



Sacred Heart
UNIVERSITY

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Fairfield, Connecticut • Campas Daingean Uí Chúis
SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY
Fairfield, Connecticut • Dingle Campus

Irish Studies at SHU has been growing! In our first newsletter, we are thrilled to share news about our students, faculty, events, courses, the Irish Studies minor, and research and scholarship projects happening in both in Fairfield and Dingle. We have new faculty in both Irish language and Irish music, and recent guest speakers in Fairfield and Dingle have included Booker prize-winning novelist Anne Enright, award-winning author Claire Kilroy, and poet Annemarie Ní Churreáin, among others. We look forward to welcoming ecocritic and scholar Malcolm Sen in February of next year. Our new work study students, Emma Jerue and Ciara Smith, are helping us develop social media sites... and this newsletter. At both of our campuses, Irish Studies offers the chance of exploring a culture rich in literature and art, a history that powerfully engages with questions of religion, race and politics, and a landscape that embodies both tradition and forward-thinking ideas about ecology, citizenship and culture. We welcome you to learn more below, and encourage you to get in touch.

Dr. Abby Bender
Director, Irish Studies Minor



Students in Spring 2022's James Joyce Colloquium, studying Joyce's great novel *Ulysses* on the centenary anniversary of its publication. The Colloquium is offered again in Spring 2024 (ENG 285).

Student & Faculty News

Congratulations to our Dingle colleague Dáithí de Mórdha on his book *Raidió na Gaeltachta: Cultúr agus Pobal*, which won Honorable Mention for the ACIS (American Conference for Irish Studies) *Duais Leabhar Taighde na Bliana*/ACIS Prize for Books in the Irish Language. Comhghairdeas Dáithí! Read more about his scholarship and teaching below.



In addition to her courses for undergraduates, Beginning Irish I and II, Professor Hilary Sweeney is teaching a weekly course for SHU faculty that began with a Saturday intensive on Sept. 9th, and will continue through the spring semester.

Irish Studies minor director Abby Bender was elected to the executive committee of the American Conference of Irish Studies as Literature Representative. The next national conference will be at Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick, from June 17-21, 2024. With our Dingle faculty nearby, we hope to have a strong SHU contingent!

Congratulations to our 2022 and 2023 Irish Studies Minor Graduates, Grace Alcott, Cathreena Esposito, Luke Healy, Conor Kilmartin, and Margaret Weaver!

SHU in Dingle co-directors John Roney and Grace Flannery, along with faculty and student volunteers, represented and shared the riches of the Dingle campus with visitors at The Big E in Springfield, MA, in September and October.

So much is happening at our campus in Dingle that we can't fit all the news here! Please check out SHU in Dingle online and on social media to keep up with student projects, activities, internships, and more.



SHU in Dingle



SHU in Dingle

Spotlight on New Irish Studies Faculty: Irish Language and Irish Traditional Music



SHU is thrilled to have Professor Hilary Sweeney (Mhic Suibhne) teaching Irish Language I and II this year. Professor Sweeney was born and grew up in Ireland, and learned the Irish language as a child. Her classes focus not only on vocabulary and syntax, but culture. She notes, “the language is an intrinsic element in Irish culture. I believe that students interested in learning about Irish culture should learn as much as they can about the language and its role in Irish History.” While learning a new language is challenging, its rewards are many, and Professor Sweeney’s favorite part of teaching this class is “seeing my students connect to the language, and as their understanding grows, they begin to see how wonderful it is too.” There are no prerequisites for the Irish Language I class and all majors and years are welcome. Irish language classes meet in The Shanachie Room, better known to those learning the language as *Seomra an tSeanchaí*! Learn more about her class for Spring 2024 on p. 12!



