

WR 153: Writing, Research & Inquiry with Creativity and Innovation
Imitating Irish Writers
Summer 2025

Instructor Name: Kevin Barents

Course Days: See Current Schedule

Instructor Email: kbarents@bu.edu

Course Credits: 4 credits + 3 BU Hub Units (1. Writing, Research, and Inquiry; 2. Research and Information Literacy; 3. Creativity and Innovation)

Course Description

Although we are often encouraged to write what we know, the best research writing is motivated by our interest in the unknown: What do we want to discover, how can we discover it, and what are the most effective ways to communicate our discoveries? These questions will drive our work in WR 153. Building on WR 120 or its equivalent, this class will help you cultivate your writing and research skills through a range of assignments, including significant research-based writing in which you will be responsible for identifying and refining a topic, devising research questions, and answering those questions by finding and using a range of scholarly and non-scholarly sources. As a course that earns a Hub Unit in Creativity and Innovation, WR 153 will give you an opportunity to design, research, and execute a sustained project or series of projects with an emphasis on the stages of design thinking. Through generating ideas, imagining an audience's needs, developing strategies for implementation, offering feedback to your peers, redesigning in response to feedback and reflection, and risking productive failure, you will develop the skills and persistence to bring your project to fruition. You will also come to understand creativity as a learnable, iterative process that can be applied in any area of study.

The specific topic of this section is "Imitating Irish Writers." From James Joyce's shapeshifting stylization in *Ulysses* to Lisa McGee's sit-com satire on *Derry Girls*, the works of Irish writers will occasion our appreciation and provide perspectives on and insights about Irish history, politics, culture, and art. Some of these poets, novelists, playwrights, songwriters, and screenwriters will also serve as models for our own (low-stakes and fun) creative exercises. In Dublin, we will visit literary landmarks, see productions, and meet with writers and scholars.

Course Objectives

You will receive three Hub units for this class: Writing, Research and Information Literacy, and Creativity and Innovation.

You will develop your abilities to:

- Generate ideas and create strategies for implementing those ideas
- Strategically search for and select both scholarly and non-scholarly sources and read them with understanding, appreciation, and critical judgment
- Express yourself orally and converse thoughtfully about complex ideas
- Engage a range of sources in order to address research questions and to communicate findings in the form of responsible, considered, and well-structured arguments

- Produce clear, coherent work in a range of genres and styles, using different media and modes of expression as appropriate
- Plan, draft, and revise efficiently and effectively, and help your peers do the same by responding productively to their work
- Reflect on how research, reading, writing, and revision practices differ for varied audiences, genres, and purposes
- Identify approaches that promote creativity and innovation

Instructional Format, Course Pedagogy, and Approach to Learning

Although they differ in their subject content, all WR seminars share common goals and lead you through a sequence of assignments that emphasize a process of planning, drafting, and revising informed by feedback from your classmates and instructor. Seminar activities also give you opportunities to engage in focused scholarly inquiry and discussion.

In WR 153, you will learn about and practice design thinking as you undertake a sustained project or series of projects related to our course topic. Design thinking is a non-linear creative process that will help you develop the skills and persistence to bring your project to fruition and can be applied to practical and conceptual problems in other areas of study and life. The process involves the following steps:

Understand

Students will develop a foundation for their work by exploring issues and approaches relevant to the course topic, as well as previous work in the field.

Empathize

Students will practice empathy by demonstrating their awareness and understanding of the audience for whom they write or create.

Define

Based on their observations and insights, students will articulate a problem or question that will motivate their work over the course of the semester.

Ideate

Students will generate new ideas and possible solutions by challenging assumptions and engaging in a variety of creative activities.

Prototype

Students will start to create solutions and implement their ideas into written, digital or other forms in order to capture ideas, but also redefine choices.

Test

Students will share drafts with others in order to gain feedback and insight into improving final versions.

Assess/Reflect

Students will regularly reflect on and evaluate their peers' and their own processes and final outcomes.

In this course, you will also conduct individual and/or group research for your project, exploring new ways to find, evaluate, and engage with information from different sources and in different formats. You will become better able to select and use information sources strategically to formulate and respond to research questions and to participate in scholarly and non-scholarly conversations about your topic. You will become a more flexible writer by adapting your inquiry to address different audiences and integrating research into your writing in various ways to create new knowledge. Reflecting on your approaches to creativity, research, and writing will prepare you to adapt these to future occasions.

Required Texts

Required Texts: -Materials for some Author Logs may require you to pay a rental fee or subscription.

