



Sacred Heart
UNIVERSITY



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

Spring 2024 was a busy semester for Irish Studies at SHU! During a brilliant Saint Patrick's week celebration, "Tradition and Complexity: A Week of Art, Music, Literature, and Scholarship," SHU faculty members Richard Falco, June-Ann Greeley, Marie Hulme, Nathan Lewis, Luciana McClure, Hilary Sweeney, and Chesley Zimmerman all presented work related to Irish Studies courses, research, and creative/fine arts. Our Irish language and traditional Irish music students also shared public readings and a performance. Visiting speakers included scholars Malcolm Sen (University of Massachusetts), Claire Bracken (Union College), Seth Mulliken (Northeastern University), and award-winning Irish novelist Caoilinn Hughes. The Chapel graciously hosted a powerful event reflecting on the legacy of the late musician and activist Sinéad O'Connor. You can find our [events page here](#). Meanwhile, our Dingle campus has been buzzing with summer courses and research—including the newsworthy discovery of the remains of a bronze age tomb by faculty member Billy Mag Fhloinn—as well as the renovations to our beautiful new building. In nearby Limerick in June, two SHU faculty members, John Roney (History) and Kevin Power (Philosophy, Dingle campus), presented papers on John Moriarty—part of a SHU research initiative—at the American Conference for Irish Studies. Finally, we are grateful for our work study students Emma Jerue and Ciara Smith for their work this year (including on this newsletter!), and we look forward to showcasing our Dingle staff and faculty in our upcoming Fall 2024 issue of the newsletter. In the meantime, we invite you to learn more about SHU Irish Studies in Fairfield and Dingle below and at our social media links (above), and please get in touch with any questions!

-Abby Bender, Director of the Irish Studies Minor, bendera5@sacredheart.edu



A sneak peak at our new building at SHU in Dingle - a beautiful space for students, faculty, and visitors doing Irish Studies. Learn more about the historic Christian Brothers school and ongoing restoration: <https://shuindingle.com/elementor-4023/>

Scenes from Dingle, 2023-2024

Occupational Therapy in Dingle



During Fall 2023, Sacred Heart University's occupational therapy (OT) program sent a team of faculty members and graduate students to Dingle, Ireland, in the fall to bring needed OT services to schools and families. The team included OT faculty members Sharon McCloskey and Ellen Martino, and Donna Bowers, a SHU physical therapy professor. The participating OT graduate students, who are all in their final year, were Lydia Reppucci, Fiona Buckley, Caitlin Pursell, Sofia Bramante, Cassandra Dwight, Nicole Koshes, Emily Comer and Catherine Graviano. [Read more here.](#)

English Majors in Dingle



Above: Our Spring 2024 semester cohort of English majors out for lunch alongside Lecturer and Program Co-Director of SHU in Dingle, Dr Ciara Barrett. English majors and other humanities students should consider the spring semester in Dingle for courses both in and beyond their majors!

Below: Our 2024 May I short-term cohort in Dingle, where student learning takes place more often outside than in. Classes in Biology, Business, Communication, Media & Arts, Exercise Science, Health Science, Liberal Arts, and Nursing draw hundreds of students from SHU and beyond.



Irish Studies at SHU, Spring 2024



"Climate, Coloniality, and Sustainable Futures"

Malcolm Sen, University of Massachusetts, February 8, 2024

This year's Annual John Moriarty Lecture was delivered by English Professor Malcolm Sen, Director of the Environmental Humanities Specialization at UMass. Dr. Sen's work at the intersection of climate, sustainability, and Irish Studies made him the perfect person to address the SHU community. Charles Gillespie, Assistant Professor of Catholic Studies and Director of the Pioneer Journey, provided an introduction that situated this work in the context of both philosopher John Moriarty's and SHU's vision for sustainability and social justice. Sen's lecture showed how the crisis of climate collapse forms the background hum of almost all contemporary literature, and he urged us to read such literature critically as a mode of decolonial thinking that fosters the habitability of the planet. The event was co-sponsored by the Institute for Sustainability and Social Justice, The Center for Catholic Studies, Languages and Literature, the Human Journey Colloquia Series, and Irish Studies. We had a full house for this event and were delighted to have terrific student and faculty engagement with these urgent ideas.