We are delighted that musician and educator Chelsey Zimmerman will be joining us at SHU in Spring 2024 to teach Traditional Irish Music. Professor Zimmerman, a classical flutist by training, began playing Irish music in 2014 and was energized by its communal and social forms, as well as the way the tradition remains individually creative. Traditional Irish music, Professor Zimmerman notes, conveys information about Irish history and culture, while also playing a significant role in the lives of many non-Irish musicians. Professor Zimmerman holds an MA in Irish Music Studies from the University of Limerick in Ireland, and her Ph.D. research there explores the engagement of early 20th century Irish traditional recording artists with the social and historical context of New York City, and the impact it had on their music. Learn more about her class for Spring 2024 on p. 12!

Spotlight on Dingle Faculty: Dáithí de Mórdha, Ph.D.



Dáithí de Mórdha is a journalist and broadcaster at *Raidió na Gaeltachta* [Irish-language radio service of *Raidió Teilifís Éireann*], and he teaches the history, folklore, and archeology of Ireland and the Dingle peninsula at SHU in Dingle. He holds a M.Phil. and Ph.D. in Folklore and Ethnology from University College Cork. In addition to his recent book on Irish language radio, in 2013 he published *The Great Blasket: A Photographic Portrait / An Blascaod Mór: Portráid Pictiúr* with Mícheál De Mórdha.

Comhghairdeas (congratulations!) to Dáithí de Mórdha on his book *Raidió na Gaeltachta: Cultúr agus Pobal*, which won Honorable Mention for the ACIS (American Conference for Irish Studies) *Duais Leabhar Taighde na Bliana*/ACIS Prize for Books in the Irish Language. Prof. de Mórdha's book focuses on the role that the Irish language radio station played in "the development, preservation, and dissemination of indigenous Gaelic culture since its inception in 1972." Inspiration came from growing up with *Raidió na Gaeltachta*, including from his father who spent 16 years working for them: "the radio was always on in our house."



De Mórdha notes that "Gaelic culture is a living, breathing, ever-changing thing, and the media plays a key role in that culture." As in his books, students taking his courses at SHU in Dingle learn that folklore/folk culture is around us all the time, and we consume it daily. Students studying with Prof. de Mórdha also learn how Ireland's history, culture, and folklore are embedded in and transmitted through place: field trips with Prof. de Mórdha are a highlight of both semester and short-term courses!

Spotlight on Irish Studies Minor: Alyssa Santini



Alyssa Santini, Kaari Scaglia, Kailey Blount, Jillian Reis, and fellow Irish Studies minors Conor Kilmartin and Luke Healy at SHU in Dingle.

What made you want to pursue a minor in Irish studies?

I decided to pursue an Irish Studies minor because of the rich literary history Ireland has. I'm an English major, and I wanted to minor in something that would enhance my understanding of more than just American literature. Along with politically and socially important literary works, there's also a lot of folklore and myth that holds a lot of importance in their culture. The combination of those things makes for an extremely interesting literary history. Aside from that, Ireland also has a tumultuous history where its people fought tirelessly to protect their country, going through a lot of ups and downs, making the historical side of the minor another really interesting topic to learn about. Having all of that in mind is why I decided to minor in Irish Studies because I knew there was a lot of interesting knowledge I could get out of it.

Do you plan to use the minor in the future?

The Irish Studies minor would definitely be useful in the future, positively contributing to my career plan of becoming a literary agent and working within the publishing industry. By knowing about different kinds of literature, such as American or Irish, it's easier to pick out the influences and styles an author is using in their work, and then use that knowledge to pitch their work in the way that would benefit it most. It's important to know how and where something would be best marketed, and knowing everything from the classic to contemporary styles of a place's literary history is really beneficial.

What was your favorite thing about studying abroad at SHU's Dingle campus?

