

**NYU in Dublin 2006**  
**V58.9515/V42.9515/V93.9515**  
**Contemporary Irish Politics & Society:**  
**Understanding the Sociology of Change**

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**Course Description**

Enormous changes have occurred in Ireland in the last decade, especially the social and cultural implications of the economic boom known as the "Celtic Tiger" that have transformed the country in so many ways. What happens to the social life of a nation that leapfrogs from being an agricultural economy to a technologically-advanced postindustrial one?

The changes that Ireland has undergone extend to all areas of public and private life: the (uneven) rise in levels of personal wealth; the decline of the Catholic church, both as a means of social organisation and as a mode of private, personal understanding of the world; the change from being a population defined by emigration to one now experiencing much higher levels of immigration; and the attendant challenges of our transformation into a more dramatically multicultural society. How did the transformation happen? Ireland managed to attract a huge amount of foreign direct investment but to what extent is Ireland dependent on other nations, especially the U.S., for its current prosperity? How has affluence changed the way that Irish people live? Ireland is often seen as a post-colonial society; if true, what influence does this condition have on Irish ability to participate in the 21st-century global economy?

This class gives you a set of tools for understanding the reality of the dynamic country you will be living in for summer 2006, and the discrepancies between the imagined and the real Ireland can be fruitfully explored in the classroom. One of the main themes to be covered in some depth is the visualization of Irish culture and society, so nearly every class will involve some video screenings.

Prof. Slater's Ph.D. is from Trinity College and his areas of expertise are Irish tourism, rural society and development, popular culture, capitalism, and Ireland in the European context.

**REQUIRED TEXT:**

H. Tovey and P. Share, *A Sociology of Ireland*, (Gill & MacMillan, 2003, second edition)

## Section 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1. Introducing Ireland as a Global Spectacle

'Clear, Cool, Crystal Water', (video)

Edward Said. 1993, 'Yeats and Decolonization' (extract) from his Culture and Imperialism.

Richard Florida, 2002, 'Van Morrison, U2 and High-Tech' from his The Rise of the Creative Class.

## Section 2. IS IRELAND A MODERNISED SOCIETY?

### 1. An Outline of Modernization Theory

According to modernization theory, all societies are undergoing a process of 'modernization', so that they are becoming increasingly more alike. The driving force behind this 'convergence' of different societies is usually considered to be 'industrialization'.

I. Roxborough, Theories of Underdevelopment, ch. 1 & 2.

N. Smelser, 'Towards a Theory of Modernization' (X)

C. McCullagh, 'Development and Underdevelopment' (X)

### 2. and 3. From 'Traditional' to 'Modern' Ireland:

In the 1930's two American Anthropologists, Arensberg and Kimball, claimed to have discovered in the West of Ireland an almost classic example of a stable 'traditional' society. Their work provided a bench-mark against which subsequent changes in the whole of Ireland can be measured.

D. Hannon, (1972) 'Kinship, Neighbourhood and Social Change in Irish Rural Communities', Economic and Social Review 3.2.

D. Arensberg, S. Kimball, Family and Community in Ireland. [extract].

H. Brody, Inishkillane: Change and Decline in the West of Ireland. (and extract) 'Shadows of the West'. (video)

### 4. Irish Society and the Critique of Modernization Theory.

In the last twenty years modernization theory has been widely challenged in sociology in general. Recent analyses of Irish society have applied these criticisms of modernization theory to the Irish context. Especially important is its failure to explain how industrialization 'takes off' and economic development starts.

C. McCullagh, 'Development and Underdevelopment' .  
H. Brody, Inishkillane: Change and Decline in the West of Ireland.  
P. Gibbon, 'Arensberg and Kimball Revisited' .  
'Ballroom of Romance' (video)

### **Section 3. IS IRELAND DEPENDENT?**

#### **1. An Outline of Dependency Theory**

First applied to Latin America, Dependency theory argued that 'developing' countries have been underdeveloped by the way they were incorporated into the world market system. Accordingly, these 'underdeveloped' societies became known as periphery regions and the 'developed' societies became identified as core regions.

A.G. Frank, On Capitalist Underdevelopment, ch. 1  
C. McCullagh, 'Development and Underdevelopment' .  
T. Spybey, Modernisation and Dependency Theories.

#### **2. Ireland as a 'Periphery' Region: Dependency Theory in Irish Sociology:**

Dependency theory in its' original form suggested that industrialisation could not take place in the periphery regions. But this prediction has been proved wrong with the emergence of multi-national firms in so-called periphery regions such as Ireland. Why did Dependency theory not 'fit' into the Irish context? We have to attempt to tackle this question.