Right All Along: A Conversation about Sinéad O'Connor

March 18, 2024



Irish musician and activist Sinéad O'Connor was 56 when she died last year, shocking the world into a sudden sense of what we have lost in her: not only her transcendent voice and powerful songs, but her commitment to seeing, and speaking out against, systemic oppression. We held this event in the chapel to underscore O'Connor's commitment to spirituality even as she exposed and critiqued the Catholic church, particularly in its treatment of women and children in Ireland. O'Connor explored many religious traditions, including Rastafarianism and Judaism, finally converting to Islam in 2018, when she took a new name, Shuhada, meaning "truthful witness." Our speakers discussed elements of that truthful witness: of social injustice in Ireland and elsewhere, of the need to remember personal and national traumas - but also the ongoing sense of hope, care, and beauty in language, art, music, and spirituality. Chaired by SHU Director of Irish Studies Abby Bender, speakers included Claire Bracken (Union College), Seth Mulliken (Northeastern University), Luciana McClure (SHU), and Hilary Sweeney (SHU). Sponsored by Irish Studies, The Department of Art and Design, The Human Journey Colloquium Series, The School of Communications, Media & the Arts (SCMA), The Hersher Institute for Ethics, Languages and Literature, and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

Ireland: Conflict in Eden

March 18, 2024

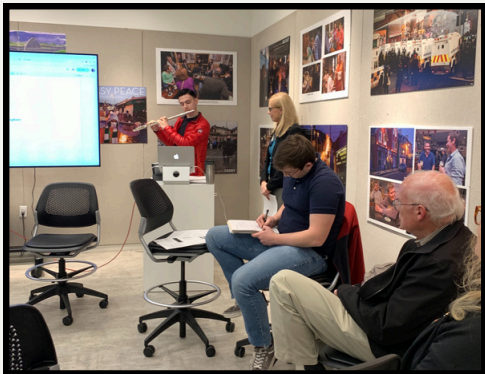
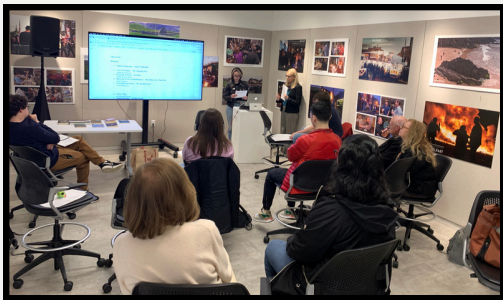


The Department of Art & Design at West Campus hosted an exhibition of photographs of the conflict in Belfast and life in the Dingle peninsula by Richard Falco (SCMA) & Mariusz Smiejek, and paintings by Nathan Lewis (Art & Design). We are delighted that several of Professor Falco's prints from the exhibition are now permanently on display in the Martire Center for the Humanities (third floor West).

Poetry Repossessed

March 19, 2024

For over fifteen centuries poetry has been written in the Irish language. This presentation by Hilary Sweeney (Languages and Literature) and her Irish language students was composed of a selection of poetry in the original Irish, with translations to English, and included a special student flute performance with music by the eighteenth-century Irish composer Turlough Ó Carolan.



Comhghairdeas [congratulations] to our Beginning Irish II students who finished an entire year of Irish Language! Special congratulations to Mathew Meaney (second from right) for earning his Fáinne Airgid, a silver pin in the shape of a circle which signifies that one is a willing speaker and learner of Irish.



The Influence of Place on the Artistic Imagination

March 20, 2024

Last year, 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 traveled 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 read scenes from the novel as part of a larger conversation with Professors Nathan Lewis (Art & Design) and Richard Falco (SCMA) about the influence of place on the artistic imagination.



