

HIU12054 The Birth of Empire: Ireland and the Atlantic World

In 1500 Ireland was at the edge of the known world. A century later it occupied a central position at the crossroads of Atlantic empires as European horizons stretched into the Americas. Irish settlers, soldiers, sailors, and servants could be found everywhere from the Amazon basin through the sugar colonies of the Caribbean to the frontier farms of Pennsylvania and the cod banks off Newfoundland. Forms of colonial warfare and plantation schemes first pioneered in Ireland were replicated across the Atlantic in other colonial contexts. Irish capital flowed across the Atlantic financing imperial expansion while the material rewards of colonialism irrevocably altered Irish consumption and dietary patterns. Transatlantic migration meanwhile and colonial conquest at home meanwhile reshaped family and gender relations. Access to Atlantic markets and to the riches made possible by the expansion of a European racial capitalism Irish ports and cities thrived reshaping the Irish urban and rural landscape in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Through a series of thematic lectures, and engagement with a fascinating range of primary sources which reflect the gendered, linguistic, and religious diversity of the period, students taking this module will explore the centrality of the Atlantic world to the transformation of early modern Ireland.

The module does not presume any prior knowledge of the early modern period and consists of a one-hour lecture each week, alongside a series of small-group tutorials, to allow for further discussion and debate of the issues raised in the lectures.