

HIS 511B The Great Hunger: Ireland, Empire, & Famine
Mondays, 3:30-6:20pm, MHRA 1204



PROFESSOR: Dr. Jill Bender

OFFICE: MHRA 2116

OFFICE HOURS: Wednesdays, 1-3pm; and by appointment

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

During the mid-nineteenth century, Ireland suffered a series of famines that nearly halved the island's population—in less than one decade, from 1846 to 1855, between 1.1 and 1.5 million people died at the hands of starvation or disease and another 2.1 million emigrated. The difficulties of these years were captured at the time and later recalled through art, literature, music, and more. Indeed, few (if any) events have had a larger impact on Irish history, politics, or national memory than “The Great Hunger.” This course is designed to introduce students to the history of the Irish Famine and its repercussions. Together, we will examine the broad political, social, and cultural impacts of the Famine. Individually, students will conceptualize, research, and write papers on a related topic of their own choosing.

Student Learning Objectives:

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify an appropriate research topic and pertinent primary and secondary sources.

2. Critically analyze various primary sources within their historical context.
3. Evaluate historiographical debates within the field of Irish history.
4. Conduct independent historical research, and communicate the findings.
5. Develop and support an original written argument.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance and Participation: The basic format of this course will consist of four weeks of group meetings during which we will discuss assigned readings on the Irish Famine. After these first several weeks, students will meet individually and collectively with the professor to discuss and assist their progress on independent research projects. Attendance at and participation in both class and individual meetings is mandatory. 5 points will be deducted from your participation grade for each absence after the first. Students who consistently arrive late or leave early will be marked absent.

Writing Assignments: The primary purpose of this course is to guide students as they write a 20-25 page, research paper. Writing a solid research paper takes time, planning, and rewriting (among other things). This is not a project that can be completed the night before it is due. In order to emphasize the importance of planning and editing, I have developed a number of short assignments that will walk you through the many steps involved in producing a research paper. Below I have identified these steps and provided brief descriptions of each assignment. More information will be provided as the semester progresses.

Step 1: Identify a research question

Identifying a research topic often begins with a question. Not a question that can be answered with a short yes or no or even a simple sentence. Instead, you want to ask a question that will provide deeper insight into the past. As you read the weekly assigned readings during the first weeks of the semester, think about the questions that historians are asking about the Irish Famine. How do they answer these questions? What sources do they use to answer these questions? What is their argument? What questions are left unanswered? This final question—what questions are left unanswered—will point you in the direction of your own research question.

Assignment #1 3-5 Research Questions: Please write 3-5 research questions. When developing your list of possible questions, remember to consider the following: can this question be answered in one sentence or does this topic have potential to provide insight into the past? Is this topic feasible, both in regards to length and to sources? (SLO 1)

Assignment #2 Paragraph: Write a short paragraph (3-4 sentences) explaining your proposed topic and include a related research question. (SLO 1)

Step 2: Building a research topic

Once you have a question in mind, you will want to start to find answers. The first step is to identify possible sources. What have historians already written about this topic? What

sources have they used? What sources would allow you to find answers to your own question and are these sources available at Jackson Library, through appropriate internet archives, or via Interlibrary Loan?

Assignment #3 Research Proposal and Bibliography: Your research proposal should identify 1) your topic 2) the historiographical discussion with which you plan to engage and 3) a proposed bibliography. (SLO 1, 3)

Step 3: Conducting Research

Once you have identified possible primary sources, you need to read and analyze them.

Assignment #4 Primary Source Analysis: Write a 1-2 page analysis of a primary source document related to your research paper. Please identify, contextualize, and analyze the source. In particular, explain how this source advances your argument. Attach a copy of the primary source to your analysis. (SLO 2)

Step 4: Creating an argument

Once you begin your primary research, what answers do you find? What patterns can you detect in the sources? And what is the best way to present this argument? Often, this step involves significant outlining and writing as you think about and reconsider the best ways to organize your evidence so that it makes sense to a larger audience.

Assignment #5 Outline: Your outline should include an introduction that 1) introduces the topic in an engaging manner 2) sets out the argument (including historiographical contribution) and 3) prepares the reader. Your full outline should then include detailed bullet points and section paragraphs that make the development of the argument clear. (SLO 1, 3, 4, and 5)

Assignment #6 Presentation: During weeks 12 and 13, each student will be required to present their research to the entire class. Oral presentations provide an excellent opportunity to both synthesize and articulate your findings. More information will be provided closer to week 12. (SLO 1, 2, 3, and 4)

Step 5: Writing and writing and writing

Writing a research paper rarely (never?) occurs in one go. Rather, you will want to write a draft, receive peer reviews, and rewrite (editing in response to reviews). Furthermore, reviewing each other's work will strengthen your own writing by providing you with an opportunity to consider other arguments and how to present your questions and critiques in a helpful and constructive manner.

Assignment #7 Polished Rough Draft: Your polished rough draft should be as close to a final draft as you can produce without formal feedback (minimum length of 15 pages), and should include endnotes/footnotes and a bibliography. (SLO 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5)

Assignment #8 Peer Review: Please provide a one-page, typed review of your peers' papers (each student will review two papers) and provide copies to me as well). Be kind, but also offer constructive feedback—What are the paper's strengths? Where is there room for improvement? Can the argument be clearer or better supported in places?

Final Papers (SLO 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5): Students will produce a 20-25 page research paper based on primary and secondary sources. Although paper topics will vary according to individual student interests, all papers must relate to the course theme of the Irish Famine. The final paper with bibliography and notes will be **due by 5pm, Friday, December 4th**.

Due Dates: The assignments for this class are designed to build upon each other and guide students toward the production of an original research paper. As a result, it is essential that students turn in all assignments, on time. Any late assignments will not be accepted, and a 0 will be recorded.

Academic Integrity Policy: Please cite your sources using footnotes or endnotes. Plagiarism is a breach of the university's academic integrity policy. For more information on this policy, see <http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu/complete/>.

Final Grades will be calculated according to the following:

Participation and Attendance (both in class and during individual meetings):	10%
Writing Assignments:	50% (total)
#1 3-5 Research Questions & #2 Paragraph	5%
#3 Research Proposal and Bibliography	10%
#4 Primary Source Analysis	5%
#5 Outline	5%
#6 Presentations	10%
#7 Polished Rough Draft	10%
#8 Peer Reviews	5%
Final Paper:	40%

Grading Scale

A+: 97-100	B+: 87-89	C+: 77-79	D+: 67-69	F: 0-59
A: 93-96	B: 83-86	C: 73-76	D: 63-66	
A-: 90-92	B-: 80-82	C-: 70-72	D-: 60-62	