

## IRELAND: ARTS, LAND, PEOPLE

### OVERVIEW

*“Ireland is a magical place. I hope you take many more students to Arts Week so that they may come face to face with some of Ireland's best.”*  
—Fran Lee, student traveler, 2006

This travel-study course brings students to one of Ireland’s most scenic regions, to a renowned arts festival where we will explore the ways in which cultural identity is expressed and supported by the arts, as well as how land and landscape impact culture and are expressed in the arts.

The class has been offered annually since 2005. Enrollment is limited to 15, and all spaces must be filled by mid summer, so prompt enrollment is suggested. Students can earn either three or four competences. Those taking Externship AND Advanced Electives together can earn four competences; other students take some combination of three competences (which can include up to one FX competence) by negotiation with the instructor.

Fee includes land costs (transportation, tours, accommodations with breakfast, some meals, all admissions to Arts Week activities, special daily lectures). Airfare and tuition are extra. Financial aid is available.

### THE EVENT

Clifden Arts Week was established 32 years ago as a way of bringing artists to a small fishing town in Connemara, Co. Galway, in the far west of Ireland. At that time, a virtually bankrupt economy meant that many children grew up only to emigrate to England, America or Australia in search of work. Brendan Flynn, a visionary schoolmaster who is now a member of the Irish national Arts Council, believed that if artists showed students in primary and secondary schools how to express themselves and how to build arts-related industries, both the community and its economy would be strengthened. Such has indeed proven to be the case. Although Ireland’s overall economy has boomed, development is concentrated in urban areas. The region around Clifden, however, has seen steady economic improvement as the scenic area has become famous as a center for arts and culture—especially traditional culture. Arts tourism has been a major contributor to the Connemara economy over the last three decades.

Clifden Arts Week is now internationally renowned as a venue for the most impressive traditional and contemporary Irish culture. Some twenty events each day offer a potpourri of possibilities ranging from stand-up comedy to orchestral music, from traditional dancing to sculptural installations, from poetry readings to lectures on local history. Although the focus is on Irish culture, artists from another country in the Eurozone as well as a non-European culture are featured each year; these have included African drummers, Polish singers, and Brazilian musicians. Clifden's small size means that the artists are accessible to students for interviews and personal discussion throughout their visit.

This ten-day study tour introduces students to questions of globalization of culture vs. traditional/ indigenous cultures; cultural tourism; roots of art in society; the role of the artist in society; community-based vs. elitist arts; landscape and its impact on arts; impact of arts in education; environmental issues in economy and the arts.

### **THE LOCATION**

The most traditional of Ireland's four traditional provinces is Connaught, the farthest west region of the island. The most traditional region in Connaught is Connemara, the peninsula that juts out between Galway City and Westport, County Mayo. There, dispossessed Gaelic-speaking Irish were driven during centuries of English domination, meeting an established and fiercely independent ancient culture that used the rugged mountains as a shield against invaders. Still one of Ireland's most wildly scenic areas, Connemara is also home to many of the land's most renowned traditional artists and musicians.

Approximately four hours by road from Shannon Airport, the small city of Clifden is often called "the capital of Connemara." A market town situated on an protected ocean harbor, Clifden is Connemara's largest town—but still only has 2000 permanent residents. It is the site of the regional high school, which serves several hundred students who travel as much as an hour daily, often from villages of only a few hundred residents. Although tiny, Clifden is a highly sophisticated town, for it serves as a major tourist destination for tens of thousands of European visitors every year. High-quality restaurants and world culture combine with a friendly, small-town atmosphere to make Clifden a unique destination for the American traveler.

In addition to the cultural charms of Clifden, the region is renowned as one of Ireland's most beautiful areas. Set just below the Twelve Bens, a range of quartzite peaks, Clifden serves as the center of the only wilderness tourism in Ireland. Although not on the class schedule, students will have the opportunity to take fjord tours on the Atlantic, fish for salmon and trout, go scuba-diving, cycle the Sky Road, visit Connemara National Wilderness Park, play golf, or hike the Twelve Bens if they choose. For those who prefer less adventuresome pastimes, Clifden is home to galleries, craft stores and jewelers featuring some of the most beautiful Irish art and artifacts. Whether strolling by the sea or nodding to other travelers on the streets of town, students will enjoy Connemara's bracing and energetic culture and climate.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

The course will be offered in fall term, 2009, with the following schedule:

**Thursday, September 17:** Bus departs Shannon Airport at 11 am and conveys students to Barefield for lunch at a traditional Irish pub dating from the 1800's. There we are joined by renowned folklorist, author and *seanachie* (traditional storyteller) Eddie Lenihan who sets the stage for an in-depth learning experience of Irish arts, culture and history. After a 2 hour bus ride, check-in at Dun Rí Guest House, right off the main square, where students reside for the entire trip. The formal opening of Arts Week runs from 8-9 (approximately) at the West Connemara Leisure Center, approximately a 10 minute walk from the guest house. There our participants will see traditional music and dance as well as previews of the week's events.

