Syllabus

Course Title: The Gift of Gab: Storytelling and Irish Identity

Program and Date: Ireland Summer: May 30 – June 13, 2027

Instructor Name: Jordan Brown

Instructor Home Institution and Department: University of Kentucky, Department of Sociology

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Get to Know Your Professor

I am an Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Kentucky, where I have been a faculty member for 11 years. I earned my Ph.D. in Sociology from Florida State University and have taught at universities in Florida and Illinois before joining UK. I am passionate about experiential learning and feel strongly that study abroad gives students opportunities to engage with sociological concepts in ways that a traditional classroom cannot replicate. I had the privilege of leading my first CCSA study abroad course in England and Scotland this past summer, and that experience only deepened my commitment to this kind of teaching. I am particularly excited to offer this course because Ireland has a personal significance to me. My own family emigrated from Ireland during the Great Famine, and questions about Irish identity, cultural memory, and what it means to claim an Irish heritage have been part of my life long before developing this course. We will explore exactly those types of questions, and I cannot think of a better setting for that conversation than Dublin and Galway.

Course Description

Every culture tells stories, but few use them the way Ireland has: surviving colonization, preserving a language nearly wiped out, and building a national identity against the odds. This course uses the sociology of collective memory and storytelling to examine what Ireland's most iconic sites reveal about Irish identity, and what happens when that identity gets packaged and sold. Field trips to such sites in Dublin as Trinity College, St Patrick's Cathedral and the National Museum will provide insights into Irish national history and culture, while traveling through the Irish countryside and sampling popular culture in pubs featuring traditional Irish music and storytelling will illustrate how cultural identity is formed. Students majoring in sociology, history, or communications will engage with sociological concepts in ways that a traditional classroom cannot replicate and gain a deep understanding of how any culture constructs, preserves, and commodifies its own identity.

Course Level and Credit Hours

Upper Level Undergraduate, Honors optional
Three Credit Hours

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Prerequisite(s)

A previous social science course, or consent of instructor.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of all coursework with a passing grade and full participation in course activities, students shall be able to:

1. Apply sociological theories to explain how national identity is constructed and preserved through storytelling and oral tradition.
2. Apply sociological theories of cultural commodification to explain how authentic cultural practices are transformed into tourist products.
3. Analyze how cultural identity is practiced within a society and how it is constructed and marketed for outside and diaspora audiences.
4. Evaluate competing narratives about a shared history and assess who benefits from each version being told.
5. Explain how music, art, and folklore function as mechanisms for transmitting collective memory across generations.

Required Readings and Materials

Mary Waters, *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America*
Additional online articles and readings will be distributed while in Ireland

Students must bring either a paper notebook or electronic device (tablet/laptop) for completing the reflective journal assignment.

Assignments and Grades

The Final Grade will be assessed as follow:
Pre-departure report on collective identity = 10%
Reflective Journal of Daily Activities (1 to 2 pages per day) = 25 %
Quizzes completed during trip = 15 percent
Individual short presentation (5-10 minutes) about site we will be visiting. Prepared before trip for on-site presentation. = 10 percent
Active participation and attendance in discussions and site visits. = 15 percent
Final Paper to be written after returning to U.S. on culture and identity or commodification of culture (1000-1500 words) = 25 percent

Honors students complete the same activities and site visits but are additionally required to:

- Submit a longer final research paper (2000–3,000 words vs. 1000–1,500 words for standard students) that situates their analysis of Irish identity within a broader sociological framework, drawing on at least 10 peer-reviewed sources beyond assigned course readings.

- Complete a pre-departure annotated bibliography of 10 sources related to their chosen paper topic, due one week before departure. This will be graded as part of the Final Research paper.

Grading Scale

The following scale will be used to compute your grade.

90 – 100% = A
80 – 89% = B
70 – 79% = C
60 – 69% = D
Below 60% = F

Onsite Learning Experiences and Activities

Onsite learning experiences in this class will likely include the following site visits. This is a tentative list which will be replaced with a detailed daily itinerary of class meetings and field trips prior to the departure date.

- Kilmainham Gaol
- Guinness Storehouse and Brewery Experience
- Glasnevin Cemetery guided tour
- EPIC Irish Emigration Museum
- Trinity College and the Book of Kells
- Dublin Castle
- St. Patrick's Cathedral
- National Museum of Ireland
- Galway City Museum
- Connemara
- Galway Folk Festival
- Athlone Castle
- Giant's Causeway

Attendance Policy

Attendance is mandatory at all scheduled activities and class meetings as well as field trip excursions. This includes any virtual meetings before and after the onsite experience. Repeated absences, including for ill health, will require documentation to be excused.

Given the intensive nature of this two-week course, even a single absence represents a significant portion of the total instruction time. Each unexcused absence will result in a 10% deduction from your final course grade.

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Academic Integrity Policy

Academic dishonesty in any form, including plagiarism, is unacceptable and will result in immediate consequences ranging from assignment failure to course failure. Students must adhere to their home university's academic integrity standards and policies. All violations will be documented and reported to the student's home institution.

Physical Expectations

Program requires walking 3-5 miles per day on uneven pavement in all kinds of weather and long periods of standing. Students must be able to carry their own bags and belongings.

Costs

While the CCSA program fee often covers all of the entry fees and other costs for required course activities on field trips, it is possible that additional costs will accrue to participants. Therefore, participants need to budget $100 for such possible extra, class-oriented expenditures.

Disability Accommodation

CCSA is committed to providing access to education abroad to the extent possible in a study abroad setting. The earlier CCSA and the faculty know the needs, the more likely we can accommodate them. At a minimum, students seeking accommodations are to contact both the CCSA office and the faculty one month in advance of the program's beginning. Students seeking such accommodation must provide CCSA with a copy of the letter on file with their own Office of Disability Services

outlining what services they receive on their home campus.

Title IX Policy

Sexual misconduct (including sexual harassment, sexual assault, and any nonconsensual behavior of a sexual nature) and sexual discrimination violate CCSA policies. Students experiencing such behavior may obtain support from the Onsite Program Director or the CCSA Executive Director. To report sexual misconduct or sex discrimination, contact either of these two officers. Disclosure to faculty instructors or CCSA officers of sexual misconduct, domestic violence, dating violence, or sex discrimination occurring on the program or involving a visitor, student or employee is not confidential under Title IX. Faculty and other CCSA employees are required to forward such reports, including names and circumstances, to the CCSA Executive Director.

Statement about Final Syllabus

Please note that all CCSA syllabi are subject to change, but every effort will be made to ensure participants receive notice of such changes in a timely manner.