

## *The Politics of Culture in Divided Societies*

*(Course taught in English – Twelve 2-hour classes – Assessment: 15-minute oral exam)*

*This course examines the political uses of visual culture in divided and conflicting societies. It will mainly focus upon Northern Ireland, but other case studies will be approached. The first objective of this course is therefore to provide students with a sound understanding of the historical, political and social dimensions of the conflict in Northern Ireland as well as the peace process which finally led to devolution and power sharing between the catholic and protestant communities. This course also aims to introduce students to the study of visual culture and its political implications. A wide range of pictures will be considered, from stamps, posters and murals to press photographs, cartoons and films.*

*The course will start with a quick overview of English-Irish relations up to the Irish War of Independence, concentrating on the factors that explain sectarian tensions between protestants and catholics and the social and religious specificities of Ulster.*

*The Partition of Ireland into two autonomous territories, which was introduced by the Government of Ireland Act in 1920 and de facto confirmed by the Anglo-Irish Treaty of December 1921, opened up a long period during which Northern Ireland was governed as a Protestant and Unionist state, the triumphalism of which was expressed both in the architecture of the Parliament Houses in Stormont and in the murals which adorned the gable walls of loyalist districts. The situation of Northern Irish catholics, who were largely marginalised and discriminated against, will be compared to that of African-Americans in the southern United States following the Civil War and with that of Blacks in South Africa at the time of Apartheid.*

*Bloody Sunday and the early 1970s represented a watershed: the peaceful fight for civil rights, mainly conducted by the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association and modelled after the struggle of African Americans, gave way to armed struggle between nationalist and loyalist paramilitaries. Analysing extracts from the film *Bloody Sunday* by Paul Greengrass will illustrate this transition and will lead us to examine the political implications of a film produced at the very moment when the commission headed by Lord Saville was reappraising responsibilities for the events of 30<sup>th</sup> January 1972.*

*Starting in the 1970s, the Troubles had a decisive impact upon Northern Irish, and indeed British, visual culture. As violence settled in the province, political posters and later murals invaded the walls of catholic and protestant districts alike, glorifying combatants and rallying both sections of the population through references to history and recent events in several parts of the world, including Palestine and South Africa.*

*The Good Friday Agreement of 1998 was a decisive step in the peace process, with the recognition of the principle of consent by all the major political actors involved. However, new outbursts of violence postponed the establishment of devolved institutions in Belfast. Cartoons published in the Republic of Ireland, in Northern Ireland and in the rest of the United Kingdom in the*

years 2000 pinpoint the prevarications of politicians such as Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams and Unionist Ian Paisley, while press photographs insist on visual testimonies of the changes underway.

Although devolution and power-sharing were suspended on several occasions due to the difficult collaboration between Northern Ireland's main political parties, violence has progressively receded from the region and transition towards peace is now well under way. The visual culture of the province however still bears the signs of earlier tensions. Loyalist and Republican murals indeed did not suddenly disappear with the ceasefires; programmes have therefore been set up by a variety of often public-funded agencies to rebuild the image of Northern Ireland through the replacement of certain murals by new compositions. More generally, the question of the memorialisation and the musealization of the conflict is gaining prominence. Through a comparison with South Africa, we will therefore consider the political negotiations involved in cultural processes of reconciliation and reconstruction.

All chapters in the course will be backed up by powerpoint presentations that will be made available through the Moodle platform, along with other documents, including a selection of research papers.

## **OUTLINE OF THE COURSE**

*Lesson 1: From Divisions in Ireland to a Partitioned Island.*

1. *The Historical Roots of the Northern Irish Question*
2. *Nationalists and Unionists during the Great War*
3. *The Advent of Republicanism*
4. *Partitioning Ireland*

*Lesson 2: "A Protestant State for a Protestant People": Northern Ireland from 1920 to 1963.*

1. *Stormont: 50 Years of Unionist Rule*
  - 1.1. *Home Rule in Northern Ireland*
  - 1.2. *Political Stagnation*
2. *An Insecure Statelet*
  - 2.1. *Constitutional Uncertainties*
  - 2.2. *The Threat from the South*
  - 2.3. *The Threat from Within*
3. *A Segregated and Discriminatory State*
4. *Visual Displays of Triumphant Unionism: Murals in Northern Ireland (1920s-1950s)*
5. *The Stormont regime in perspective: Northern Ireland compared to the southern United States and South Africa*

*Lesson 3: From Civil Rights Protest to Insurrection: The Descent into the 'Troubles' (1963-1972).*

1. *The O'Neill Years (1963-1969)*
  - 1.1. *Terence O'Neill's Reformist Agenda*
  - 1.2. *The Civil Rights Campaign*
  - 1.3. *Tensions Build Up*
2. *Towards Armed Conflict: the Emergence of New Actors (1969-1971)*
  - 2.1. *The Battle of the Bogside*
  - 2.2. *The Arrival of the British Army*
  - 2.3. *The IRA: Split and Rebirth*

- 2.4. *The Growth of Loyalist Paramilitary Groups*
- 3. *The End of an Era (1971-1972)*
  - 3.1. *Internment and the Escalation of Violence*
  - 3.2. *Bloody Sunday*
  - 3.3. *The Abolition of Stormont*

*Lesson 4: Picturing the 'Troubles': The Northern Ireland Conflict and its Visual Representations (1972-1998).*

- 1. *From Failed Political Solutions to Security Measures (1972-1979)*
  - 1.1. *Failed Political Solutions: Power Sharing and the 'Irish Dimension'*
  - 1.2. *Security Measures: Criminalisation and Ulsterisation*
- 2. *The Early Thatcher Years (1979-late 1980s)*
  - 2.1. *The Hunger Strikes and the Emergence of Republican Mural Painting*
  - 2.2. *The Anglo-Irish Agreement and the Revival of Loyalist Mural Painting*
- 3. *Towards the Peace Process (1988-1993)*
  - 3.1. *Changes in Republicanism?*
  - 3.2. *The Loyalist Agenda and Paramilitary Activity*
  - 3.3. *Loyalist and Republican Iconography*
- 4. *The Development of the Peace Process (1993-1998)*
  - 4.1. *The Downing Street Declaration (1993)*
  - 4.2. *Ceasefires and Ceasefire Murals*
  - 4.3. *Stagnation, Violence and Negotiations*

*Lesson 5: Peace at last? Post-conflict Reconciliation and Reconstruction (1998-2007)*

- 1. *The Good Friday Agreement (1998)*
- 2. *The Deferred Implementation of the Agreement (1998-2007)*
- 3. *Post-Agreement Murals: A Peace Iconography?*
- 4. *Memorialization and Musealization: Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and South Africa*

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