

## BOSTON UNIVERSITY DUBLIN PROGRAMS

### CONTEMPORARY IRISH SOCIETY CAS SO 341

**Lecturer:** Frank Byrne, H. Dip. Ed., MACCS

**Email:** frankbyrne@dublin.ie

#### **Course Overview**

The aim of the course is to introduce students to the key features of Irish society and the key currents underpinning social change in Ireland in the 21st Century. Ireland, as a society, has experienced both incremental and accelerated social change in the latter half of the twentieth century. The former is characterised by the struggles that emerged between the forces of tradition and the forces of modernity whereas the latter emanates from radical economic change. In order to understand change we must first understand what has gone before. Thus the course begins with a profile of Irish society and a historical overview of its core features in the latter half of the 20th century. It then moves on to examine continuity and change in some of the key categories of Irish society such as religion, culture, economy and politics via their two step encounter with modernity.

#### **Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the course students should:

- Attain a structured insight into the salient factors that contribute to construction of contemporary Irish society;
- Become relatively comfortable with social interaction locally;
- Be in a position to reflect on how the issues, which arise during the course, may apply to their understanding of their identities both at home in the USA and in the wider world.

#### **Teaching Methodology**

The course is delivered through a series of lectures and participative class discussions with a strong emphasis on dialogue and debate. Where appropriate, the classes will be supplemented by audio-visual material, guest lectures and field-trips. Students will be asked to keep a brief diary for the duration of this course.

#### **Assignments and grading**

**Class participation and attendance, including diary, (10%):** Participative class discussion is an integral part of the course; students are encouraged to ask questions and are expected to actively engage in discussion during class.

**Two quizzes (20%):** The quizzes take place at the beginning of Lecture 9 and Lecture 19 and are in the form of 25 multiple-choice questions based entirely on material presented in class. Included also will be a small number of questions testing attention to newspapers and radio and TV news.

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**Essay (40%):** Essay titles will be distributed in week two. Essays should be between 2,000 and 2,500 words long.

Essays must answer the question or topic set. They must include discussion of different positions from the material researched, must develop an argument and reach a conclusion. Do not use overly long quotations; however, quotations, where applicable, must be clearly designated by quotation marks and accredited as to source. All essays must be typed and one and a half times spaced, with a front page indicating the title and the name of the student. Please note that proper and full referencing is a marking criterion. Originality of thought, theoretical insight, and clear exposition is likely to lead to good grades.

**Final Exam (30%):** Exam questions will be based on topics allowing some minor research on an aspect of contemporary Ireland. There will be a wide choice. Students must answer two questions excluding the topic on which they did their essay.

### Core Text

Share, P., Tovey, H. and Corcoran, M.P. (2007) *A Sociology of Ireland* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition), (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan). (Referred to in the readings below as STC)

### Supplementary Texts

FitzGerald, G. (2005) *Ireland in the World: Further Reflections* (Dublin: Liberties Press)

Slater, E. & Peillon, M. (2000) *Memories of the Present: A Sociological Chronicle 1997-1998*. (Dublin: IPA)

Daily newspapers and TV/Radio news bulletins will also form part of the required texts.

### Additional Reading

Corcoran, M.P and Peillon, P. (2002) *Ireland Unbound; A Turn of the Century Chronicle*, (Dublin: IPA)

Fanning, B. (2002) *Racism and Social Change in Ireland* (Manchester: MUP)

Horgan, J. (2001) *Irish Media, A Critical History*, (London: Routledge)

Inglis, T. (1998) *Moral Monopoly*, (Dublin: UCD Press)

Kirby, P. (2002) *The Celtic Tiger in Distress: Growth with Inequality in Ireland*, (New York: Palgrave)

O'Toole, F (2003) *After the Ball; Ireland After the Boom*, (Dublin: New Island Books)

Peillon, M, and Slater, E. (1998) *Encounters with Modern Ireland: A Sociological Chronicle 1995-1996*, (Dublin: IPA)