**Friday, September 18:** To introduce participants to Irish arts and culture, as well as to Clifden, this long day's class presents several speakers of national renown:

Kathleen Villiers-Tuttle, historian of the area, offers an overview of Clifden and Connemara history.

Dave Hogan, ecologist and lecturer on Irish spirituality, describes local sacred sites and their relationship to environmental concerns.

Sean Halpenny, known as one of Ireland's best bodhran (traditional drum) players, introduces participants to traditional music.

Due to the length of the day's class (10 am-3 pm), lunch is served in the seminar room where we meet, off the luncheon room at Dun Rí.

**Saturday, September 19:** A short class (9-10 am) answers questions and sets the group agenda for the weekend. A writing workshop with Dublin poet Tony Curtis follows; traditional Irish dance lessons may also be offered.

After these morning classes, the day is filled with book launches (elaborate affairs in Ireland), concerts and other arts activities. See below for details on arts programming.

**Sunday, September 20:** No class meeting, but many arts events are available; church concerts and literary activities predominate on the schedule. In addition, tour participants may wish to go pony trekking by the sea, hillwalking in Connemara national park, or boating on the mirror inlets of the ocean.

**Monday, September 21:** All-day bus tour (leaving 9:30 am) up the scenic Connemara coastline from historic Letterfrack, then across the bogs to Killary Harbour, said to be the most beautiful spot in Ireland. On its shores, the Wool and Sheep Museum offers insight into the traditional spinning, weaving and knitting crafts of the region; a light lunch follows. From there, tour participants travel to Delphi Lodge, scene of a tragic attempt to gain aid for starving Irish people during the infamous period called An Gorta Mór, “the Great Hunger,” a period during which the Irish population diminished by more than half from famine and immigration. At Delphi, hundreds of desperate people were turned away from a meeting of British leaders; starving and ill, the people then walked back to the sea over the mountains above Delphi, many of them dying along the way. The summit of their tragic walk is now marked by a small monument, dedicated by Bishop Desmond Tutu in honor of all victims of famine. From there, we proceed to Louisberg, to the local Granuaile Center, where we will learn about the period of the Irish chieftains and the great Pirate Queen, Grace O’ Malley, of the region. A small collection of artifacts from Famine times also allows tour members to learn further about this tragic period of Irish history. Return to Clifden approximately 5:30 pm, in time for evening activities including poetry and music.

**Tuesday, September 22:** Class meets from 11 am-1 pm, with a special guest lecture by all-Ireland champion harpist, Lynn Saoirse, who will describe the history of the instrument that symbolizes Ireland as well as playing harp compositions in styles from ancient to modern. Afternoon and evening arts activities.

**Wednesday, September 23:** Bus departs at 9 am for Aughnanure Castle (from the Irish, Achadh na nIubhar, the field of yews), which was once held by Grace O’ Malley when she was married to one of the chiefton clans, the O’ Flahertys. The 16<sup>th</sup> century castle is in good repair and offers a view of what life in medieval Ireland was like. Next, tour participants will visit Brigit’ s Garden, a recently created environmental and spiritual center with lavish gardens depicting the four sacred holidays of the Celtic people. After lunch at Brigit’ s Garden, tour participants will travel to Galway City for the remainder of the day and early evening; bus returns to Clifden at 7 pm.

**Thursday, September 24:** Class meets 11 am-1 pm, with guest lecturer Joan McBreen. Poet and anthologist McBreen, editor of the definitive collection of Irish women's poetry, will describe the changes that Irish women have experienced in the last half-century, illustrating the process with her own poetry. Afternoon and evening arts activities.

**Friday, September 25:** Class meets 11 am-1 pm, with guest lecturer Michael Coady. From Carrick-upon-Suir in County Tipperary, Coady is one of Ireland's best loved poets and is a member of *Áos Dá na*, the Irish Academy of Arts. He will read from his work and describe the connections between the Irish in Ireland and in America. Afternoon and evening arts activities.

