

ENGL 337 Study of a Major Author – Oscar Wilde

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MWF 12:30-1:20



We will be reading the major works of Oscar Wilde and learning about his extraordinary life. Born in Dublin in 1854 and educated at Trinity College Dublin and Oxford, Wilde would become a celebrity as the spokesperson of the Aesthetic Movement. As a journalist, essayist, novelist, and playwright, he challenged Victorian social mores and worshipped beauty as an ideal.

At the height of his popularity in 1895, with both *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *An Ideal Husband* playing on the London stage, Wilde's life and career were destroyed when he brought libel charges against the Marquess of Queensberry, the father of his lover, Lord Alfred Douglas. Wilde lost the case, and the government pursued criminal charges for gross indecency. Wilde was found guilty in and sentenced to two years of hard labor in prison, which broke his health, destroyed his family, and ruined his career.

We will read widely across Wilde's *oeuvre*, including essays such as "The Soul of Man Under Socialism," "The Critic as Artist," and "The Decay of Lying"; plays including *An Ideal Husband* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*; and his only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. We will explore the Aesthetic movement, Decadence, and Wilde's enduring legacy as a queer icon.