My favorite part about studying abroad was being able to have the entirety of Dingle be our classroom. We visited castles, holy sites, and locations where different folklore stories and myths were believed to have taken place. Being able to learn about these things while physically there was not only a once-in-a-lifetime experience, but it also helped in connecting to the material and being able to really learn and remember it. Taking classes there is unlike anything else since the town and its surrounding areas become your classroom, and you get to experience so many things you would never get the chance to if you didn't go abroad. Being there also helps in building a better connection to Irish culture because the town and its people are extremely welcoming. You get to learn things from the locals and hear from them about life in Ireland. Irish music also has a huge presence in Dingle, and you can go to any of their numerous pubs and experience the live music scene, which is a big part of their culture. Studying abroad in Dingle is more than worth it, and I would tell anyone that's thinking about it to go.

Spotlight on SHU Claddagh Dancers: an Interview with Captain Ailie Daley



The Claddagh Dancers, Sacred Heart's Irish Dance team, is comprised of 32 members, all of whom have extensive experience in competitive and performative Irish Dance. They are the current Collegiate Irish Dance Association's 2023 National Champions. [Read about their recent championship win here!](#) Senior Ailie Daley is the team captain.

What do you enjoy about the SHU Claddagh Dance Team?

What I enjoy most about the Claddagh Dancers are the connections and friendships I have made throughout my four years at Sacred Heart. The dancers on the team are some of my favorite people on the planet and I admire every one of them. Regardless of what they have going on in their personal lives, everyone shows up to practice, shows, and competitions and gives their best effort. I never fail to laugh or smile when I go to practice. Our friendships extend way beyond the walls of the studio, and I am confident that I will remain friends with my teammates for the rest of my life. I am beyond blessed to have been a member of this team throughout my college experience.

What is one thing most people don't know about Claddagh dancing?

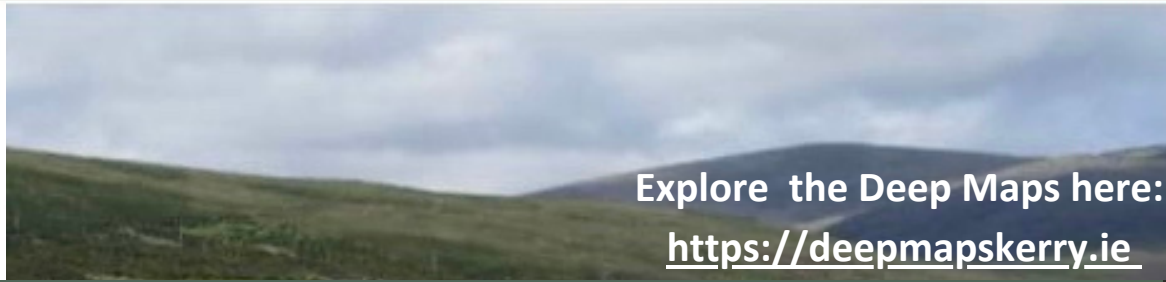
I think the one thing people underestimate about Irish dancing is the level of athleticism it takes to perform a number. Not only is Irish Dancing an art, but a sport as well. It takes a great deal of strength, aerobic capacity, and control to perform Irish Dancing with precision. We will practice a number for an entire semester before we are technically precise and neat enough to perform it at a competition or show.

What were a few highlights from the spring break trip to Dingle?

The Claddagh Dancers' Spring break trip to Dingle was genuinely the highlight of my college experience. Not only were we able to enjoy Irish Dancing in Ireland, we were enveloped and completely embraced by the Dingle community. Personally, my favorite memory from Dingle was performing a few of our staple numbers for a local elementary school, and teaching them a traditional Ceili dance (a group dance). The entire team bonded on this trip, and I would give anything to go one more time with the team before graduating.

