**USP, August 2022**

 **‘Ireland, Empire, and the Early Modern world’.**

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Discussions of empire are very much of the moment. The decade of commemoration in Ireland, combined with the recent campaigns associated with ‘Black Lives Matter’ and ‘Statues Must Fall’ are forcing a fundamental re-examination of our history and relationship with empire. And, of course, empires and imperial frameworks, policies, practices, and cultures have shaped the history of the world for the last two millennia. It is nation states that are the blip on the historical horizon even if states, societies, and monarchies had long existed within empires. Friedrich Engels, writing to Karl Marx in 1856, observed that ‘Ireland may be regarded as the first English colony’. Yet if early modern Ireland was ‘colonial’, as it undoubtedly was, it also formed an integral part of the first English Empire and people from Ireland served as active imperialists across the English and other early modern European empires.

This brief course takes Ireland as a case study for the examination of empire. At the end of this course students will have a deeper understanding of (a) the operation of empire in the early modern period (i.e. c.1550-c.1750); (b) colonial Ireland; and (c) some of the legacies of empire in the world today. Over the course of three weeks this brief course addresses the following questions:

* How the Irish were both victims of imperialism as well as aggressive perpetrators of it;
* How Ireland served as a laboratoryfor empireand how this had important consequences for imperialism in America and in India and how it was resisted;
* What Irish indentured servitude in the seventeenth-century Caribbean really meant and why white supremacists in the United States deliberately equate it to white chattel slavery to distort the true meaning and misery of black slavery;
* How the Irish played a significant role in the French Caribbean, Portuguese and later Dutch Amazon, Spanish Mexico, and the English colonies in the Atlantic and Asia where they served as soldiers and clergymen, and traded calicos, spices, tobacco, sugar, servants, and slaves;
* How empire shaped the lives of those living in Ireland, and how imperial commodities - tea, coffee, chocolate, sugar, spices, tobacco, and calicos – as well as representations of empire - in novels, plays, prose, images, travel literature and maps - formed and influenced ideas, identities, mindsets, tastes, fashions, and landscapes;
* How Ireland’s imperial past has been forgotten (or deliberately ignored) for far too long and how in the era of Brexit, ‘Black Lives Matter’ and ‘Rhodes must fall’, it is more important than ever that we understand its legacy and how it has shaped our present.

**Assessment**:

This is a brief and intense course so attendance at and full participation in class is essential.

Final written assignment.

**Week I: w/c 8 August 2022**

**Class 1: Making History**

The play *Making History* by Brian Friel, which was first performed in 1988, is set on the eve of the Nine Years War (1594-1603), of the completion of the English conquest of Ireland, and of the onset of a period of intense anglicisation, colonisation and commercialisation. The play is used to explore these themes, which reoccur across the lecture series, along with three chronological contexts pertinent to any discussion of empire and Ireland. First, the turn of the seventeenth century, the transitionary moment in which the play was set; second, the late 1980s, when at the height of the Troubles the play was performed first in Derry and then across Ireland; and, finally, the context of today, the early 2020s, as we continue to wrestle with the legacy of empire in Ireland, in the UK, and around the world.

**Class 2: Anglicisation**

How Ireland was made English is the subject of the second lecture and will interrogate, under the umbrella of anglicisation, conquest, colonisation, ‘civilisation’, cultivation, and commercialisation. When viewed from the perspective of early modernity what is clear is that anglicising processes did not occur in a linear way, nor was the outcome predestined. On the contrary, what becomes apparent is the haphazard, messy and clumsy nature of the processes surrounding anglicisation and the very real limitations on central power.

**Week II: w/c 15 August 2022**

**Class 3: Assimilation**

This class examines colonial Ireland as an integral part of the English imperial system. While there is no escaping discussion of race, religion, and rebellion or of extreme violence, exploitation, and expropriation, there are also stories of assimilation, acceptance, negotiation, survival, and tolerance that need to be told. The traditional configurations of kingdom, colony, and empire are viewed through the prism of gender and the particular relationship between marriage and cultural assimilation is also examined.

**Class 4: Agents of Empire**

This classlooks at the Irish, Catholic and Protestant, as agents of empire who played active roles in European global expansionism. By 1660 Irish people, mostly men, were to be found in the French Caribbean, the Portuguese and later Dutch Amazon, Spanish Mexico, and the English colonies in the Atlantic and Asia where they joined colonial settlements, served as soldiers and clergymen, forged commercial networks as they traded calicos, spices, tobacco, sugar, and slaves. How did these encounters and experiences shape their identity and how did others perceive and represent them? Equally, how might this hibernocentric perspective challenge, complicate and even change received understandings of empire, especially the English one?

**Week III: w/c 15 August 2022**

**Class 5: Laboratory**

This class explores the extent to which Ireland served as laboratory both for imperial rule and for resistance to that rule. Processes and practices of government, especially legal and landed ones and others relating to anglicisation, characterised from the mid-sixteenth century the implementation of English imperial authority in both Ireland and across the English empire. In addition to analysing influences and actions distinctive to English rule in Ireland, India and the Atlantic, it is important to acknowledge those shared more generally by early modern empires. Equally challenging is how we draw insights across time and make meaningful connections from the early modern into the modern period, rather than taking a teleological approach and reading history back from the present.

**Class 6: Empires**

The final class focuses on the impact of empire on Ireland and how empire has been remembered. How did empire shape the lives of those living in Ireland, and how is Ireland’s engagement with and experience of empire in the early modern period remembered (or not) and represented/mis-represented? Today in Ireland some celebrate and some excoriate connections with the British Empire. Others have either conveniently forgotten or are simply ignorant of Ireland’s imperial past. However the decade of commemorations (2012-2022) in Ireland and campaigns around ‘Black Lives Matters’, Brexit, and ‘Rhodes must fall’ have kindled a greater awareness of the importance of revisiting the history of empire, if only to better understand its legacy and how it has shaped the present.

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