Courseware

Our class has a Blackboard site that contains the syllabus, assignments, and other course-related materials. You can access our Blackboard site here <http://learn.bu.edu/>

Course Requirements and Assignments

- Assigned readings
- Frequent low-stakes writing exercises, homework, and in-class writing
- Metacognitive and reflective writing, including an initial self-assessment and a final reflective essay
- Frequent and varied activities engaging in innovative and creative practices and design thinking
- A semester-long research project
- Regular peer review
- Instructor conferences
- Regular class attendance and active participation

Overview of Assignments

Low Stakes Writing

Required Responses	10%	(Packet 7)
4 Author Logs	20%	(Packet 7)
Research Log	20%	(Packet 7)

Medium Stakes Presentations

Author Presentation	15%	(Packet 8)
Original Creation Pres.	10%	(Packet 9)

High Stakes Writing

Analysis	10%	(Packet 9)
Research Report	15%	(Packet 10)

50% Low Stakes Writing

You will complete most of this writing on your Author Logs, Required Responses, and Research Log documents. Other Low Stakes Writing include comments on peer's work, written discussion threads, and notes handwritten in the Packet with details from in-class, video, and audio lectures. These responses will directly inform and feed your other projects. This work will mostly be graded for completion and development, not for grammar or refinement, so feel free to make mistakes and put down your thoughts without immediately editing them.

25% Medium Stakes Presentations

This work will be graded for completion and development, for how well you demonstrate success with our course goals, and also for how well you are able to engage your audience and communicate meaningful lessons from the materials you have found and studied. The creative work you do this semester will be graded for completion and effort.

25% High Stakes Writing

The Analysis and the Research Report can be considered to be more "high stakes" than the work mentioned above. We do not have exams or finals in this class, but you might think of these assignments as a kind of exam, on which you'll show your understanding of all of the packet materials and demonstrate your success with all of the course goals. I will consider both sentence-level and global issues. You will receive substantial written feedback from me on both drafts of the Analysis and on the final draft of the Research Report. You will receive feedback on the drafts of your Research Report largely through conferences and conversation, focusing on global concerns and including a discussion of your Research Report draft. You should use my written feedback on your Analysis as a guide as you work to diagnose and correct sentence-level errors on your final work. You can assume that, when I read your Low and Medium Stakes Writing, I notice many of the same things even if I do not always mark them.

Attendance

You may miss two classes without penalty. I ordinarily do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, so please save your absences for when you need them. If you exceed the number of allowed absences, your course grade may be lowered as follows:

Number of absences Final grade penalty

3 1 letter

4 2 letters

5 3 letters

6 Automatic Failure

If you have a special obligation that will require you to miss classes (e.g., religious observances, family obligations), please talk with me at the beginning of the semester or whenever the need arises. If there are extraordinary circumstances that cause you to miss more than the allowed number of classes, please contact me

so we can discuss how to best handle the situation. If you become ill at any point during the semester, do not come to class. Excessive lateness will also lower your grade: the fourth and each subsequent tardy will result in a grade penalty of -1%. Coming to class more than 15 minutes late counts as an absence.

Late and Missed Assignments

I am committed to providing you with timely written or verbal feedback on one draft of each major paper and written feedback and a grade on the final version of each major paper. You can generally expect my responses to your drafts within two weeks of your punctual submission of them; graded final versions will be returned to you within two weeks.

If you submit a homework exercise or draft late, I cannot promise to read it in time for my comments to be useful to you. If you do not turn in drafts, you are still responsible for turning in final versions of your papers when they are due. Please note too that we will regularly work with our exercises and drafts in class. If you are habitually late with your assignments, you will be unable to participate fully in the class.

Unless you make other arrangements with me in advance, graded assignments will be penalized by one-third of a letter grade for each class day they are late. Due dates will be outlined on the course schedule, and you are expected to plan accordingly and allow sufficient preparation time.

Academic Integrity

In this class, we will discuss conventions for using and citing sources in academic papers. Cases of plagiarism will be handled in accordance with the disciplinary procedures described in Boston University's Academic Conduct Code. All WR students are subject to the CAS code, which can be read online:

<http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/>

Name and Pronouns

I will ask that all students provide their names and pronouns at the beginning of the semester. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Office of Disability and Access Services

I assume that all of us learn in different ways. If there are circumstances that may affect your performance in this class, please talk to me as soon as possible so that we can work together to develop strategies for accommodations that will satisfy both your learning needs and the requirements of the course. Whether or not you have a documented disability, BU provides many support services that are available to all students.