Irish Step Production (DA 303) is a course that counts towards the Irish Studies Minor.
[Learn more here!](#)

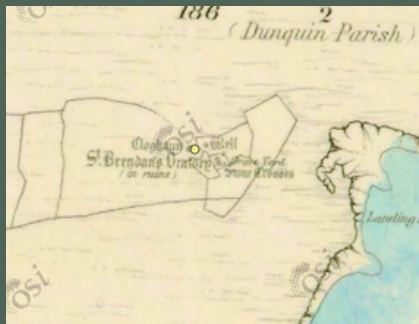
Research in Dingle: Deep Mapping



Explore the Deep Maps here:

<https://deepmapskerry.ie>

The Dingle peninsula can be considered an outdoor museum, with its Bronze Age tombs, medieval chapels, oratories and monasteries, and old stone cottages, as well as spectacular mountains, hills, ocean coves and cliffs. Yet in an ever-changing environment, preservation and sustainability are key to its future, and this can only come from a deeper knowledge of all that it contains. This new project, Corca Dhuibhne / Deep Mapping / Dingle Peninsula, a collaboration with SHU in Dingle and An Díséart Centre of Irish Spirituality and Culture, uses the term ‘deep mapping’ as a guiding methodology. The new methodology is one of the newest approaches in environmental humanities that seeks to understand the totality of human cultural heritage as rooted in a place.



Researchers have established and produced a “works in progress” website with a growing collection of information about Holy Wells on the Dingle Peninsula. Holy Wells are the first research focus, and the goal is to follow with research on burial tombs and religious sites, followed by places of departure on the coasts for pilgrimages, trade, and fishing. Each of the many sites for this project provides specific GPS coordinates for each location on a map, followed by some explanation of the history, cultural value, practices over time, and literature (story, poetry, and song) of the site. Numerous pictures, video, and links to other websites give a multitude of meanings and details. Billy MagFhloinn and Dáithí de Mórdha did much of the research, and on a GIS map on the web there are 51 wells identified, with a key to ones that are public, some that need permission, and some that are private with no access. SHU in Dingle is working in collaboration with York and Infinite IQ, a company that will bring some unique virtual reality elements to studies in Dingle for faculty, students, and tourists. Thus, the goal of this collaboration is to promote sustainability, preservation, and enjoyment of the many historically significant cultural heritage sites on the Dingle peninsula. SHU Committee members include Dr. John Roney, Project manager, Dr. Billy MagFhloinn, Dr. Dáithí de Mórdha, Mark Beekey, John Rapaglia, Gary Delaney, and An Díséart members Joan Maguire and Isabel Bennett.

Research in Fairfield: The CTIAHS Archives



2023 SHU graduates Kailey Blount and Emily Rentz completed year-long internships investigating the history of the Irish in Connecticut using the archives and library of the Connecticut Irish-American Historical Society (CTIAHS), recently donated to SHU. Their work examined and described the history of Connecticut's Irish places for the Irish-American Heritage Trail. [Read more here.](#)

The CTIAHS Archives are now held in the Shanachie Room / *Seomra an tSeanchaí* in the Ryan Matura Library. Scanning of the archival materials will begin next year so we can make these materials digitally available to students and researchers. We welcome interest from faculty and staff who want to be involved in the Irish Archives Digitization Committee. Please contact either John Roney or Abby Bender with your interest.

The Shanachie Room/*Seomra an tSeanchaí*

The library space that houses the newly-donated Connecticut Irish-American Historical Society archives is now The Shanachie Room/*Seomra an tSeanchaí*, where our Irish language and Irish drama courses are meeting this semester.



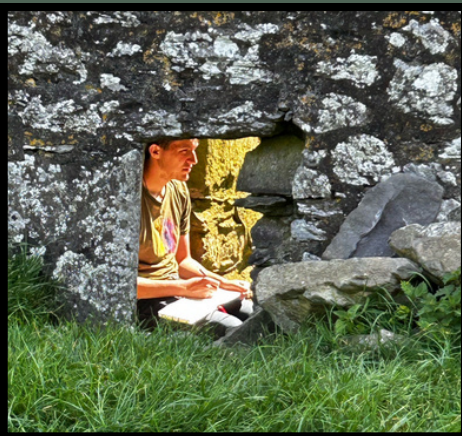
Founding members of the CTIAHS at the opening reception for the new Shanachie Room in the Ryan Matura Library

SHU in Dingle, Scenes from Summer 2023

Students in Prof. Kristen Savell and Prof. Christine Susienka's interdisciplinary Biology and Philosophy course **Tombs, Treks, and Transcendence** learn how to excavate an archeological site, right.