Celebrating Goddess - Saint Brigid in Words and Music

April 4, 2024



June-Ann Greeley's illustrated presentation introduced us to the Irish Saint Brigid via the pre-Christian and medieval legend and lore of Brigid, and then the narratives of the popular Catholic saint. Long before St. Francis of Assisi, Brigid realized the beauty in and wisdom of the land and all its creatures, and so her tradition offers a contemporary audience powerful guidance for an eco-spirituality and an advocacy for animal rights. Our Traditional Irish Music instructor at SHU, Chelsey Zimmerman, accompanied by local session legend Joe Gerhard, provided the music. Prof. Zimmerman's students also shared the music they had learned on the tin whistle - an impressive performance!

Caoilinn Hughes: A reading and conversation about her new novel, *The Alternatives*

April 12, 2024



We were delighted to welcome Irish author Caoilinn Hughes for a reading and conversation with SHU Languages and Literature professor and Writer-in-Residence Amie Reilly. Hughes is the author *The Wild Laughter*, which won the Royal Society of Literature's Encore Award and was longlisted for the International Dylan Thomas Prize, and *Orchid & the Wasp*, which won the Collyer Bristow Prize and was longlisted for the International Dublin Literary Award. She was recently the Oscar Wilde Centre Writer Fellow at Trinity College Dublin, and has just concluded a year as a Cullman Center Fellow at the New York Public Library. The *New York Times* described her new novel *The Alternatives* as "a bold, beautiful, complex novel," and Hughes as a "daring genius" and "unstoppable force." How thrilled we were to hear her read and talk about this book!

Spring 2024 Events in Dingle

The Sacred Heart University Band & Orchestra, A Winter's Concert January 4, 2024

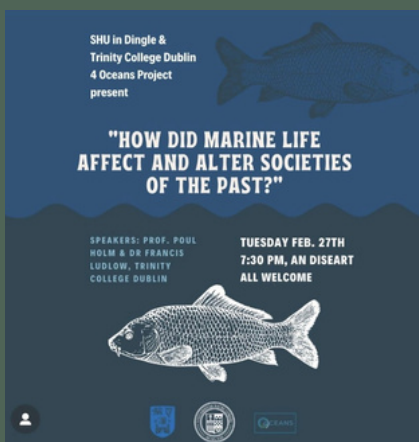
The Sacred Heart University Band and Orchestra performed on January 4th, 2024 at St. Mary's Church in Dingle. The concert featured the European premiere of Steven Rosenhaus's *JFK: A Profile* and Randall Standridge's *Choose Joy*, with special guests Niamh Varian Barry (SHU in Dingle) and Méabh Ní Bheaglaoich. The proceeds went to Pobalscoil Chorca Dhuibhne's New Cubbie Sensory Hub.



4 Oceans Workshop, Trinity Centre for Environmental Humanities

Hosted by SHU in Dingle, February 26-28, 2024

With funding from the European Research Council (ERC), this project assesses the importance of marine life to human societies during the last two millennia, with a focus on understanding the consequences of marine resource exploitation for societal development ([link above](#)). SHU Professor John Roney, as a member of the Irish Environmental History Network, facilitated this collaboration and was there to host the workshop.



"How Did Marine Life Affect and Alter Societies of the Past?" February 27, 2024

Presented by SHU in Dingle and the Trinity College Dublin 4 Oceans Project, featuring speakers Professor Poul Holm and Dr. Francis Ludlow, from Trinity College Dublin. This talk considered the intriguing insights of the historical interplay between societies and marine life, shedding a light on the marine world's large impact on humanity.

Atlantic Anthropological / Antraipeolaíochta Atlantach

This annual anthropology workshop was hosted by SHU in Dingle from April 25-28, in collaboration with University College Cork / Queen's University, Belfast, convened by Dr. James Cuffe (UCC) and Dr. Fiona Murphy (QUB). SHU in Dingle faculty members Dáithí de Mórdha, Billy MagFhloin, and Kevin Power gave talks as part of the workshop.