McWilliams, D. (2005) *The Pope's Children* (Dublin: Gill & McMillan)

McWilliams, D. (2007) *The Generation Game*, (Dublin: Gill & McMillan)

Kennedy, F. (2001) *Cottage to Crèche*, (Dublin: IPA)

Foster, R. F. (2007) *Luck and the Irish*, (London: Penguin)

### Plagiarism

It is every student's responsibility to read the Boston University statement on plagiarism, which is available in the Academic Conduct Code. Students are advised that the penalty against students on a Boston University program for cheating on examinations or for plagiarism may be "...expulsion from the program or the University or such other penalty as

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may be recommended by the Committee on Student Academic Conduct, subject to approval by the Dean.”

**Note:** Students must retain an electronic copy of all essays submitted for assessment.

### Lecture Schedule

Date	Lecture Title / Reading / Activity
	<p><b>1 Space, Place and Race</b></p> <p>Introductions and overview – a look too at the geography of Ireland both social and physical and its impact on contemporary perceptions. We examine the location of the national narrative.</p>
	<p><b>2 Ireland and Modernity: The Emergence and Development of the Irish State</b></p> <p>Reading: Chapters 3 and 4 in STC.</p> <p>A historical account of the development of the influential institutions, ideologies and interest groups that have emerged from and constituted the Irish State and its political, economic and cultural landscape into the twenty first century. Irish ethno-nationalism has been at the centre of Irish cultural identity. In this class we trace the trajectory of its development through the lens of modernism, and the ways in which it has informed and continues to shape public life. As well as nationalism, there will be an examination of the other pillars of Irish identity – Celtic, Catholic and colonised.</p>
	<p><b>3 The Catholic Church and Changing Beliefs 1</b></p> <p>Reading: Chapter 14 in STC</p> <p>For most of the State’s history the Catholic Church has had a state supported monopoly on the spiritual, moral and educational life of its population. This monopoly has seen its influence extend into various other spheres of Irish social life. This lecture looks at the origins of rituals and faith, early Celtic Christianity, the monastic tradition and the consequences of the Reformation. It will seek to set the scene for the trip to Glendalough.</p>
	<p><b>Program Orientation Excursion to Glendalough</b></p> <p>‘Monastic site founded in the 6<sup>th</sup> century’</p>

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	<p><b>4 The Catholic Church and Changing Beliefs 2</b></p> <p>Reading: Chapter 15 in Fitzgerald.</p> <p>This lecture sketches the outlook and influence of the Church in the various spheres of Irish life since the 1960s whilst also pointing to the forces, which have, relatively recently, challenged its centrality in Irish life.</p> <p><b>(Essay titles will be distributed at this lecture.)</b></p>
	<p><b>5 The Gift of the Gab</b></p> <p>Reading: Chapter 1 in Fitzgerald and pp. 345 – 348 in STC.</p> <p>In this class it is proposed that we look at the Irish language, its origins and use. The decline in the use of Irish is a matter of concern for those who believe it impacts on national identity. We will also take a look at the both our literary and oral traditions and at our use of Hiberno-English.</p>
	<p><b>6 The Media in Ireland</b></p> <p>Reading: Chapter 15 in STC.</p> <p>Lecture six addresses the structural development of the media in Ireland and traces its interplay with the social, democratic and cultural life of the country. Of particular interest is the contested role of the public broadcaster and its centrality in Irish public life. In this lecture we focus on the role played by the Mass Media in shaping the National identity. We will examine the implications for Irish culture, which is sandwiched between two media giants.</p>
	<p><b>7 “An Educated Population”</b></p> <p>Reading: Chapter 8 in STC</p> <p>Much has been made of the contribution made to the Celtic Tiger by the ready availability of a well-educated work force. This lecture will examine the structures and practices in the field of education in Ireland. Changing circumstances may encourage us to redefine some of the constructions and goals we have taken for granted.</p>
	<p><b>8 Inside the Tiger: From Bust to Boom and back again?</b></p> <p>Reading: Chapter 3 in STC</p> <p>This lecture explores the trajectory of the Irish economy since the foundation of the state. It will look at some of the key explanations of the ‘Celtic Tiger’ economy and how it impacted on the social fabric of the country. The prospects for the immediate future will also be questioned in the light of the global recession.</p>

