280-01 Irish Political Culture

Timothy White
Irish Political Culture
Political Science 280-01
3 Credit Hours
CRN# 90592
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Summary of Course

This course explores various aspects of Irish political culture as it has evolved from the late nineteenth century. These include: the development of Irish national identity, the role of the famine and land in the collective memory of the Irish, the colonial and postcolonial nature of Irish society before and after independence, the historic role of the Church, the role of those economically marginalized with the modernization of society, the role of women in Irish society, the role of those who emigrated, the role of the Protestant minority, the role of the traveling community historically and more recent immigrant groups who form the ethnic minorities of Irish society, and the contemporary changes to Irish identity, especially amidst the continuing sectarian differences that exist primarily in Northern Ireland. Thus, this course is organized around the dominance of a nationalist vision that brought independence to the southern twenty-six counties in the early 20th century and how those who were marginalized in this original vision of Irish nationalism have been incorporated as well as analyzing social processes which became exclusionary of those who no longer fit within the changing definitions of Irishness in the late twentieth century. Films will be used to explore images and the reality of Irish life in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Thus, the course focuses on the continuing debate in Ireland regarding inherited and changing identities. This course fulfills the Diversity Curriculum Requirement in Xavier’s Core Curriculum and counts as an elective in the Gender and Diversity Studies Minor. The course also is an elective for the Postcolonial and European Concentrations in the International Studies Major.

Assignments

Each student will be responsible for five film reviews. These film reviews will not only summarize the film but provide analysis linking this film to the topic of the lecture for that class, either the nationalist version of Irish political culture or the challenge to this inherited identity in contemporary Ireland. These two to three single-spaced reviews will be due a week after the film is viewed and class discussion on that topic. Each film review will account for 15% of the student’s final grade.
Exam

The take-home final exam for this course will be comprehensive and will ask a series of essay questions. They will focus on all of the topics in the course, including early discussion of the creation and definition of Irish nationalism and challenges to this inherited identity both north and south in Ireland. This exam is due on December 16th and will account for 25% of the final grade.

Class Participation

Students are expected to participate in class discussion, and students are responsible for the readings the day they are assigned. Students are also encouraged to ask questions that arise from lecture, readings, films, or current events. Regular attendance is required.

Grading Policy

The following grade scale will be used in this course:  A = 93-100, A- = 90-92, B+ = 87-89, B = 83-86, B- = 80-82, C+ = 77-79, C = 73-76, C- = 70-72, D+ = 67-69, D = 63-66, D- = 60-62, and F = Below 60. There is no curving or dropping of grades in this class. For a reference to the standards for these grades, see the Department of Political Science Grading Guidelines provided below:

A- to A = Superior critical reading, thinking and analytical skills. Detailed understanding of course readings. Generally clear, well-organized writing that develops important issues in a thoughtful way. Analysis of texts is without technical or factual errors. An excellent essay will significantly surpass the expectations of a good essay by demonstrating critical mastery of the logic, assumptions, and evidence of research sources. Excellent use of quotations and proper citation of texts.

Class discussion is frequent and thoughtful; shows a very good grasp of the issues.

B- to B+ = Good to Very Good critical reading, thinking and analytical skills. Solid understanding of course readings. Generally clear, well-organized writing that reports important issues in some detail. Analysis of texts is generally without technical or factual errors. A good to very good essay will have a thesis, define and incorporate concepts appropriately, present a coherent argument, and make a persuasive case for its thesis using convincing evidence; it may also need to consider plausible and reasonable alternatives systematically. Good use of quotations and proper citation of texts.

Class discussion is regular and helpful; shows a solid grasp of the issues.
C- to C+ = *Adequate* critical reading, thinking and analytical skills. Generally competent writing that identifies important issues but leaves them insufficiently explained or examined. Analysis of texts may be technically or factually defective in minor ways. An *adequate* essay will have a thesis, define and incorporate concepts appropriately, and present a coherent argument. Correct use of quotations and citation of texts.

*Class discussion* is occasional and generally adequate; may reveal some misunderstanding of the issues.

D- to D+ = *Inadequate* critical reading, thinking and analytical skills. Poor or incompetent understanding of course readings. Below average writing that omits or misunderstands important issues. Analysis of texts may be technically or factually defective in substantial ways. An *inadequate* essay may not have a clear thesis, or may not define and incorporate concepts appropriately, or it may not present a coherent argument. There may be ineffective use of quotations and inadequate citation of texts.

*Class discussion* is infrequent; may reveal a lack of engagement with the issues or serious misunderstanding.

F = *Unacceptable*. No serious engagement of course readings. An *unacceptable* essay shows little or no serious attempt to understand important issues. Writing is unclear, or unorganized, or undeveloped to the degree that the essay is deemed a failure. Analysis of texts may contain egregious errors. There may be a failure to cite texts.

*Class discussion* is infrequent and ill informed; reveals no real understanding of even basic issues.

**Schedule of Topics and Readings**

(Note that the readings for this course are available through Canvass).

Aug. 26  What is Political Culture and How to Study It?


Irish Nationalism and Political Culture – The Wind That Shakes the Barley


Sept. 2 The Role of Famine and Land in Irish Political Culture – The Field


Sept. 9 The Role of Civil War in Defining Irish Political Culture – Michael Collins


Sept. 16  The Role of Protestants and Anglo-Irish Identities in Independent Ireland – *The Last September*


Sept. 23  The Role of the Church in Irish Political Culture – *Stella Days*


Sept. 30  

The Role of the Emigrant in Irish Political Culture – *In America*


Oct. 14  

Travellers and Irish Political Culture – *Pavee Lackeen*


Oct. 28 Gender and Irish Political Culture – *The Magdelen Sisters*


Nov. 4 Class, Urban Alienation, and Irish Political Culture – *Intermission*


Nov. 11  Economic and Social Change and Alienation in Rural Ireland – *Garage*


Nov. 18  New Arrivals and Irish Political Culture – *Once*


Nov. 25  Historical Background to the Conflict in Northern Ireland – *Bloody Sunday*


Dec. 2  Peace Making and The Good Friday Agreement - *Omagh*


Dec. 9  The Difficulties of Consolidating Peace in Northern Ireland – *Five Minutes of Heaven*


Dec. 16  Submission of Final Exams – Evaluations – *Waking Ned Devine*