

**HIS 511B The Great Hunger: Ireland, Empire, & Famine**  
**Thursdays, 3:30-6:20pm, MHRA 2204**



**PROFESSOR:** Dr. Jill Bender

**OFFICE:** MHRA 2116

**OFFICE HOURS:** Tuesdays, 2:00-3:00pm; Thursdays, 11:00am-12:00pm; 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.

The following book is **required** and is available for purchase at the university bookstore.

Mary Lynn Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2015).

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### **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 (most readings will be made available via Canvas). 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. Five 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 15-20 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 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 (4-5 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 9 and 10, 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 9. (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 12 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 15-20 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 2<sup>nd</sup>**.

**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://sa.uncg.edu/dean/academic-integrity/>.

**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	

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## CLASS MEETINGS

**Week 1: Aug 25 Introduction—what is history? What is famine?**

## UNIT I: EXAMPLES

**Week 2: Sept 1 The History of the History of the Great Irish Famine**

Ciara Boylan, “Famine,” *The Princeton History of Modern Ireland*, eds. Richard Bourke and Ian McBride (Princeton University Press, 2016): 403-424.

Kevin Kenny. “Ireland and the British Empire: An Introduction,” *Ireland and the British Empire*, ed. Kevin Kenny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004): 1-25.

Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, chapter 1, chapter 2.

**Week 3: Sept 8 Relief Efforts during the Hungry Years**

Peter Gray, “Ideology and the Famine,” *The Great Irish Famine*, ed. Cathal Póirtéir (Dublin: Mercier Press, 1995): 86-103.

Robin Haines, “Introduction: Charles Trevelyan and his critics” *Charles Trevelyan and the Great Irish Famine* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), 1-26.

Jennifer Hart, “Sir Charles Trevelyan at the Treasury,” *English Historical Review* 75 (1960): 92-110.

Peter Gray, “National Humiliation and the Great Hunger: Fast and Famines in 1847” *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. 32, no. 126 (Nov., 2000): 193-216.

**Week 4: Sept 15 Famine, Migration, and Diaspora**

Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 3-8, 280-344.

David Fitzpatrick, “Flight From Famine,” *The Great Irish Famine*, ed. Cathal Póirtéir (Dublin: Mercier Press, 1995): 174-184.

Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, pages 24-40, chapter 5.

**Due:** Assignment # 1 List of 3-5 Possible Research Topics

**Week 5:      Sept 22            Global Repercussions, followed by Library Workshop 1:  
Secondary Sources (MHRA 1305)**

Jill Bender, "The Imperial Politics of Famine: The 1873-74 Bengal Famine and Irish Parliamentary Nationalism," *Éire-Ireland* vol 42: 1 & 2 (Spring/Summer, 2007): 132-156.

Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, chapter 6 and chapter 7.

**Due:**            Assignment #2 Paragraph due on Canvas by **5pm, Mon, Sept 26**

## **UNIT II: RESEARCHING, ORGANIZING, AND WRITING**

**Week 6:      Sept 29            Library Workshop 2: Primary Sources (Curry 304), followed  
by in-class discussion of individual projects**

**Due:**            Assignment #3 Research Proposal and Bibliography due on  
Canvas by **5pm, Mon, Oct 3**

**Week 7:      Oct 6                Class Meeting**

**Due:**            Assignment #4 Primary Source Analysis due on Canvas by **5pm,  
Mon, Oct 10**

**Week 8:      Oct 13              Individual Meetings**

**Due:**            Assignment #5 Outline due on Canvas by **5pm, Wed, Oct 19**

**Week 9:      Oct 20              Presentations (Group 1)**

**Oct 21            \*\*\*EXTRA CREDIT OPTION: History Department Alumni  
Networking Event, 5-7pm, MHRA\*\*\***

**Week 10:     Oct 27              Presentations (Group 2)**

### UNIT III: WRITING, REVISING, AND POLISHING

**Week 11: Nov 3 Individual Meetings**

Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, 69-81.

**Week 12: Nov 10 Rough Drafts Due!!**

**Due:** Assignment #7 Polished Rough Draft (complete with notes and bibliography).

**Week 13: Nov 17 Discussions of Rough Drafts**

**Due:** Assignment #8 Peer Review (Please bring two copies of your peer reviews to class)

**Week 14: Nov 24 No Class**

**Week 15: Dec 1 Conclusion and Final Comments**

**Due: \*\*FINAL PAPERS are due by 5pm on Friday, December 2.\*\***

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