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	<p><b>9 Small Island: Big World (Quiz #1 at the start of this lecture)</b></p> <p>Reading: Chapters 12 &amp; 13 in FitzGerald.</p> <p>In this class it is hoped to discuss those aspects of our society, which have ripples beyond our shores. Amongst the topics will be the Diaspora, Neutrality, Development Issues, The United Nations and globalisation. It may throw some light too on observations during the trip to the North.</p>
	<p><b>10 Field Trip to National Museum at Collins Barracks and to St. Michan's Church</b></p> <p>Some of the themes explored in last Thursday's lecture are well illustrated by the exhibitions at Collins Barracks. After a brief introduction worksheets will be used to encourage students to explore the museum. The morning will end with some cryptic investigations.</p>
	<p><b>11 The Happiest Europeans?</b></p> <p>Reading: FitzGerald Cp. 11</p> <p>In the light of the result of the second Lisbon Referendum, it is appropriate to explore the European facet of modern Irish identity. This will also allow us to have an outline overview of the development of the European project and its aims and structures.</p>
	<p><b>12 The Round System: Popular Culture in Ireland</b></p> <p>Reading: Chapter 13 in STC.</p> <p>There is a tendency to underplay the contribution of popular cultural expressions in creating and sustaining national identity. Of particular interest is the way in which the culture of everyday life – games, socializing – involves an interweaving of the global and the local. This class will seek to tease out the contribution they may have made to the creation of modern Ireland.</p>
	<p><b>13 Ethnicity and Multiculturalism</b></p> <p>Dr Ciaran Dunne, Guest lecturer will consider how Ireland has gone very swiftly from a situation of emigration to one where there has been a significant inflow of foreign workers and asylum seekers. This has presented its own issues and changes in the economy may reverse the trends and exaggerate the challenges. As a society we have to face up to the prospects of racism and pluralism. It might be instructive too to review how we deal with minorities within our own society.</p>

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	<p><b>14 Irish Music and Popular Culture</b></p> <p>Building on the material in the previous lecture, guest lecturer, Jim Rogers, will seek to locate the contemporary Irish music industry and culture in the broader contexts of national identity and the global entertainment scene. Listening to musical examples will form a substantial part of this lecture.</p>
	<p><b>15 The Political System and Structures</b></p> <p>This will be an opportunity for students to have an overview of the way our political system works and the way the affairs of the country are administered. They will be able to make comparisons with the American system and it will prepare the ground for a guided visit to the Dáil.</p> <p><b>(Essays to be submitted after this lecture.)</b></p>
	<p><b>16 Green Tinted Glasses</b></p> <p>Reading: STC Cps. 7 &amp; 11</p> <p>To counteract any temptation to tell the national narrative in purely optimistic and uncritical terms, this lecture will examine those places where the cracks are most obvious in contemporary Ireland. Issues such as poverty, inequality, crime and addiction compel us to address the contradictions and anomalies in the national consensus.</p>
	<p><b>17 Field Trip</b></p> <p>Visit to Dáil Éireann and meeting with Public Representative</p>
	<p><b>18 Health and Welfare (Quiz #2 at the start of this lecture)</b></p> <p>Reading: Chapter 10 STC.</p> <p>This lecture will take a critical look at some of the issues surrounding health care in modern Ireland. Topics will include traditional and alternative therapies, privatization of medicine and substance abuse.</p>
	<p><b>Final Examination</b></p>