The Sacred Heart University Choir March 8, 2024

The Sacred Heart University Choir performed on March 8th at St. Mary's Church in Dingle. The proceeds from the concert all went to Pobalscoil Chorca Dhuibhne's New Cubbie Sensory Hub.



Spotlight on Dingle Faculty:

Billy Mag Fhloinn, Ph.D.



Professor Mag Fhloinn has a Ph.D. in Folklore and a B.A. in Archaeology. In addition to teaching, he also works with Irish television for RTÉ and TG4, and occasionally for international productions, including the BBC, PBS, and the National Geographic Channel. He is an accomplished musician and artist, and well as a wedding and funeral celebrant. He has been teaching courses at SHU in Dingle in Celtic Religion and Mythology as well as Irish Folklore and History since 2014. In 2016 he published a book entitled *Blood Rite: The Feast of St. Martin in Ireland*.

What is your favorite aspect of teaching?

I like introducing the students to ideas and concepts that are very different from what they are used to. People in the past thought about things in often very different ways, conceiving of themselves in a world that was unlike ours in certain respects. Their view of time, death, the cosmos, their relationship to the land, etc. Viewing the world through their lens allows us to think about who we are now, and how we might perceive of ourselves in new and interesting ways.

I love engaging with the past, doing the deep dive, and gaining insights about where we come from. Sharing this with people who come to visit Dingle is a favourite thing of mine, as it allows for a deeper connection to the land, and teaches something about what it means to be human. Some things are very different, some things are the same over long timespans, this is an essential part of human culture.



Is there a favorite field trip student connect with?

I think students like to go the wedge tomb at Dún Meánach. It is a very ancient site, around 4500 years old, and is situated in a very dramatic location, on the top of a high ridge overlooking the sea, and across to glacial valleys. It's quite a profound place.



With other SHU faculty, Professor Mag Fhloinn is currently working on a deep mapping project, <https://deepmapskerry.ie/>, cataloguing sites and gathering information about them, presented online in interactive maps and connected databases.

See the article in *The Guardian*, left, about his discovery of a bronze-age tomb.

Spotlight on Irish Studies in Dingle: Richard Magee's Poets and Madmen Course



Dr. Magee (Languages and Literature) teaches a class on Poets and Madmen during the two-week Dingle session during winter break. Dr. Magee's students learn "how poetry is reflection of our minds, and how our memories grow out of particular places." Dr. Magee's favorite part of teaching is "the reactions of the students. When a student who is afraid of writing poetry suddenly finds a voice, when a student who already writes falls into that writing groove and writes better." While this is an English class, the class is open to all students, and Dr. Magee loves "the different insight that comes when there are students from many different disciplines in the class." While this class is intensive over the two weeks, students have expressed that the class was important to them, and they came away with a new appreciation for writing. Half of the class is held outside, as field trips immerse the students in the Dingle culture and help them gain a better understanding of poetry in Ireland. Why should students be excited about this class? "It's the best class they will ever take!"





Student Spotlight:

Michaela Farley, Nursing

What was your favorite thing about studying abroad in Dingle?

My favorite thing was being part of the local community. Since Dingle is a very small town, you really become one of the locals. Between going to the same local coffee shop every morning to seeing the same faces grocery shopping, it was very much a community feel. We also were there to celebrate St. Patrick's Day which was a lot of fun! The entire town came together for a parade and the festivities lasted all day long.

What was your favorite class in Dingle?

My favorite class in Dingle was Health Assessment. I really enjoyed this nursing class over in Ireland because I felt as if I learned a lot about the cultural differences in healthcare while expanding my knowledge of patient care. I was able to begin my clinical at the County Kerry hospital which was an incredible experience. It was very interesting to see the difference in our hospitals as well as talk with the nurses about their experience in a different country.

What experiences did you get outside of the classroom?

