. [The New Critical Idiom]
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- Feeney, Oisín. "How Did The Troubles Begin And Who Was Involved?" *The Troubles Podcast*, 21 April 2020. <https://shows.acast.com/the-troubles-podcast/episodes/backgrounder-and-primer>.
- Fennell, Jack. 2019. *Rough Beasts: The Monstrous in Irish Fiction, 1800-2000*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
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- Kiberd, Declan. 2017. *After Ireland: Writing the Nation from Beckett to the Present*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Killeen, Jarlath. 2006. "Irish Gothic: A Theoretical Introduction." *Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies* 1: 12-26.
- Killeen, Jarlath. 2014. *The Emergence of Irish Gothic Fiction – Histories, Origins, Theories*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1982.
- Luckhurst, Roger. 2012. "The Public Sphere, Popular Culture and the True Meaning of the Zombie Apocalypse." *The Cambridge Companion to Popular Fiction*. Eds David Glover and Scott McCracken. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 68-85.
- Mooney, Wendy. 2017. "The Cured, dir. by David Freyne." *Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies* 17: 158-161.
- Newman, Kim. 2006. "Irish Horror Cinema." *Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies* 1: 3-11.
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- Radley, Emma. 2013. "Violent Transpositions: The Disturbing 'Appearance' of the Irish Horror Film." *Viewpoints: Theoretical Perspectives on Irish Visual Texts*. Eds Claire Bracken and Emma Radley. Cork: Cork University Press. 109-123.
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