

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON  
Department of History  
Semester II, 2007-2008

History 600

Professor Jim Donnelly

The Celtic Tiger and Modern Ireland

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Since the early 1990s the Irish Republic has been transformed almost beyond recognition by an economic miracle that has been the wonder and the envy of the rest of Europe and much of the wider world. Its economy during this period has been by far the fastest-growing in all of Europe; sometime in the late 1990s Ireland passed its former colonial master Britain in its living standards. It is now one of the wealthiest industrial countries in the world after having gone (as one commentator put it) from “potato chips to computer chips” in less than a generation. Closely linked to this economic miracle have been a far-reaching series of social and cultural changes, including the ending of high unemployment, unprecedented job opportunities for those with the requisite educational skills, the virtual cessation of emigration (long the scourge of Irish society), the emancipation of women through their hugely increased participation in the labor force, consumerism on a scale previously considered unimaginable, a huge increase in immigration, and the eclipse of traditional Catholic morality and of the moral and political influence of the Catholic church, once a powerful institution in Irish society.

Among the major goals of this course, three stand out above the rest. First, we want to achieve a balanced understanding of the reasons for the economic miracle that began in Ireland in the early 1990s and continues up to the present. This objective will involve us in assessing the roles of the European Union and United States as engines of Ireland’s transformation. We will also explore the policy changes and initiatives pursued by the government of Ireland that interacted with enormous US and EU investments and with the attractions of the huge EU market to produce and sustain the Irish economic miracle. Second, we will investigate the nature, dimensions, and consequences of the extraordinary social and cultural changes outlined above. The history of modern Europe offers relatively few examples of a society that has experienced so many social and cultural changes in so short a time—for example, in relations between the sexes, between young and old, between rural dwellers and urbanites (or suburbanites), between the affluent and the deprived, and between natives and immigrant newcomers. Third, we will examine the “downside” of the Celtic Tiger—the major problems and challenges posed by the entry of Ireland into this altogether new stage of its long history. Even a short list of such problems would include environmental degradation of numerous kinds, the erosion of morality in public life and in business, acute urban congestion in and all around Dublin, unregulated suburban development more generally, the growth of pathological behavior (binge drinking, drunken driving, drug addiction, and teenage suicide), the expansion of organized crime, gross inadequacies in the provision of public health, serious income inequality, and tensions in the assimilation of immigrants. We will ask how such challenges might be more effectively addressed through governmental and nongovernmental action.

The overall aim of the course will be to take the measure of this new Ireland as a full participant in the era of globalization. We will do this after gaining appropriate perspective by paying some attention to the history of Ireland between 1945 and the late 1980s.

### SEMINAR MEETINGS

Meetings once a week, each meeting to last two hours; all meetings to be devoted to discussion of the required readings.

### WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS AND EXAMINATIONS

A research proposal of about fifteen pages focusing on a question or a set of related questions needing scholarly investigation, and stating the methods and sources to be used in the search for answers.

### GRADING SYSTEM

1. Research proposal (50 percent)
2. Informed participation in seminar discussions (50 percent)

### REQUIRED READING

Diarmaid Ferriter, The Transformation of Ireland, 1900-2000 (London: Profile Books paperback, 2004).

Stephen Collins, The Power Game: Fianna Fáil since Lemass (Dublin: O'Brien Press paperback, 2000).

Tom Inglis, Globalizing Ireland: Same Difference (Globalizing Regions) (London: Routledge paperback, 2007).

Fintan O'Toole, After the Ball (Dublin: New Ireland paperback, 2003).

There will be one other paperback book (to be announced).