[Find out more about these classes and others running for Summer 2024 here!](#)



Most of our Dingle short-term and semester courses count towards the Irish Studies minor, and all are open to students from any college or university. The Irish Studies Minor requires only 15 credits, so it is possible to complete even in your final years at SHU. [Click here to add the Irish Studies Minor.](#)

Interested in Ireland for the full semester?
See more here: [SHU in Dingle | Fall Semester](#)

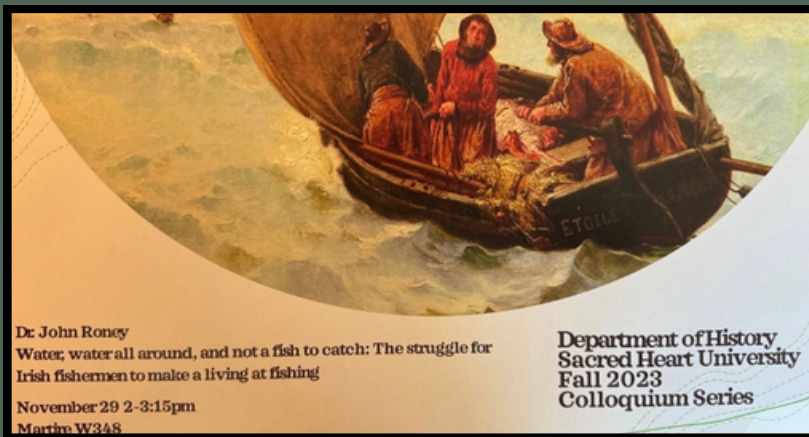
In Prof. Nathan Lewis's May II session of **Introduction to Painting**, students sketch and paint in and around the natural and historical sites of Dingle, including the ruin of Rahinnane Castle, above.



In addition to hearing Irish writers read and discuss their work at the annual Listowel Writers' Week Festival, students in Prof. Abby Bender's class **Ghosts, Changelings, and Mermaids: Tradition and the Body in Irish Writing**, spoke with prize-winning author Claire Kilroy about her new novel *Soldier Sailor* (2023), left.

Irish Studies at SHU, Fall 2023

Students taking Irish Drama traveled to NYC to see one of their texts come to life, in the Irish Repertory Theatre's performance of Brian Friel's masterpiece, *Translations*. A NYTimes Critics Pick, the production was described as an "exquisite revival [that] makes a rigorous case not only for Brian Friel's pre-eminence as an interpreter of Irish national identity, but for the vitality of art in deciphering life." Some students are writing new or alternative scenes for the play as their final class project.



Prof. John Roney's talk at the Department of History Fall Colloquium Series engaged faculty as well as students in his Fall 2023 Coastal Communities course. "Water, water all around, and not a fish to catch: The struggle for Irish fisherman to make a living at fishing"



SHU Community Theatre
Presents
Cherish the Ladies:
Celtic Christmas
Wednesday, December 13, 7pm

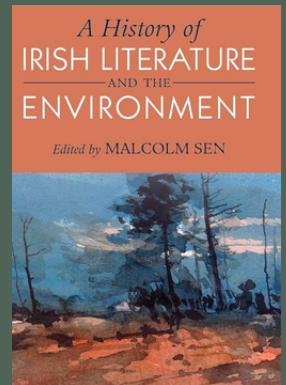
Irish Studies Events, Spring 2024

“Climate, Coloniality, and Sustainable Futures” Malcolm Sen, University of Massachusetts



The Annual John Moriarity Lecture
co-sponsored by Irish Studies

Thursday, February 8th, 3:30pm
Michelle Loris Forum, Martire



“Place and the Artistic Imagination”: A Reading and Conversation

Marie Hulme (Languages and Literature)
Nathan Lewis (Art and Design)
Richard Falco (Media Studies)
Wednesday, March 20th, 3:30pm
Gallery area, Dept. of Art and Design