**Saturday, September 26:** Arts Week ends with a community festival that starts at noon with the famous "poetry session" featuring literary artists who have appeared during the week and anyone else who wishes to read or recite (millionaire Irish businessmen have been known to recite ancient Irish poetry and tourists to read from their diaries!). For more than 12 hours, the town rings with music and song, leading up to the evening parade featuring residents costumed by professional circus performers, followed by a concert on the square. An unforgettable farewell to a wonderful event.

**Sunday, September 24:** Depart at 7 am morning to travel by bus to Shannon Airport. Participants may arrange to stay longer for individual explorations.

**Arts Week programming:** Tour participants hold full passes for all festival activities, not available to the general public. Daily programs include naturalist walking tours, traditional dancing, art shows, poetry and prose readings, book launches, drama, historical and cultural lectures, and children's and senior events. In addition to traditional Irish music and culture, the festival showcases traditional culture from other countries as well; past festivals have seen Polish, Latin American, Ghanaian, and other artists in residence. In addition to scheduled activities, participants enjoy outdoor activities (cycling, hill walking, ocean boat rides) as well as unscheduled arts activities (gallery visits, "sessions" or unscheduled musical performances, unannounced performance arts activities).

#### TEXT

Villiers-Tuttle, Kathleen. *Beyond the Twelve Bens* (Available from DePaul bookstore or through Connemara Girl Publications).

#### Recommended Reading

Robinson, Tim. *Setting Foot on the Shores of Connemara*.

Monaghan, Patricia, ed. *Irish Spirit: Pagan, Celtic, Christian, Global*

## COMPETENCES OFFERED

Students may register for up to four competences. Four competences are available to students who have taken Research Seminar and who enroll for Externship and Advanced Elective (together). Students may also enroll in Externship OR Advanced Electives plus one other competences, selection by negotiation with the instructor. These may include one FX competence, but cannot include A-4, H-4, or S-5. Finally, students may take three competences by negotiation (again, these cannot include A-4, H-4 or S-5).

## TOUR LEADERS

Co-leaders of the tour will be:

**Patricia Monaghan**, Resident Faculty and Associate Professor at SNL, who has published a number of books on Irish mythology and literature. She is also a widely-published poet on both sides of the Atlantic and winner of the prestigious Pushcart Prize for literature. She holds dual Irish-American citizenship and has been traveling to Ireland at least yearly for 30 years.

**Michael McDermott**, Chicago public-sector physician, asthma specialist (Stroger Hospital) and environmentalist with a specialty in organic gardening and prairie restoration. He will especially focus on environmental issues impacting the west of Ireland, as well as issues of health care and other scientific issues.

## TOUR COST, ACCOMMODATIONS, ARRANGEMENTS

Tour cost includes only land portion. Participants book their own flights to and from Ireland; this permits them to extend their stay after the tour ends. Students may travel from any airport, American or international, so long as they are in Ireland by 11 am on Thursday, September 17. Airfare can range from approximately \$550 if booked early and as much as \$1200 if booked at the last minute, so early booking is encouraged. DePaul is not responsible for participants whose late bookings result in higher than expected costs.

Participants must have passports for travel to Ireland, but visas are not required; passports take several months, so students are urged to get passports in order as soon as possible. Applying for passport after mid-July might jeopardize travel. Participants are required by university regulations to purchase travel insurance; they are also encouraged to check their health insurance plan to make sure that they are covered during travel.

Travel fee of \$1485 includes:

Bus from Shannon to Clifden, Sept. 17; lunch and lecture at Hassert' s in Barefield.

Accommodations at Dun Ri guest house in downtown Clifden, Sept. 17-27 (double occupancy). See [http:// www.connemara.net/ dun-ri/](http://www.connemara.net/dun-ri/) .

Full Irish breakfast daily.

Admission to all Arts Week activities (available only to tour participants; not available to general public).

Private lectures by Irish writers and artists (see descriptions above; others may be added according to availability and participant interest).

Guided bus tour to Killary Fjord and Delphi Lodge with lunch provided; admissions to Wool and Sheep Museum and Granuaile Center.

Bus tour to Galway; admission to Aghanure Castle and Brigit' s Garden; tea/ scones at Brigit' s Garden.

Return bus to Shannon.

Additional costs, not covered by the tour fee, include lunches and dinners. These can vary depending on student taste and health requirements; a well-stocked supermarket a short walk from the guest house provides the option of living at less than \$30/ day on carry-out food. Restaurants range from \$7 for pub-grub to \$95 for fine dining with wine. Also not covered: souvenirs; tips and incidentals.

For further information, please contact Resident Faculty member, Patricia Monaghan, at [pmonagha@depaul.edu](mailto:pmonagha@depaul.edu).