

HIU34562 Dissenting Ireland: From Plantation to Partition (Armstrong)

Assessment: One long essay



By the nineteenth century perhaps one in ten of the inhabitants of Ireland were identified with communities of religious dissent, neither Catholic nor attached to the established Church of Ireland. Yet theirs remains largely a 'hidden history', or at least one rarely connected to changes and developments impacting on Ireland and the wider world from the seventeenth to the early twentieth century. This module will examine the diverse histories and hugely varying life experiences of the women and men who were part of these communities. The module will centre on case studies, linking these to wider themes and approaches, drawing together social, political, gender, intellectual and religious history. Each case study will draw upon the wealth of primary sources produced by dissenting men and women, from diaries and letters to political tracts and sermons, histories and literary texts. Topics will range from debates on religious liberty to the regulation of sexual and family life; Presbyterian political radicalism and revolutionary action in 1798 to the emergence of popular Unionism; the experiences of French religious refugees or of individuals struggling with, or profiting from, an Irish Industrial Revolution; the excitements of mass religious revival in rural Ireland and the encounter with Darwin's challenge to traditional religious belief. Due attention will be given to Presbyterians, at once numerically dominant in parts of Ulster yet strikingly diverse in their social backgrounds or convictions, but the module will also attend to the rich variety of dissenting communities which contributed to the history of Ireland, not least to small, scattered but often influential groups present across the island, from Quakers to Methodists, Unitarians to the Salvation Army.