Last year, Prof. Marie Hulme of the Department of Languages and Literature was awarded a University Research and Creativity Grant to pursue research for her novel *Brigid's Peace*. Professor Hulme travelled to the Dingle Peninsula, Belfast, and Donegal, immersing herself in the landscapes, language, and peoples of the novel's setting. Set during the period of sectarian violence known as “The Troubles,” *Brigid's Peace* examines the need for luminosity and forgiveness in the face of generational trauma. Professor Hulme will read scenes from the novel as part of a larger conversation with Professors Nathan Lewis (Art and Design) and Richard Falco (Media Studies) about the influence of place on the artistic imagination.

Irish Studies at SHU, Spring 2024

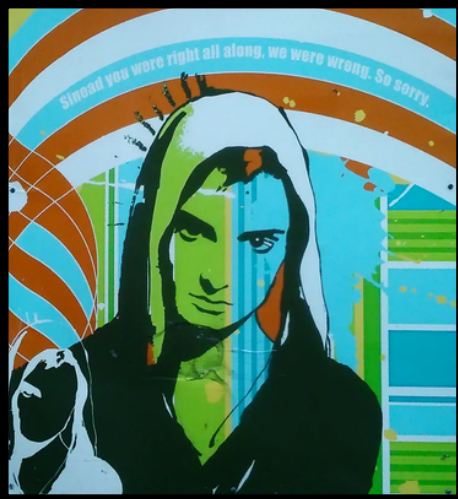
SHU Community Theatre Presents A St. Patrick's Day Celebration with DERVISH

Thursday, March 14, 7:30pm

[Get tickets](#)



"Sinéad O'Connor was Right all Along": A Conversation



Co-sponsored by Irish Studies and Literary Spring
date and time TBA

In her widely-shared 2023 elegy for the late Sinéad O'Connor, "Sinéad O'Connor was Right all Along," Erika Meitner writes that "you called out misogyny, excessive commercialism, sex abuse / in the Catholic church ... your voice is / an emergency." Only since O'Connor's death in 2023 have we seen the full acknowledgement of the rightness of her sense of urgency, which derailed (or redirected) her career rather than fueling public outrage. Most reflections on her life have noted, with a sense of embarrassment, regret, or shame, the failures to listen with seriousness to her concerns about Irish society's treatment of women and children, a topic which now resonates in an Ireland belatedly catching up to her fury.

Irish Studies classes in Fairfield for Spring 2024

Spring 2024 *** New Course in the Irish Language!
GL 108: Beginning Irish II
SHU Fairfield, Tuesdays 2:00-4:45 pm (meeting in the library)
LAE, Social and Global Awareness



Learn to speak, read, and write Irish with Professor Hilary Sweeney/ Mhic Suibhne, originally from County Limerick, Ireland. You will soon be proud to say *Tá cúpla focal agam* (I have a few words).

If you've been to Dingle, or plan to go, learning some Irish will greatly transform your experience, and locals will welcome you with open arms.

Modern Irish began over 2,500 years ago and is used in Ireland today. Learn the language fundamentals while focusing on the communicative approach—you will be speaking in Irish from day one! The history of the language, the Celts, Irish mythology, poetry and song will be included as part of this introduction to Irish language and culture.

Questions welcome. Reach us here:

Dr. Abby Bender, dir. of the Irish Studies minor: bendera5@sacredheart.edu

Dr. John Roney, history: roneyj@sacredheart.edu

Hilary Sweeney, languages and literature: sweeneyh2@sacredheart.edu

Beginning Irish II

GL 108

Tuesdays 2-4:45pm

Learn the language fundamentals while focusing on the communicative approach—you will be speaking in Irish from day one! The history of the language, the Celts, Irish mythology, poetry and song will be included as part of this introduction to Irish language and culture.

