
VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES



IRISH STUDIES
COURSE
DESCRIPTIONS
FALL 2026



Minor in Irish Studies

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Villanova University hosts the Center for Irish Studies. The minor in Irish Studies is open to students from all colleges, and our interdisciplinary program features courses from seven departments. Irish Studies faculty research and teach through a range of disciplines. The Center facilitates courses in anthropology, art history, economics, history, language studies, literature, philosophy, political science, studio art and theatre.

Fifteen credits are required to complete the minor, of which six credits are core requirements: a 3-credit literature survey in English and a 3-credit survey in History. Students may structure and focus five of the many Irish Studies electives into a unified program of study that works with the student's overall goals. The Irish language (Gaelic) two-course sequence can fulfill the College of Arts and Sciences language requirement. Study-abroad courses taken in Ireland may be used for the minor.

Major in Irish Studies

Irish Studies offers a major as a specialization in the Department of Global Interdisciplinary Studies (GIS). The 31-credit major in Irish Studies provides an interdisciplinary and comparative approach to deepen students' understanding of the history, culture, religion, politics, literature, languages, and society of Ireland and produce an in-depth research thesis. Students may sign up for the GIS major and choose their Irish Studies (GIST) specialization through the Department of Global Interdisciplinary Studies in 36 Garey Hall. The GIS Chair and the Director of Irish Studies will work closely with students to develop individual interests, abilities, and career goals while fulfilling their major.

All courses listed here are 3.0 credit unless otherwise noted.

Fall 2026 Course Descriptions

ENG 1975: Borders, Migration and National Identity

TR 1:00pm – 2:15pm

Dr. Rena Potok

This course will explore the dynamics of borders, migration and exile, and their impact on constructions of national identity. Our areas of focus will be the literatures and borderzones of the United States & Mexico; Ireland & Northern Ireland; Israel & Palestine. In our readings and discussions, we will consider social justice issues such as the border as a means of oppression and a prospect for liberation; and we will view the issue of migration with an eye toward matters of human dignity, gender, vulnerability and marginalization. The course prioritizes teaching students to become more perceptive readers of literature and to hone critical thinking and writing skills, by crafting a variety of formal analytical essays and informal reflections.

We will begin with foundational readings on the concept of the border and expand our field of inquiry to novels, plays, short stories and poems by Oona Frawley, Hannah Khalil, Colum McCann, Mahmoud Darwish, Ruth Almog and others. We will also consider how these texts engage with questions of partition, body politics and hybrid identity. Our immersion in these materials will help us cultivate, in particular, an understanding of the life, history and culture of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Israel and Palestine.

Attributes: Irish Studies, Peace & Justice, Core List & Writing Sem

ENG 1975: Women in Irish Literature & Film

TR 4:00pm-5:15pm

Dr. Rena Potok

This course will explore the particular experience of being an Irish woman in political, domestic, religious, and social spheres by taking a deep dive into works of 20th and 21st-century Irish literature and film. Our sustained examination of these texts will unpack the many roles that women occupy (and resist) in Irish literature and film: symbol of Ireland; queens, hags, and fairies; incarcerated bodies; bearers of trauma and memory; rebels, migrants, Travelers, and more. The course prioritizes teaching students to become more perceptive readers of literature and to hone critical thinking and writing skills, by crafting a variety of analytical essays and informal reflections.

Our readings will include literary works generated from the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland – the two political and geographic spaces that constitute the island of Ireland. Materials will include short stories, poems, and plays by Eavan Boland, Rosaleen McDonagh, Claire Keegan, Eilís Ni Dhuibhne, and Melatu Uche Okorie (among others); and films such as *Float Like a Butterfly*, *The Magdalene Sisters*, *Silent Grace*, and *Wildfire*. These works of literature and film will guide us in a discovery of key topics in the history, memory, and lived experience of Irish women:

mythic female figures and modern fairy tales; trauma and memory under colonial and religious authority; incarceration and resistance; family and friendship; migration, exile, and return; Traveler culture; and stories of contemporary Ireland. Woven through these stories are their historic and cultural contexts: British colonialism, the Great Irish Famine, the Troubles, post-conflict Ireland and Northern Ireland, and the Celtic Tiger boom and bust.

In the course of our reading, viewing, discussion, and writing, we will look closely at the relationship between nationalism, feminism, gender, and Irish culture. And we will consider how these works might create new intersections between the fields of Irish studies and gender studies.

Attributes: Irish Studies, Gender & Women's Studies (GWS)

IS 1111: Introductory Irish Language I

Section I: M 8:30am - 9:20am; TR 8:30am – 9:45am

Section II: M 9:35am – 10:25am; TR 8:30am – 9:45am

Section III: M 10:40am – 11:30am; TR 10:00am – 11:15am

Dr. Jonathan O'Neill & Michael Malloy

Groundwork in Irish (Gaelic), including oral proficiency, aural comprehension and reading knowledge; for students beginning the study of language. Supplementary language laboratory work on Irish culture and practicing spoken Irish. Successful completion of the course sequence, IS 1111 and IS 1112, satisfies the language requirement for the CLAS. 4.00 credits. Counts toward the Irish Studies minor.

IS 1121: Intermediate Irish Language I

TR 2:30pm-3:45pm

Dr. Jonathan O'Neill

Review of grammar and vocabulary in Irish (Gaelic). Recitations, readings and oral drills. Supplementary language laboratory work.

Prerequisites: IS 1111 and IS 1112

4.00 credits. Counts toward the Irish Studies minor.

PSC 6900: Social Movements in Divided Societies

Tuesdays 4-5:50pm

Dr. Cera Murtagh

Social movements are fundamental to political change in any society. In a deeply divided society, however, movements must navigate particular openings and barriers in the political landscape. Social movements can be central to the outbreak of conflict in such places, and they can play a pivotal role in building peace. They can be a force for exclusion and division, and they can be a driver for justice, equal rights and unity. This course examines the multiple, complex and critical roles social movements play

in divided societies, as well as the impact they can exert and their capacity to effect change in those places. It explores a range of different types of mobilization, from movements for civil rights and racial equality, to peace, gender rights, LGBTQ+ rights and the environment. The course analyses the barriers and openings these movements face in a deeply divided society and the strategies they use in response. The course is fundamentally concerned with understanding how societies move on from violent conflict towards peaceful, just and sustainable futures. It takes a comparative approach, with the aim of gaining a global view of these issues, and uncovering comparative lessons, including for the United States. Case studies include Northern Ireland, South Africa, Rwanda, Liberia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lebanon. The course takes an intersectional lens, with a focus on social justice and equality.

Attributes: Irish Studies, Peace and Justice, Core Lit and Writing Sem