Disability Services is the office responsible for assisting students with disabilities. If you have a disability that interferes with your learning (whether visible or invisible, physical or mental), you are encouraged to register with this office. Disability Services will work with you to determine appropriate accommodations for your courses, such as additional time on tests, staggered homework assignments, or note-taking assistance. This office will give you a letter outlining the accommodations you need that you can share with your teachers; specific information about your disability will remain private. If you have any questions about accommodation, or what constitutes a disability, I invite you to speak with me or to Disability Services.

In this class, we are seriously committed to supporting diversity and inclusion among all classroom community members. We proactively strive to construct a safe and inclusive environment by respecting each other's dignity and privacy. We treat one another fairly and honor each member's experiences, beliefs, perspectives, abilities, and backgrounds, regardless of race, religion, language, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender identification, ability status, socio-economic status, national identity, or any other identity markers. Bullying, hateful ideas,

violent language, belittling, racial slurs, and other disrespectful or “othering” language or behavior will not be tolerated.

Our class provides a safe space for free inquiry and open exchange of ideas. Difficult social issues will be confronted, and controversial ideas will be exchanged. We recognize the power and promise of language and yet are cognizant that language might be used to exclude or hurt rather than express or inform. Therefore, though we might feel strongly about a topic, we maintain respect for each other’s diversity. We act and communicate respectfully toward one another, both directly and indirectly, both inside and outside the classroom.

We value curious, open-minded inquiry, and we critically engage with ideas in diverse texts to learn about perspectives diverging from our own; this enhances our existing understandings and enriches our lives. Writing to communicate necessitates an inclusive relationship with a reader, and in this class, we are accountable for our messages and committed to caring for our reader’s understanding of these messages. While at times it is appropriate to share our beliefs and opinions, we are committed to informing those beliefs and opinions through intentional inquiry and evidence-based thinking. All members contribute to building a caring, inclusive learning environment that promotes productive participation and sharing, and engenders growth among us all. As a classroom community, we share these values. If you ever have any concerns about the classroom climate, please reach out to me.

Resources

CAS Writing Program: Administers all WR courses and the CAS Center for Writing. You may contact the Writing Program if you have any concerns about your WR class:

100 Bay State Rd., 3rd Floor
617-358-1500; writing@bu.edu

Boston University Libraries: Offer a wealth of online and print resources. Research Librarians will introduce you to the many resources the library offers in any field of research. They can work with you to develop a research plan and organize your sources.

Educational Resource Center: Offers tutorial assistance to all undergraduate students in a range of subjects, including writing. You should use the Writing Program’s Center for Writing for your WR classes, but you may wish to visit the ERC website for information: 100 Bay State Rd, 5th floor; 617-353-7077; <http://www.bu.edu/erc>

CAS Academic Advising: A central resource for all questions concerning academic policy and practice in the College of Arts and Sciences. The office is headed by the Associate Dean for Student Academic Life and has a staff of fifteen faculty advisors and five academic counselors. All students can receive academic advice about and assistance through this office. Students who have not yet declared concentrations can receive pre-registration advising through this office:

100 Bay State Rd. 4th floor
Email: casadv@bu.edu
Phone: 617-353-2400
<http://www.bu.edu/casadvising/>

Student Central: Web page that provides direct access to public and personal academic, financial and institutional data maintained in the University's central computer system:
<http://www.bu.edu/students>

Student Health Services: Offers an array of health services to students, including wellness education and mental health services (behavioral medicine):

<http://www.bu.edu/shs/>
<http://www.bu.edu/shs/wellness/index.shtml>

Imitating Irish Writers Current Schedule

This schedule is subject to change. The most recent version will be in our Google Drive folder.

All readings and assignments are **DUE** by class time on the date they are listed on the schedule. You may choose to skip any Author Logs, as long as you have a total of 4 by the end of the semester.

Although not specifically listed for each date on the schedule, "Required Responses" entries (see Packet 7) should always be completed **before** class on the day the lecture or response is listed.

Part 1: Course Foundations

Week 2

T 6/17 *Introductions; course adjectives and expectations; responding to sources according to BEAM role; metrical poetry; choosing an author*

W 6/18 **Meet at 10AM at the front entrance to Trinity University**
Yeats Exhibit, Heaney's bog bodies; Blooming Ulysses at Bewley's Cafe
Read: At least 15 pages (or the equivalent of audio/visual material) that you find about your assigned author. You might want to use [Mugar's homepage](#) or our class's customized [Library Research Guide](#). Some exhibits might require a subscription or rental fee.

Watch: All 4 brief videos in the Flipped Learning Module on "Strategies for Analysis of Text," available at this [link](#). You do **not** need to complete any of the activities in the module, but you should use strategies and templates in your Research Log response (see below).