James Joyce Colloquium

ENG 285

Mondays 2-4:45pm

Don't miss the opportunity to read Joyce's masterpiece *Ulysses*, believed by many to be the greatest novel ever written in English, in a supportive, interdisciplinary classroom where you will follow your interests in this most encyclopedic of all texts.

ENG 285:

James Joyce
Colloquium

Spring 2024

from *Dubliners* to *Ulysses*

Over 100 years after the publication of James Joyce's *Ulysses* in 1922, his novel remains the most challenging, rewarding, and humane book many of us will ever read. It is both focused on Ireland and insistently global, specific and universal, existential and obsessed with the body.

Don't miss the opportunity to read *Ulysses* in a supportive, interdisciplinary classroom where you will follow your interests in this most encyclopedic of all texts. Joyce's *Ulysses* is scientific, literary, artistic, physical, sexual, religious, multicultural, global, celestial... and much more.

Counts towards the Irish Studies Minor.

Mondays, 2-4:45pm

Questions? Email me! bendera5@sacredheart.edu

Prof. Abby Bender



INTRO TO IRISH TRADITIONAL MUSIC Spring 2024

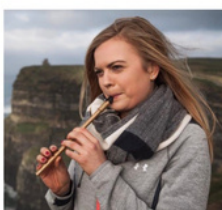
MU-106 (3 Credits) with Chelsey Zimmerman

Th 5:00 PM - 7:30 PM
Fairfield, Martire Center E149

Students will survey the development of Irish Music from pre-Christian times through to the present, have the opportunity to attend live performances, and learn to play the Irish whistle.

We are thrilled to be welcoming Chelsey Zimmerman as a new instructor for Introduction to Traditional Irish Music. This course provides students with a thorough overview of traditional Irish music, song and dance from their earliest references right up to today's influence on the world music stage. Aural, as well as some basic traditional musicianship skills, will be developed over the course. The course will study the history and development of the traditional music sessions or "céilí," and will enable students to savor traditional music in its natural social setting. The course will study the history and development of the tradition, while also ensuring the students gain a deeper understanding by learning some practical skills.

*This course fulfills the Humanistic Inquiry LAE requirement and counts towards the Irish Studies minor.



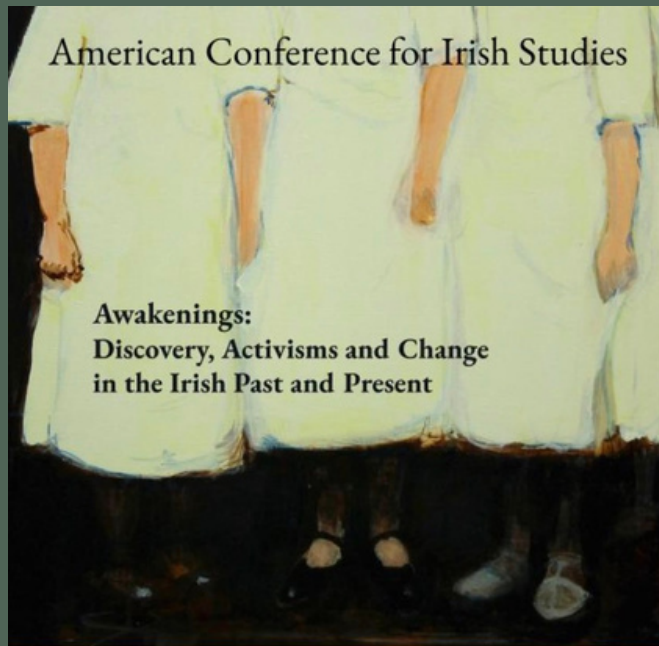
Introduction to Traditional Irish Music

MU 106

Thursdays 5-7:30pm

This course provides students with a thorough overview of traditional Irish music, song and dance from their earliest references right up to today's influence on the world music stage. Aural and basic traditional musicianship skills will be developed over the course. The course will study the history and development of the traditional music sessions or *céilí*, while also ensuring the students gain a deeper understanding by learning some practical skills.