R.Crotty, Ireland in Crisis: A Study in Capitalist Colonial Underdevelopment. ch.6.  
J. Wickham, 'Dependency and State Structure: Foreign Firms and Industrial Policy in the Republic of Ireland', (X).  
C. McCullagh, 'Development and Underdevelopment', (X).

#### **3. Irish Society and the Critique of Dependency Theory.**

Recent work within the Dependency framework, has begun to reject many of the old aspects of Dependency theory, especially the idea that industrialisation could not happen in periphery regions. This new form of industrialisation has been identified as 'dependent', which is being controlled by multinational investment. Consequently, a dual economy seems to have emerged, one determined by foreign owned firms, the other by Irish indigenous firms.

D.O'Hearn, (1989) 'The Irish Case of Dependency: An exception to the exceptions', in

American Sociological Review v.54.

E. O'Malley, 'Industrialisation in Ireland',

J. Wickham, 'The Politics of Dependent Capitalism: International Capital and the National State'.

#### **4. The State and Society in the Republic of Ireland.**

We have already seen that the Irish State played a pivotal role in the emergence of dependent industrialization. As the main administrative institution in a society, the State is continuously engaged in the regulation of conflict among other structures of the society. The specific nature of the Irish State has been characterized by its centralizing tendencies and the presence of clientelism in its structures. How 'modern' do these characteristics make the Irish State?

E. Hazelkorn, 'Class, Clientelism and the Political Process in the Republic of Ireland'.

M. Peillon, (1987) 'State and Society in the Republic of Ireland: A Comparative Study', in Administration, vol.35, no.2.

#### **5. Is Ireland a Post-colonial Society?**

It has recently been argued that the problems which the Irish state is attempting to come to grips with are ones caused by our previous relationship with a colonial 'superpower'. This understanding of the Irish situation tends to identify Ireland, either as a part of the third world, or a post-colonial society, or both.

P. Shirlow, (eds), (1995) Development Ireland: Contemporary issues.

F. Walsh, 'The Structure of Neo-Colonialism: The case of the Irish Republic'. (X).

L. Kennedy, (1992) 'Modern Ireland: Post-Colonial Society or Post-Colonial Pretensions?', The Irish Review, no.13.

T. Cahery, (eds), (1992), Is Ireland a Third World Country.

M.Peillon (2003) 'Agency, flows and post-colonial structure in Ireland', The Irish Review, no.30.

### **Section 4 The Rise of the Celtic Tiger**

#### **1. From a non-industrial to a post-industrial economy**

For most of the twentieth century, Ireland has, in economic terms, trailed far behind most of Europe. It remained a predominantly an agricultural economy. However, it did experience rapid change and intense transformations. In this lecture, I will argue that while failing to generate an industrial order, Ireland has managed to establish itself as a post-industrial enclave within global capitalism.

M.Peillon, 'Culture and state in the new economy of Ireland', in Kirby, Gibbons and Cronin, Re-inventing Ireland. Culture and the Celtic Tiger.

H. Tovey and P.Share, A Sociology of Ireland. pp. 64-75.

## **2. Globalisation and the Rise of the Celtic Tiger.**

In the 1990's the Irish economy 'took off' to such an extent that it is now one of the quickest economies in Western Europe. Echoing the 'tiger' economies of the Far East, this has led many to dub Ireland the 'Celtic Tiger'. Here, we will attempt to investigate the conditions that gave rise to this 'beast' and the consequences for Irish society as a whole.

D. O'Hearn, Inside the Celtic Tiger.

S. O'Riain, 'The birth of the Celtic Tiger', (X).

S.O'Riain, (2000) 'Soft solutions to hard times', in E.Slater and M.Peillon (eds), Memories of the Present.

## **3. and 4. Late Modernity in Ireland and the Global 'flows'.**

Features of old Irish society, which were outside the forces of the market are now increasingly being incorporated into commodity production. Nearly every dimension of Irish popular culture has recently undergone this process of commodification such as dance, music, intellectual pursuit and even sport. These forces and others have pushed Irish society into what Giddens has identified as Late Modernity.

E. Slater and M. Peillon, (2000),(eds) Memories of the Present.

M. Peillon and E.Slater, (1998),(eds) Encounters with Modern Ireland.

J.Urry, (1990) 'The Consumption of Tourism', in, Sociology, 24, pp23-35.

'The Quiet Man' (movie)

***Dr. Eamonn Slater,  
June 2006***