Ireland famously (or infamously) voted in 2004 to end the automatic citizenship right for all babies born in Ireland; supporters of the legislation argued that women were travelling to Ireland to give birth specifically to obtain an EU passport for their children. This was certainly not the first time that constructions of the family created conflict in Ireland (we might think of the 1937 Constitution and the series of divorce laws enacted by the State, or the Ann Lovett case and the various child abuse scandals), nor that representations and understandings of childhood were contentious topics of public discourse. Thus the 2009 release of the Ryan Report has been seen as signaling a new openness in Ireland to discussing formerly taboo topics. This course is an interdisciplinary exploration of the intersections of childhood and the construction of the family in twentieth-century Irish society. The central focus of this exploration will be literary representations of the family (texts to be read may include James Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*; Kate O’Brien, *The Land of Spices*; Hugo Hamilton, *The Speckled People: A Memoir of a Half-Irish Childhood*; Patrick McCabe, *The Butcher Boy*; and Emma Donoghue, *Stir-Fry*); we will also examine media depictions of the family. Topics to be covered include: education; child abuse; traditional roles of the mother and father in the family; teenage pregnancy and the Magdalene laundries; censorship issues.

The course introduces students to historical and contemporary feminist and gendered conversations about childhood, the family, and heteronormativity in Irish society. While the central texts for the course will be literary, our approach to the topic of childhood and the family in Ireland will be interdisciplinary, though, in recognition of the current state of Irish Studies (particularly Irish literary studies). We will also explore media representations of the family, including documentaries (*Pyjama Girls*), films (*The Wind that Shakes the Barley, Evelyn*, and *Albert Nobbs*), and television (*Mrs. Brown’s Boys*). Our discussions of these texts (both written and visual) will be informed by secondary readings from the social sciences, including sociological, anthropological, and historical studies; this interdisciplinary approach introduces students to the tenor of current research in Irish Studies, and this course provides students the opportunity to undertake literary research through a gendered lens. This course will engage students in developing a deeper understanding of gender relations, class, sexuality, and family life, as well as highlight ways that Irish literature has consistently expressed these concerns. Additionally, through its focus on a single topic, the position of the child/family in Irish society, students will be able to apply insights from a variety of disciplines in order to formulate answers to the questions raised by our readings.
**Course assignments:**

10% ~~ participation  
30% ~~ 2 short response papers (4-5 pages);  
30% ~~ Research project – students will select a topic related to our readings:  
   10% ~~ oral presentation of their secondary research that explores a sociological or historical phenomenon which plays a prominent role in one of the novels (child abuse or educational opportunities for girls, for example)  
20% ~~ a research paper (5-8 pages);  
10% ~~ a review essay of 2 critical articles (2-3 pages)  
20% ~~ a final exam (including take-home essay and quotation identifications).  

**Primary texts to purchase:**

Emma Donoghue, *Stir-Fry* [Harper Collins, 978-0060171094] *this is not available in the bookstore*  
James Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* [Penguin, 978-0142437346]  
Patrick McCabe, *The Butcher Boy* [Delta, 978-0385312370]  
Kate O’Brien, *The Land of Spices* [Virago, 978-1844083169]  

**Schedule:**

Week 1:  
8/28: Introduction – the changeling figure and Bridget Cleary  

Week 2:  
9/2: *Riders to the Sea* (1904)  
[http://archive.org/stream/riderstosea00syngiala/riderstosea00syngiala_djvu.txt](http://archive.org/stream/riderstosea00syngiala/riderstosea00syngiala_djvu.txt)  
9/4: Library work – Patricia Lynch’s *Strangers at the Fair and other Stories*  

Week 3:  
9/9: *Albert Nobbs* [to be screened in advance] (turn-of-the-century)  
   research presentation [education at the beginning of the 20th century; traditional roles of the mother and father in the family]  

Week 4:  
9/16: *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Chapters One and Two (1914-15)  
9/18: *Portrait*, cont., Chapters Three and Four  

Week 5:  
9/23: *Portrait*, cont., Chapter Five  
9/25: Clair Wills, "Political Background to the Rising"; "Introduction: In the name of God and the dead" [e-reserves]  
   *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* [to be screened in advance] (1920)
Week 6:
9/30: Macardle’s “The Return of Niav” [e-reserves]
O’Connor’s “My Oedipus Complex” [e-reserves]
1st response paper due (film) – prompt to be provided
10/2: The Land of Spices, Book One (pre-WWI; pub: 1941)

Week 7:
10/7: The Land of Spices, cont., Book Two
10/9: The Land of Spices, cont., Book Three

Week 8:
10/14: Mary Lavin, “the Nun’s Mother.” [e-reserves]
Cara Delay, “Ever so holy: girls, mothers, and Catholicism in Irish women’s life-writings, 1850-1950” [e-reserves]
Elizabeth Cullingford. “‘Our Nuns Are Not a Nation’: Politicizing the Convent in Irish Literature and Film.” [e-reserves]

Week 9: Fall Break (10/19-10/27)

Week 10:
10/28: Evelyn [to be screened in advance] (1953)
10/30: Kavanagh, “A Christmas Childhood’ in Ireland” and “The Great Hunger” [handouts]
Friel, “The Child” [e-reserves]
O’Flaherty, Liam. “The Fanatic.” [e-reserves]
Research presentations [Magdalen asylums; teenage pregnancy; sexual mores]

Week 11:
11/4: The Speckled People: A Memoir of a Half-Irish Childhood
2nd response paper due (poetry) – prompt to be provided

Week 12:
11/11: The Butcher Boy

Week 13:
11/18: Meehan, “The Statue of the Virgin at Granard” and “Child Burial” [handouts]
Research presentation [child abuse; the role of the Catholic Church in Irish society; censorship issues]
11/20: Boland, “The Room in Which My First Child Slept” [handout]
Ní Dhomhnaill, “The Battering” and “First Communion” [handouts]
Heaney, “Digging” [handout]
Research paper due
Week 14:
11/25: *The Pyjama Girls* [to be screened in advance]
    Ní Dhuibhne, Éilís. “Sex in the Context of Ireland.”
11/27: Thanksgiving break

Week 15:
12/2: *Stir-fry*
12/4: *Stir-fry*, cont.

Week 16:
12/9: **Critical article review due**
12/11: Tom Inglis, “The Global Irish”
    *Mrs Brown’s Boys* [to be viewed in advance –
    Web links on Sakai]
    Wrap-up

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**Final exam – Tuesday, December 17, 8-10 am**

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**Primary Texts:**


**Secondary texts:**


Additional Sources:
Joseph Dunne, *Childhood and Its Discontents: The First Seamus Heaney Lectures*
Diarmuid Ferriter, *Occasions of Sin, Sex and Society in Modern Ireland*
Richard Mills, “Perspectives on Childhood” in *Childhood Studies: A Reader in Perspectives of Childhood* [Editors Jean Mills and Richard Mills]
Cliona Rattigan, ‘What Else Could I Do?: Single Mothers and Infanticide, Ireland 1900-1950’
Maxine Rhodes, “Uncovering the History of Childhood” in *Childhood Studies: A Reader in Perspectives of Childhood* [Editors Jean Mills and Richard Mills]
James M. Smith, *Ireland’s Magdalen Laundries and the Nation’s Architecture of Containment*