

Irish Traditional Music and Culture from 1800 - 2008

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This course is designed for the students of Queens College, CUNY.

Course Description:

This course will combine music appreciation with Irish and Irish-American cultural history. It will offer students a cross-disciplinary insight into traditional music, song and dance culture in Ireland from pre-famine to the present. Using a diversity of multimedia presentations, workshops and live performances, students will be introduced to the transcultural journey of Irish music, song and dance during the last two centuries. Particular attention will be given to the impact of famine and emigration on Ireland's musical heritage. The course will also examine the politics of music and song associated with the Land War and Home Rule movement of the late 19th century, as well as the foundation of major cultural nationalist organisations including The Gaelic Athletic Association, The Gaelic League, and Comhaltas Ceoltoirí Éireann. The course will culminate with a critique of the recent globalization of Irish traditional music culture, which has been fueled by transnational phenomena such as *Riverdance* and *Lord of the Dance*.

Format:

Each session will include both lecture and group discussion. Elementary music, song and dance workshops will be integrated into the course, as will performances by guest artists.

Goals:

1. Students will develop a broad understanding and appreciation of Irish traditional music culture.
2. Students will gain an insight into the factors that impact on the ever-changing topography of Irish traditional music, song and dance.
3. Through participation in music song and dance workshops, students will develop an awareness of the complexities involved in excelling in these art forms.

Course Requirements:

This course is designed to appeal to students from a broad cross section of academic disciplines. Music competency is not a prerequisite for this course.

Requirements include:

1. Mandatory attendance in class and at guest recitals.
2. Active class and workshop participation.
3. Completion of assigned coursework.

Evaluation:

The course will be evaluated as follows

- a) 2 papers on assigned topics. (20% each)
- b) Mid-term assessment (30%)
- c) Final assessment (30%)

Reading list:

Breandán Breathnach, *Folk Music and Dances of Ireland*, (London: Ossian Press Publications, 1996).

Fintan Vallely, *The companion to Irish Traditional Music*, (Cork: Cork University Press, 1999)

Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, *A Pocket History of Irish Traditional Music*, (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 1996).

Mick Moloney, *Far from the Shamrock Shore: The Story of Irish-American Immigration Through Song* (Crown publications, 2002).

Tomás Ó Canainn, *Traditional Music in Ireland*, (Cork: Ossian Publications Ltd, 1993).

Additional Readings:

Fintan Vallely, Hammy Hamilton, Eithne Vallely & Liz Doherty, *Crosbealach An Cheoil*, (Cork: Ossian Publications, 1999)

Joe Lee, *Ireland, 1912-1985: Politics and Society*, (Cambridge University Press, 1989)

Kerby A Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish exodus to North America*, (Oxford University Press, 1985).

Marie McCarthy, *Passing it on, The Transmission of Music in Irish Culture*, (Cork: Cork University Press, 1999).

Nuala O'Connor; *Bringing It All Back Home: The Influence of Irish Music at Home and Overseas*, (Dublin: Merlin Publishing, 2001).

Terence Browne, *Ireland a social and cultural history, 1922 to present*, (Cornell University Press, 1985)

Irish Traditional Music and Culture from 1800 - 2008

Lecture 1

Course overview. Defining *Culture* and *Tradition* in the context of Irish traditional music, song and dance.

Tin Whistle tuition

Lecture 2

Classification and history of musical instruments.

Tin Whistle tuition

Lecture 3

The Harp as a musical instrument and as a cultural symbol.
Case study: Turlough Carolan, the last Irish Bard.

Tin Whistle tuition

Lecture 4

Dancing at the crossroads: Investigating the symbiotic relationship between Irish instrumental music and dance. Solo and group dancing styles will be studied, including Céilí, Set and Sean Níos.

Tin Whistle tuition

Lecture 5

Céilí and Sean Nós Dance Workshop

Lecture 6

Irish songs and singing styles: Meters, modes and form.
Sean nós, street singing, Irish tenors.

Sean Nós singing workshop

MIDTERM EXAMINATION

Lecture 7

Chas Amhráin: Song themes and how they function as Historical, Political and Ideological tools.

Songs of the Great Famine, emigration and exile.

Land War, Home Rule and political ballads of the late 1800s.

Tin Whistle tuition

Lecture 8

Music Collectors of the 19th century; Petrie, Goodman, Joyce,

A Harvest saved: Captain Francis O'Neill and the American connection.

Tin Whistle tuition

Lecture 9

Cultural Nationalism organizations of the late 19th and mid 20th century and their role in the preservation and promotion of Irish traditional music, song and dance.

1. The Gaelic Athletic Association

2. Conradh Na Gaeilge

3. Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann

Lecture 10

19th century American recording technology and its phenomenal impact on Irish traditional music.

Case study - The 78rpm recordings of fiddler Michael Coleman

Tin Whistle tuition

Lecture 11

Regional music styles of Ireland:

Case studies - Sliabh Luachra
Clare
Donegal

Tin Whistle tuition

Lecture 12

From *Clannad* to *Riverdance*: Irish music, song and dance as commodity.

Tin Whistle tuition

FINAL EXAMINATION