

CONTEMPORARY IRISH SOCIETY

CAS SO 341

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Credits: 4 BU Credits + 3 HUB Units

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 and the early 21st. 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.

HUB Learning Outcomes

The individual in Community (One Unit):

- Students will analyse at least one of the dimensions of experience – historical, racial, socio-economic, political, gender, linguistic, religious, **or** cultural – that inform their own worldviews and beliefs as well as those of other individuals and societies.
- Students will participate respectfully in different communities **such as** campus, citywide, national and international groups, and recognize and reflect on the issues relevant to those communities.

Global Citizenship and Intercultural Literacy (Two Units):

- Students will demonstrate through comparative analysis, an understanding of global diversity as expressed in at least two different languages, cultures, religions, political systems or societies.
- Students will demonstrate detailed understanding of at least two cultural contexts through study abroad. This will involve reflection on the challenges and pleasures students discover in orienting themselves in new and unfamiliar cultures.

Generally, on completion of the course, the student will be able to:

- Identify the unique resources for foundational knowledge that is inherent in the study abroad experience. These resources will range from their own observations, having landed in a setting that is unfamiliar to them, to the constructs and theories offered via their lectures, fieldtrips and the supplementary material (Global citizenship and Intercultural Literacy).
- Contrast their newly acquired information and insights with their previous assumptions and formulate hypotheses regarding the bases of transcultural perspectives and practices (Global citizenship and Intercultural Literacy).
- Feel confident and comfortable in their interaction with others on campus and beyond but ultimately to integrate with ease into the workplace assigned for their internship stint (Global citizenship and Intercultural Literacy).
- Demonstrate cultural sensitivity in their interaction with colleagues, supervisors and others who cross their paths social, academically or professionally during their stay in Dublin (Global citizenship and Intercultural Literacy).
- Develop a curiosity and an enthusiasm for the potential for learning and self-development entailed in the thoughtful exploration of the wider world (Global citizenship and Intercultural Literacy).
- Examine a variety of dimensions of the Irish experience – politics, religion, education, the economy, popular culture, etc. – as an introduction to a worldview that may differ from the one they may take for granted (The Individual in Community).
- Theorise about the foundations of national identity and evaluate how the social, cultural and political structures they are introduced to both reflect and construct such an identity (The Individual in Community).
- Critique the differences between contrasting institutions and social constructs – law, education, health care, as examples – and to extrapolate from that what elements may contribute to achieving the common good and to advancing ethical global citizenship (The Individual in Community).

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.

In-Class Quiz (10%): The quiz takes place in the form of 20 multiple-choice questions based on material presented in the first three classes. Included also will be a small number of questions testing attention to newspapers and local radio and TV news.

Review (15%): For this assignment, you are asked to write a 500 word review of Irish media (a film, TV series, podcast, music (album), exhibition or a gig). Your review should reference at least 4 Irish media sources (news and events websites) and show awareness of Irish culture more broadly. The Review should be localised - written to appeal to and engage an Irish audience.

Essay Plan (15%): You should write and create an essay outline with a 300 word introduction and a list of proposed references. This will contribute to the writing and creation of your final essay submission. Details on the format of this outline will be provided in class.

Essay (25%): Essays should be 2000 words (+/-10%) long. 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 one sided and one and a half times spaced, with a front page indicating the title and the name of the student. Please use double spacing after periods (full stops). 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 (25%): Exam questions will be based on topics allowing some research on an aspect of contemporary Ireland. There will be a wide choice and the format of the exam and its grading will be discussed in class.

Core Text

Share, P., Corcoran, M.P. and Conway, B. (2012) *Sociology of Ireland* (4 th 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
Part 1	Socio-Historical Context
Class 1	<p>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. Reading: O'Malley pp. 44 – 49</p>
Class 2	<p>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. Reading: SCC pp. 4- 13 Inglis (Ed.) Cp.2</p>
Class 3	<p>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</p>

	<p>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 Cps. 2, 3, 4 & 5 Inglis (Ed.) Cps. 5, 10 & 11 FitzGerald Cps. 5 & 15</p>
Class 4	<p>‘In-Class Quiz’ (10%) in beginning of session</p> <p>The Gift of the Gab 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>
Class 5	<p>Field-trip: to National Museum at Collins Barracks.</p> <p>Some of the themes explored in previous lectures are well illustrated by the exhibitions at Collins Barracks. After a brief introduction, worksheets will be used to encourage students to explore the museum!</p>
Class 6	<p>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 &</p>
Part 2	Contemporary Ireland
Class 7	<p>The Educated Population</p> <p>Historically shaped by religious and social influences, Irish education has evolved into a highly centralized structure that impacts the nation’s workforce and economy. We will examine the accessibility of higher education and the challenges it faces today, including large class sizes, limited resources, and the balance between religious influence and state oversight. We’ll think of how education contributes to social mobility and the ongoing need for reform in modern Ireland.</p> <p>Reading: SCC Cp7 pp 145 – 156 & 171 – 175</p>

	<p>O'malley pp 79 – 84 Finnigan & McCarron pp 107 – 114 Inglis pp 57 - 61</p>
Class 8	<p>Field-trip: The Gaelic Experience</p> <p>Here we learn something of the centrality of Gaelic Games to Irish identity and culture from the horse's mouth! We are going to pay a visit to a busy GAA club, and there will be an audio-visual presentation followed by hands-on experience of Gaelic Football, Hurling and Handball.</p>
Class 9	<p>Irish Folklore - Guest lecturer</p> <p>A guest lecturer will discuss the traditions of storytelling and importance of myth for Irish national identity, and how folklore shapes and informs and shapes contemporary visual arts.</p>
Class 10	<p>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</p>
Part 3	Affecting Social Change
Class 11	<p>Emigration - Guest lecturer</p> <p>Dr Ciaran Dunne, 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>
Class 12	<p>The Political System and Structures – Domestic and European Part 1</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.</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>
Class 13	The Political System and Structures – Domestic and European Part 2
Class 14	The Political System and Structures - Green Tinted Spectacles Part 3

	<p>To counteract any 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.</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>
Class 15	Q&A
Exam	Final Exam