

Ireland & the Great Famine

History

HY 273

5 ECTS Credits

Maynooth University International Summer School

Department of History

HY 273SS

The Great Irish Famine

July 2019



The Famine Memorial in the Dublin Docklands. Photo by Garrett White

Module description

This module will introduce the student to the causes and consequences of the Great Irish Famine, when between 1845 and 1852 an estimated one million people died and a further one million migrated. While in terms of deaths the Great Irish Famine does not rank anywhere near a number of other such events – for example the Irish Famine, 1740-41, when approximately half-a-million of an estimated population of two-and-a-half million died, or the Great Bengal Famine, 1769-1773, which caused roughly 10 million deaths – it has remained a focus of popular memory and scholarly study.

While the immediate cause of the famine was the failure of the potato crop, this module will place this event within the broader social, economic, political and cultural context of nineteenth-century Ireland. In doing this, it seeks to understand the multiple factors that caused this disaster; the varied local, state and philanthropic responses to it; and its long-term impacts. Students will be introduced to the economic and theological concepts that guided contemporary reaction to the outbreak of the famine, as well as responses to it. Finally, students will gain an understanding of the contested nature of the historiography and remembrance of the famine.

To help attain this goal, students will study a range of secondary and primary sources, including: journals, newspapers, correspondence and eyewitness accounts.

Learning outcomes

- i. Identify and understand the key causes and consequences of the Great Irish Famine
- ii. Contextualise the changes in Irish society as a result of the famine
- iii. Understand and analyse the broad range of primary and secondary source material which underpins the study of the Great Famine
- iv. Interpret and understand a broad range of historiographical arguments relating to the famine.
- v. Students will construct a researched, structured and persuasive essay on an aspect of the Great Irish Famine
- vi. Students will develop skills in team work and group-research projects
- vii. Students will develop their oral communication skills through seminars and a formal group presentation

Readings

Students are provided with an extensive reading list outlining the main reference, general and Famine-specific works by historians. All of these are available through the Maynooth University Library, either in hard copy or as online resources. To identify additional works pertaining to the Great Irish Famine, students are encouraged to consult Irish History Online (<https://catalogues.ria.ie/Presto/home/home.aspx>), a bibliography of Irish history, and the Library online catalogue (<https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/library>).

Moodle

The course outline, lecture slides, reading list, course announcements and links to recommended websites will be posted on Moodle, the university's online learning environment (moodle.nuim.ie).

Email

It is important that students check their Maynooth University email accounts regularly, all correspondence related to the module should be conducted through this.

Attendance, preparation and participation

To benefit fully from the course and to ensure participation with their assigned group, students should attend all lectures. **There is an attendance condition attached to this module. A student must attend a minimum of 50% of the module lectures. If this condition is not met the module result is capped at a maximum of 35%.**

Please note that it is expected that students are punctual for lectures. If you are late, please enter the lecture hall with the minimum of noise and disturbance. If you must leave early, please notify the lecturer in advance and sit where you will not disturb others upon leaving. Please ensure that you have signed in for class. Phones should not be used in class; laptops etc. should be used for class work only.

Citation and plagiarism

All submitted work should include footnotes and a bibliography based on Irish Historical Studies' Rules for Contributors. An abbreviated version of this can be found in the history department's Undergraduate Handbook. Online sources should be from a reputable repository and fully referenced. These are not a substitute to engagement with the historical arguments set out in the academic texts contained in the reading list. Students should also note the consequences of plagiarism as set in the Undergraduate Handbook, this can be viewed here:

https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sites/default/files/assets/document/Undergraduate%20Handbook%20October%202018_0.pdf

All assignments must be accompanied by a fully completed cover sheet, which is available on Maynooth University Department of History website:

https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sites/default/files/assets/document/Cover%20sheet%20for%20History%20undergraduate%20assignments_1.pdf

Assessment

Assignment 1: Review of secondary source (15%) 750-word review

Assignment 2: Analysis of primary sources (15%) 750 words

Assignment 3: Field-trip report (10%) 500 words

Assignment 4: Group presentation (30%). This will consist of a twenty-minute presentation based on a research topic chosen by the group. This topic should be agreed with the course lecturer and work on this will form a significant part of the module.

Assignment 5: Essay (30%) 1,500-word research essay.

Lecture Schedule

<p>Day 1 (8 July) 9.30am–12.00pm</p> <p>1.00pm–3.30pm</p>	<p><u>Morning</u> <i>Introduction</i> <i>Lecture 1: Historiography of the famine</i></p> <p><u>Afternoon</u> <i>Comparison of secondary sources</i> <i>Preparation assignment 1</i></p>
<p>Day 2 (10 July) 9.30–12.00pm</p>	<p><u>Morning</u> <i>Lecture 2: Pre-famine Ireland</i> <i>Primary source analysis & discussion</i></p>

1.00pm–3.30pm	<p><u>Afternoon</u> <i>Lecture 3: The coming of blight: the famine begins</i> <i>Primary source analysis & discussion</i> <i>Preparation assignment 2</i></p>
Day 3 (15 July)	<p><u>Morning</u> <i>Lecture 4: Government response to famine, 1845–6</i> <i>Lecture 5: Government response, 1846–50</i></p> <p><u>Afternoon</u> <i>Preparation for group presentations</i> [Assignment 1 due]</p>
Day 4 (17 July)	<p><u>Morning</u> <i>Lecture 6: Local and private relief efforts, 1845–51</i> <i>Primary source analysis & discussion</i></p> <p><u>Afternoon</u> <i>Lecture 7: Landlord responses to famine</i> <i>Primary source analysis & discussion</i> [Assignment 2 due]</p>
Day 5 (22 July)	<p><i>Field Trip to Epic: the Irish Emigration Museum</i></p>
Day 6 (24 July)	<p><u>Morning</u> <i>Lecture 8: Emigration</i> <i>Primary source analysis & discussion</i></p> <p><u>Afternoon</u> <i>Group presentations</i></p>
Day 7 (29 July)	<p><u>Morning</u> <i>Lecture 9: Depictions of the famine in fiction, art & film etc.</i> <i>Source analysis & discussion</i></p> <p><u>Afternoon</u> <i>Film: Black 47</i> [Fieldtrip report due]</p>
Day 8 (31 July)	<p><u>Morning</u> <i>Lecture 10: Ireland after the famine</i></p> <p><u>Afternoon</u> <i>Module overview & course conclusions</i> [Extended essay due]</p>

ENDS