We had so many opportunities outside of the classroom including starting clinical over in Dingle. We went on many field trips for our classes as well as participated in group activities weekly. Some of these included horseback riding, surfing, holding baby lambs—my personal favorite—painting, hikes, and kayaking. We also went on two trips with the entire group to London and Galway! During spring break, I was able to travel to Spain, Italy, and Portugal which was a great experience. We also were able to have a blessing of the hands ceremony in Dingle at a holy well. This was a very joyful moment as it raised awareness of the work we have put into the nursing program as well as the natural beauty within Dingle.



Student Spotlight:

John Cronin, Media Arts, Film and Television



John Cronin graduated in May 2024 with a major in Media Arts, Film and Television and a minor in Sports Broadcasting. He took **Introduction to Traditional Irish Music** in the Winter Session. We loved these photographs John took in and around Dingle!

What was your favorite aspect of being in Dingle?

My favorite aspect of Dingle had to have been the Pubs/People. You immediately feel at home from the first time you go out to see the town because the people are so friendly. In the pubs everyone is always so nice and it is always a great place to hang with friends.

What can you tell us about the course you took?

I took the music class, and I thought it was awesome. Professor Niamh Varian-Barry was super nice and also pretty famous around Ireland which was cool. She taught us traditional Irish songs on the tin whistle, brought us to a concert, and we had a little concert in one of the pubs (Dick Macks). Definitely a class I would take again if I went back.

What is one thing you will cherish the most about your time in Dingle?

One thing I will cherish from Dingle was the time I had there and the people I spent those 2 weeks with. Some people I knew briefly from Sacred Heart went and by the end we were all best friends. It's amazing how close Dingle can bring people together and I'll never forget the friendship that I made on that trip.

What is one piece of advice you would give to someone planning to study abroad in Dingle?

Be as outgoing as possible. The people you will meet and the friendships you'll build are unforgettable. I remember being a little shy on the first day as most people are but soon it all became so easy and it truly felt like a second home immediately. And definitely have a pint of Guinness at the pubs.

Upcoming Irish Studies Courses for Fall 2024

Below please find our courses for Irish Studies in Fairfield. If you are interested in studying in Dingle, there are many more Irish Studies at our campus there! For more information on Irish Studies in Dingle, contact Dr. Abby Bender (bendera5@sacredheart.edu) or see shuindingle.com.

INTRODUCTION TO IRISH TRADITIONAL MUSIC



Fall 2024 MU-106 (3 Credits)

Th 5:00 PM - 7:30 PM

Prof. Chelsey Zimmerman

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. 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.

*Fulfills the Humanistic Inquiry LAE requirement.

DANCE 303: IRISH STEP PRODUCTION (1 Credit)

This course focuses on the development of technical proficiency and performance elements in Irish dance. Classes and choreography will model advanced level technique within this discipline.

*Audition is required for participation in this class. Can be taken multiple times for credit.



Fall 2024 Mondays, 2-4:45

ENG 276 MODERN IRISH WRITING

Dr. Abby Bender

Read classics of Irish literature, watch Irish films, and dive into page-turners like Sally Rooney's *Normal People*.



This course introduces you to the rich traditions of Irish writing from the literary revival of the early twentieth century to the newest work by prize-winning poets, novelists, and playwrights. We will read Irish texts—from short stories to films—in their political and cultural contexts, including a history of colonial trauma, the complex path to independence, the intersections of gender and nationalism, and the challenges of globalization.

***Meets LAE Requirements for Social and Global Awareness and Humanistic Inquiry**

Read James Joyce, W.B. Yeats, Samuel Beckett, Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, Emma Donoghue, Sally Rooney, and more!

Email Dr. Bender at bendera5@sacredheart.edu with any questions.

Fall 2024 Tuesdays 2:00-4:45 pm

GL 107: Beginning Irish I



***Meets LAE Requirements for Social and Global Awareness and Humanistic Inquiry**

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.

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.

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

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