More Recent Irish Studies Events at SHU



New England and Mid-Atlantic Regional

October 29-30, 2021

Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, CT

<https://www.sacredheart.edu/academics/colleges-schools/college-of-arts-sciences/departments/languages-and-literature/es/asic-mid-atlantic-and-new-england-regional-conference/>

In 2021, SHU hosted the New England and Mid-Atlantic Regional American conference for Irish studies conference (October 29-30, 2021), a dual-regional conference with 50+ in-person participants, as well as virtual access for those unable to attend in-person. The conference theme was “Awakenings: Discovery, Activisms, and Change in the Irish Past and Present.” Two prominent, international keynote speakers anchored the event: Seán Kennedy (Professor of English and Coordinator of Irish Studies at Saint Mary’s University, Halifax, Nova Scotia) on “Awakening to what? The subject of abuse after Endgame” in person and Claire Kilroy (author of the novels *All Summer*, *Tenderwire*, *All Names Have Been Changed*, *The Devil I Know*), virtually from Ireland, in conversation with Mary Burke (Professor of English, University of Connecticut). The conference program included five SHU faculty members giving papers and two more chairing panels, creating a wonderful sense of the liveliness of Irish Studies both at and for Sacred Heart.

Booker Prize-winning Dublin-based **Anne Enright** is the author of seven novels, most recently the widely acclaimed *Actress*, a brilliant exploration of celebrity, family, and secrecy. Enright’s stories have appeared frequently in *The New Yorker*, and her criticism is published in *The London Review of Books* and elsewhere. Mary Burke is Professor of English at the University of Connecticut and directs her department’s Irish Literature program. She spoke about *Actress* in Spring 2023.

Irish novelist Claire Kilroy in conversation with scholar and writer Mary Burke: Writing, Motherhood, and the Pandemic

Dublin-based Claire Kilroy is the author of four novels, most recently the widely acclaimed *The Devil I Know*, a darkly comic book about the Celtic Tiger and ensuing financial crisis. Kilroy’s newest works—including recently published essays and a forthcoming novel—address the tensions around writing and motherhood. Mary Burke is Professor of English at the University of Connecticut and directs her department’s Irish Literature program. Her newest book, *Race, Politics, and Irish America: A Cultural History*, will be published by Oxford University Press in 2022.



Saturday, October 30
Martire Forum, 11am
or streaming online at

<https://sacredheart-edu.zoom.us/j/92949565591>

Presented by Irish Studies @ SHU and the New England and Mid-Atlantic American Conference for Irish Studies

Irish author Anne Enright

reading and in conversation with scholar Mary Burke:

Actress, Actresses, and Irish America

Booker Prize-winning Dublin-based Anne Enright is the author of seven novels, most recently the widely acclaimed *Actress*, a brilliant exploration of celebrity, family, and secrecy. Enright’s stories have appeared frequently in *The New Yorker*, and her criticism is published in *The London Review of Books* and elsewhere. Mary Burke is Professor of English at the University of Connecticut and directs her department’s Irish Literature program. Her new book, *Race, Politics, and Irish America: A Gothic History* addresses such topics as the “whitening” of Irish America through figures such as Grace Kelly.



Friday, March 31, 12:30pm
Michelle Loris Forum
Martire Center for the Liberal Arts
Reception to Follow

Presented by Sacred Heart University Irish Studies, Languages and Literature, Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Media and Performing Arts, and the Human Journey Series.

Dublin-based **Claire Kilroy** is the author of four novels, most recently the widely acclaimed *The Devil I Know*, a darkly comic book about the Celtic Tiger and ensuing financial crisis. Kilroy’s newest works—including recently published essays and a forthcoming novel—address the tensions around writing and motherhood. Mary Burke is Professor of English at the University of Connecticut and directs her department’s Irish Literature program. Her newest book is *Race, Politics, and Irish America: A Cultural History* (Oxford University Press, 2022).