

Reading *Ulysses* with Ambassador Daniel Mulhall

A career diplomat and author, Daniel Mulhall, who is currently Ireland's Ambassador to the USA, has written *Ulysses: A Reader's Odyssey* (Dublin 2022) with different sets of non-specialist readers in mind – those who have read Joyce's novel, those who plan to read it and those who may never get to read it, but want to know more about this leviathan of literary modernism. This course is aimed at a full range of readers and especially at those who want to deepen their knowledge of James Joyce and *Ulysses*, his greatest achievement.

This course alternates between in person and virtual meetings:

April 25 in person at The Rosenbach

May 9 virtual on Zoom

May 23 in person at The Rosenbach

June 6 virtual on Zoom

June 13 in person at The Rosenbach

The five sessions will be structured as follows:

April 25 in person at The Rosenbach

'Joyce, Dublin, Ireland' will explore the biographical, topographical and historical backgrounds to *Ulysses*.

May 9 virtual on Zoom

'Stephen' will examine those parts of the novel in which Stephen Dedalus, a character modelled on Joyce himself, is the presiding character, Episodes 1-3, 7, 9 and 14. It will explore Stephen's character and the role he plays in the novel.

May 23 in person at The Rosenbach

'Bloom on the move': This session will look at the character of Leopold Bloom from when we first meet him over breakfast at his home in Eccles Street in Episode 4, and as we follow him through the streets of Dublin in Episodes 5, 6, 8 and 11. Here we become deeply acquainted with Bloom's cautious, fastidious personality and with the quirky crevices of his mind.

June 6 virtual on Zoom

'Mr Bloom triumphs': Beginning with Episode 12, we see some different sides to Bloom. In 'Cyclops', Bloom, after being goaded about his identity, cuts loose and lays out his opposition to 'force, hatred, history'. He looks to a society rooted in the opposite of hate, 'Love'. In Episode 13 ('Nausicaa'), we see a sour, less appealing side to Bloom's character. Episodes 14-17 present him as a 'good Samaritan', but we also learn a lot more about Bloom's life and outlook. We accompany him as he makes his way back to his Ithaca on Eccles Street to the home he shares with Molly.

June 13 in person at The Rosenbach

'Molly' is an appropriate note on which to finish an analysis of *Ulysses*, for not only does she have the last word in the novel (in Episode 18), but her soliloquy returns to many of the themes that have arisen during her husband's day of wandering around Dublin.

Throughout the novel, Molly is never far from Bloom's mind and there are frequent references to her by the novel's minor characters, but Molly has her say in the end.

Recommended Reading:

There is a huge amount written about Joyce and *Ulysses*, but here are some of my recommendations. Naturally, Daniel Mulhall, *Ulysses: A Reader's Odyssey* comes highly recommended as does the classic Joyce biography, Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce*. There is a new edition of Terence Killeen's guide, *Ulysses Unbound: a reader's companion to James Joyce's Ulysses*. John McCourt (ed.), *James Joyce in Context* is a readable collection of literary criticism. I also found value in Frank Budgen, *James Joyce and the Making of Ulysses*. Budgen was a friend of Joyce's in Zurich and much of what he writes clearly comes directly from his conversations with Joyce which makes it invaluable. As a guide to Dublin, try Robert Nicholson, *The Ulysses Guide: Tours through Joyce's Dublin*. Finally, Vivien Igoe, *The Real People of Joyce's Ulysses: A Biographical Guide* is fun to dip into.

About the instructor

Daniel Mulhall was born in Waterford. He has spent more than 40 years in Ireland's diplomatic service, and is currently Ireland's ambassador in the United States. He has written and lectured around the world on the subject of Irish literature, and in particular the work of James Joyce, and has worked tirelessly throughout his career to further the impact and reach of Irish writing around the world.