

CONTEMPORARY IRISH SOCIETY

CAS SO 341

Lecturer: Dr. Frank Byrne

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Class Times: Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday: 10:30 am – 1:00 pm

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 and into the opening decade of the twenty-first. 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;
- Through that growing insight, become comfortable with social interaction locally;
- Be in a position to reflect on how the issues, which arise, may apply to their understanding of their own 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.

Assignments and Grading

Class participation and attendance, (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. Unexcused absences from class sessions will be penalised.

Two quizzes (20%): The quizzes take place at the beginning of Lecture 8 and Lecture 15, and are in the form of 20 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.

Essay (40%): Essay titles will be agreed on **during Lecture 3**. Essays should be between 2,000 and 2,500 words long and are due by **Lecture 12**.

Essays must answer the question or topic agreed. 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, the word count and the name of the student (2 spaces after a period/full stop please!). Please note that proper and full referencing is a marking criterion. Originality of thought, theoretical insight, and clear exposition are 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 specific topic on which they did their essay.

Core Text

Share, P., Corcoran, M.P. and Conway, B. (2012) *Sociology of Ireland* (4th Edition), (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan). (Referred to in the readings below as SCC)

Supplementary Texts

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

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

Finnigan, R.B. and McCarron, E.T (2000) *Ireland: Historical Echoes, Contemporary Politics* (Boulder CO: Westview Press)

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

Inglis, T (Ed.) (2014) *Are the Irish Different?* (Manchester, Manchester University Press)

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

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

McDonald, B. (2009) *An Introduction to Sociology in Ireland* (Dublin: Gill & McMillan)

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

O'Malley, E. (2011) *Contemporary Ireland*, (London, Palgrave McMillan)

O'Toole, F.(2010) *Enough is Enough*, (Faber and Faber)

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

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 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 work submitted for assessment.

Lecture Schedule

Date	Lecture Title / Reading / Activity
Lecture 1	<p>1. Space, Place and Race</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>Reading: O’Malley pp. 44 - 49</p>
Lecture 2	<p>2. Ireland and Modernity: The Emergence and Development of an Irish Identity</p> <p>In this class we trace the trajectory of its development through the lens of modernity 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 traditional pillars of Irish identity – Celtic, Catholic and colonised.</p> <p>Reading: SCC pp. 4- 13 Inglis (Ed.) Cp.2</p>
Lecture 3	<p>3. The Catholic Church and Changing Beliefs</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. This lecture also 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>Reading: SCC Cp. 13 pp. 323 & 327 – 352 Finnigan & McCarron pp. 124 – 183 Inglis (Ed.) Cps. 5, 10 & 11 Inglis Cps. 2, 3, 4 & 5 FitzGerald Cps. 5 & 15</p> <p>(Essay titles will be agreed at the start of this lecture.)</p>
Excursion	<p>Program Orientation Excursion to Glendalough Depart All Hallows entrance at 10.30 am</p>
Lecture 4	<p>4 The Gift of the Gab</p> <p>In this class 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 also take a look at the both our literary and oral traditions and at our use of Hiberno-English.</p> <p>Reading: O’Malley pp. 171 – 173 Finnigan & McCarron pp. 114 – 120 Fitzgerald Cp. 1 Inglis (Ed.) Cp.17</p>

Lecture 5	<p>5. An Educated Population?</p> <p>Much was made of the contribution to the Celtic Tiger by the ready availability of a well-educated work force. This lecture examines 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>Reading: SCC Cp. 7 pp. 145 – 156 & 171 – 175 O'Malley pp. 79 – 84 Finnigan & McCarron pp. 107 – 114 Inglis pp. 57 – 61</p>
Lecture 6	<p>6. Popular Culture in Ireland</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, music, socializing – involves an interweaving of the global and the local. This class seeks to tease out the contribution they may have made to the creation of modern Ireland.</p> <p>Reading: SCC Cp. 12 pp. 289 – 322 O'Malley Cp. 7 pp. 173 – 178 Inglis (Ed.) Cps. 18 & 19</p>
Lecture 7	<p>7. The Gaelic Experience Field-trip:</p> <p>To Na Fianna GAA club to learn something of the centrality of Gaelic Games to Irish identity and culture. There will be an audiovisual presentation followed by hands-on experience of Gaelic Football, Hurling and Handball.</p>
Lecture 8	<p>8. Small Island: Big World</p> <p>In this class it is hoped to discuss those aspects of our society that have ripples beyond our shores. Amongst the topics will be the Diaspora, Neutrality, Development Issues, The United Nations and globalisation. It is also 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>Reading: O'Malley Cp. 8 pp. 183 – 202 Finnigan & McCarron p. 81 and Cp.11 Fitzgerald Cps. 7, 11 & 12 Inglis (Ed.) Cp. 13</p> <p>(Quiz 1 at the start of this lecture.)</p>
Lecture 9	<p>9. The Economy Stupid!</p> <p>A Guest lecturer will explore the trajectory of the Irish economy since the foundation of the state. He will look at some of the key explanations of the 'Celtic Tiger' economy and how it impacted on the social fabric of the country. Our current political scene is very much dominated by the fallout from the banking collapse and the bursting of the property bubble. It is impossible to comprehend contemporary Ireland without considering the impact these have had on Irish identity.</p>

Lecture 10	<p>10. Ethnicity and Identity</p> <p>A Guest lecturer will consider how Ireland went 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>
3 Day Academic Fieldtrip	<p>3-Day Academic Fieldtrip to Northern Ireland</p>
Lecture 11	<p>11. Field-trip: to National Museum at Collins Barracks and to St. Michan’s Church</p> <p>Some of the themes explored in “The Small Island” 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. There will be an opportunity to visit the 1916 leaders’ graves at Arbour Hill as part of the History of Ireland course. The morning will end with some optional cryptic investigations.</p>
Lecture 12	<p>12 . The Political System and Structures</p> <p>The Irish political system will be utilised as a case study for one version of democracy. 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 their American system. It will also allow us to review our Visit to the Dáil</p> <p>Reading: O’Malley Cp. 4 pp.87 -109 & Cp. 5 pp. 110 – 128 Finnigan & McCarron Cp. 7 pp. 205 – 232 & Cp. 8</p> <p>(Essays to be submitted by the end of this Lecture)</p>
Lecture 13	<p>13. Fieldtrip to the Peacock Theatre at the Abbey to see <i>Cyprus Avenue</i>.</p>
Lecture 14	<p>14. Fieldtrip:</p> <p>Visit to the Dáil, our national Parliament and an opportunity to exchange views with a public representative.</p>
Lecture 15	<p>15. Green Tinted Spectacles (Quiz 2 at start of this lecture)</p> <p>There may be a tendency on a course like this to frame Irish society in a romantic and positive light. For a fuller picture it is necessary to visit issues like poverty, inequality, the penal system and crime. Retired Detective Sgt. Liam Hogan from the Garda Drugs unit will add some colour.</p> <p>Reading: SCC Cp. 10 pp. 232 – 262 O’Malley pp. 67 – 71 & 84 – 86 Finnigan & McCarron pp. 273 – 277 McDonald Cps. 6 & 8</p>
Final	<p>Final Examination 11:00 am – 1:00 pm</p>