English 117B Summer 2017 **Critical Analysis (with Research)**

**Overview**: The major assignment for this class will involve analysis and research, and it is intended to expand your understanding of global cultures (not necessarily Irish or American culture). Your topic should relate in some way to the course material and/or themes, but you are encouraged to break new ground. It should be based on at least one work of literature or film, though comparison topics are also an option. It should deal with a culture other than America’s, and it should be a film you haven’t seen before.

**Details**:

* This should not be a mere “data dump” that *only* collects information and/or statements made by others, though it should include both background information and quotes/paraphrases from your research sources, properly cited.
* It should offer your original insights about the work. All ideas and words of others must be properly cited. Plagiarism can lead to failing the class. See me if you aren’t sure how to do this.
* Your analysis could be literary, cinematic, or historical.
  + Literary analysis is what you typically do in literature classes. You choose a *theme* central to the work and discuss what the writer seems to be saying about this theme. It involves a close reading of *literary elements,* including character development, plot structure, point of view, word choice, imagery, setting, or symbolism.
  + Cinematic analysis: Film analysis is just like literary analysis except that when analyzing the theme, you can also discuss elements specific to the performing arts, such as acting, cinematography, costume, music, etc.
  + Historical analysis: Typically historians analyze stories based on history to see what a particular writer has emphasized, what argument is being made, and usually also what changes (“artistic license”) are taken with the historical facts. Historians can also illuminate a work by explaining how a novel/play/poem/film’s message can better be understood by looking at its historical context—what was going on at the time it was written. For example, scholars have written about why the film *Sergeant York,* depicting a WWI hero, was intended to persuade Americans to get into WWII, and why Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible* was really about the Red Scare, not the Salem witch trials.

**Related Assignments:**

* Brief topic proposal (25-50 words, must be approved by the instructor, due Th 29 July)
* Researched paper with works cited page in MLA format (1200 words, due 8 August)
* Essay abstract to post on Canvas for your classmates (100-200 words, due 8 August)

**Topics:**

**Stories from Irish myth/legend/folklore** building off the stories we will read, you could look at other versions of the story and analyze the differences. You could also/instead analyze illustrations of these stories or characters. For example, Deirdre of the Sorrows, the Silke, Cu Chulainn, and Maeve have all been reworked many times by many writers/artists/filmmakers through the ages and in different contexts. You could pick one character or story and analyze how different versions in different contexts have been given different meanings. (examples: the silke myth has been employed in *Ondine* and *The Secret of Roan Innish* (films); Deirdre has been depicted in 2 classic plays and one TV episode set in Galway, among many other versions; and Maeve and Cu Chulainn have been depicted in recent graphic novels)*.*

**Films about the Arts/Artists in Irish culture:** *Synge Street, The Commitments, Once, Frank, Death of a Superhero, Gross Indecency, Nora*, *The Playboys, Stella Days, Secret of Kells*

**Films about strong women and social justice (in Ireland and elsewhere)**: *Veronica Guerin* (Ireland)*, Whale Rider* (New Zealand)*, Elizabeth* (England), *The Magdalen Sisters* (Ireland), *Swades* (India), *The New World* (Native Americans), *Raise the Red Lantern* (China)

**Films about the Troubles** *Five Minutes of Heaven, Shadow Dancer, Hunger, Omagh, Bloody Sunday, The Informer, The Crying Game, In the Name of the Father, The Mighty Celt.* For some reason, this period has been the subject of more films than any other period of Irish history. Some films put the fighters at center stage, while some focus on the victims, but all have a point to make about what drives people to violence and how it affects both individuals and society at large.

**Films about other cultures** that relate to our themes:

* **Immigrants making their way in a new land**: *The Beautiful Country* (Vietnamese--US), *Sweetland,* (a German, Norwegians--US), *Dirty Pretty Things* (Africans, Turk--London)*, In America* (Irish family--NY), *The Nephew* (African-American--Ireland), *Under the Same Moon* (Mexico--US), *Outsourced* (India-US), *Amreeka* (Palestinian-US), *Solomon and Gaenor* (Jews in Wales)
* **Sports and political strife/racism**: *Lagaan*, *Wondrous Oblivion, Invictus*
* **Warriors/Statesmen/Peacemakers:** *Cry Freedom, Gandhi, The Last Samurai, The Mission, Testament of Youth, Sergeant York, Silent Night, Amazing Grace, Elizabeth, First Knight, King Arthur, Troy, The Wind that Shakes the Barley*, *1916: A Terrible Beauty* (these last 2 are Irish)
* **Revamped myth/folklore:** *Sita Sings the Blues,* *The Ramayana, Tristan and Isolde, Princess Mononoke, Into the West*
* **Family dynamics:** *This is My Father* (Irish), *My Little Sister* (Japanese), *Like Water for Chocolate* (Mexican), *Mirrormask* (British)