Due: -On your Research Log document (in the "Low Stakes Writing" folder in our shared Google Drive folder), write responses (totaling at least 150 words) to the material you read, using strategies from the last page of the Course Packet. Give full MLA citation for each source (you might consult the [OWL](#)). See Packet page 7 for details.

Th 6/19 *Yeats; assignment guidelines; writing about art; description as evidence; irony; metaphor; the sound of words; sharing creative work; self-assessment*

Listen: -Audio Lectures on "Sound & Language" and "Metaphor & Symbolism" (in "Audio Lectures" folder under "Materials" in our shared Drive folder; take notes on pages 26-27 of the Packet)

Due: -Author Log for W.B. Yeats (in "Author Logs" folder under "Low Stakes Writing" in our shared Google Drive folder). See Packet pg 7.

Don't forget to respond to Audio Lectures on the Required Responses

document in our shared Google Folder (see Packet page 7)

Part 2: Research as Exploration and Inspiration

Week 3

- W 6/25 **Meet in our seats at the [3 Olympia Theater](#) by 7:15 PM for *Happy Days***
Listen: -Audio Lectures on “Concision and Specificity” and “Integrating Quotations” (in “Audio Lectures” folder and pages 21-22 in Packet)
Read: Required Materials listed on the Author Log for your author
Due: -Author Log for your author (in our shared Google Drive folder)
- F 6/27 *Beckett’s Happy Days; evaluating art; agreeing & disagreeing; reviews; peer review*
Listen: -Audio Lectures on “Irony,” “Artistic Sins” and “Agreeing and Disagreeing” (in “Audio Lectures” folder and pages 26-28 in Packet)
Due: -Analysis Draft 1 (have up on computer for peer review)

Week 4

- W 7/2 *Samuel Beckett; poetry in Irish: O Bruadair, Michael Hartnett, and Nuala Ni Domhnaill*
Read: The rest of *Waiting for Godot*
Due: -Analysis Draft 2 (convert to PDF and add to “Analysis” folder in our shared Google Drive folder)
-Author Log for Samuel Beckett (if completing)
- F 7/4 **Field Trip to *Experience Gaelic Games*--meet at 11AM**
Read: Nuala Ni Domhnaill: translations of the poems “[The Language Issue](#),” “[Behemoth](#),” and “[The Mermaid in the Hospital](#)”
Recommended: Your Research log should be at least a quarter complete

Part 3: Focusing and Shaping Research

Week 5

- W 7/9 *Louis De Paor visit; Author Presentations begin; Original Creation workshop*
Read: -All poems listed in the Author Log for Louis De Paor
Due: -Author Log for Louis De Paor (if completing)
-Final Draft of Analysis
-Informal workshop for Creative Project—prepare to share your work

- F 7/11 *Evan Boland; source-driven arguments; beginning of the film Michael Collins*
Read: [Irish Interior](#), [Mother Ireland](#), [Domestic Violence](#), [Quarantine](#),
[The Lost Land](#)
Listen: -Audio lecture on “Effective Thesis Statements,” “A Most Expected Structure,” and “Organizing an Argument” (on Media Gallery) and follow along on Packet 24-29
Recommended: Your Research Log should be at least half complete
Due: -Author Log for Evan Boland (if completing)
-Imagine you were going to use your research to write a long thesis-driven academic argument. Try to narrow your (hypothetical) focus down to a direct, up-front, contestable, meaningful, and precise thesis statement. Draft out a possible outline for a multi-paragraph essay (on Required Responses document).

Week 6

Due before scheduled conference this week: Before our meeting, please add to shared Drive folder a Word document with a draft of your Research Report (titled “Research Report Draft”)

- W 7/16 *Neil Jordan; formal workshop for Creative Project*
In Class: -Begin “Research Copy & Paste” document. No need to submit
Due: -Author Log for Neil Jordan (if completing)
- F 7/18 *TBA; varying sentences; stages of writing; friendly argument;*
Read: TBA
Due: -Author Log for TBA (if completing)

Week 7

- W 7/223 **Read:** -James Joyce: the first chapter of the novel [Ulysses](#); peer review
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Optional: Submit up to a page (double-spaced) of material research report for sentence-level feedback from teacher (add PDF to our shared Google Drive folder)
Due: -Research Report Draft for Peer Review
-Author Log for James Joyce (if completing)
- F 7/25 **Meet at Dun Laoghaire DART station by 11AM**
Joyce's tower; Original Creations
Due: Original Creation Presentation

Week 8 *See “Important End-of-Semester Announcements” email for details*

T 7/29 *Last day of class; informal summary of Research Reports; course review; course evaluations; celebration*

Due: -Final version of Research Report (add PDF to Google Drive folder)
-Research Log must be complete (in shared Google Drive folder)