1. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This module begins with the iconic battle of Clontarf in 1014 at which the high-king, Brian Boru, fought enemies that included the descendants of the Viking founders of Dublin. Study is made of the after-effects of the Vikings on Irish society, before moving to examine the causes and implications of the English invasion of the late twelfth century, especially the ensuing upheaval in Irish political life and Anglo-Irish relations. The module also offers a critical evaluation of the changing role of the church in medieval Irish life, and attention is paid to the patterns of human settlement and the physical imprint of man on the landscape: where and how did people live, and what survives today in terms of archaeology and architecture?

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Aim:
The course aims to provide students with a basic understanding of political, social and ecclesiastical developments in Ireland during the High and Later Middle Ages, by introducing essential knowledge and key concepts.

Learning outcomes:
By the end of the course, students should be able to

• outline chronologically the key developments in Ireland c.1000-c.1250
• offer explanations for the key developments in the period
• evaluate the significance of those key developments and appreciate their impact on the subsequent course of Irish history
• search for, and critically appraise, relevant literature
• undertake an analysis of select contemporary records (in translation)

Personal and transferable skills:
This course is intended to sharpen skills in
• written and verbal communication (explanation and argument), through essay work and tutorial discussion
• capacity for independent learning, through preparation for essays and tutorials
• IT, including word-processing and internet retrieval, through preparation for tutorials and essays
• documentary analysis, through the study of extracts from primary (i.e., contemporary medieval) sources

Attitudinal Skills:
Specifically, this course is intended to enhance appreciation and awareness of

• the structures of medieval Irish society, how it functioned, and the ways in which it differed from or mirrored contemporary society elsewhere
• the importance of kingship, and especially the position of the high-king
• the role of the church in medieval Irish life
• patterns of settlement and the physical imprint of man on the landscape
• the impact of the Vikings on Irish society and politics
• the causes and implications of the English invasion
• the effects on Ireland of the assertion of English lordship, especially the ensuing upheaval in Irish political life
• the social, cultural and economic impact of English colonization
3. ESSAY TITLES

1. Evaluate the role of kin in the organization of Irish society in the early Middle Ages.
2. ‘Brian Bóruma did not create a high-kingship of Ireland: he built on foundations that had been laid over the preceding centuries by the Uí Néill, north and south’ (F.J. Byrne). Discuss.
3. When did Dublin become the de facto capital of Ireland?
4. ‘There are many signs that post-Clontarf Ireland was responding to the new ideas which were transforming Europe’ (Lydon). Discuss.
5. Why were the twelfth-century reformers so anxious to ensure that the Irish church was restructured into territorial dioceses under the rule of bishops?
6. Analyze Ireland’s relationship with either Scotland or Wales in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.
7. The English invasion of Ireland was ‘an accident, unforeseen and unplanned’ (Ó Corráin). Discuss.
8. Have historians exaggerated the transformation wrought by the English invasion?
9. ‘John, so often described as the worst of kings of England was, paradoxically, the best for Ireland’ (F.X. Martin). Discuss.
10. How widespread and how effective was Irish opposition to English rule in the first century after the invasion?
11. Which was the more important element in the English attempt to conquer Ireland, encastellation or colonization?
4. INTRODUCTORY READING

Easy reads:
● Seán Duffy, Ireland in the Middle Ages (London, 1997).
● Robin Frame, Colonial Ireland, 1169-1369 (Dublin, 1981) [out of print; available in library].
● Donncha Ó Corráin, Ireland before the Normans (Dublin, 1972) [out of print; available in library].

More difficult reads:
● Francis John Byrne, Irish kings and high-kings (3rd ed., Dublin, 2001).
● Edmund Curtis, A history of medieval Ireland (2nd ed., London, 1938) [out of print; available in library].
5. COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY

**General Reading:**

**Bibliographies and guides:**

**Society and Politics, 1000-1169**


Idem, “The western world’s tower of honour and dignity”: the career of Muirchertach Ua Briain in context”, in Damian Bracken and Dagmar Ó Riain-Raedel (eds), *Ireland and Europe in the twelfth century: reform and renewal* (Dublin, 2006), pp 56-73.


**The pre-Norman church**


Marie-Thérèse Flanagan, ‘St Mary’s Louth and the introduction of the Arroasian observance into Ireland’, *Clogher Record*, 10 (1978-81), 233-44.


**Ireland and the 12th-century Renaissance**


Myles Dillon, ‘Literary activity in the pre-Norman period’ in *Seven Centuries of Irish Learning* ed. Brian Ó Cuív (1961), 27-44.


**The English Invasion**


**Aftermath of the invasion**


C.A. Empey, ‘The settlement of the kingdom of Limerick’ in *England and Ireland in the later Middle Ages* (see above, no. 73).
James Lydon, ‘John de Courcy (c. 1150-1219) and the medieval frontier’ in *Worsted in the Game* (see above, no. 63), 37-48.

**Medieval Dublin**

Art Cosgrove (ed.), *Dublin through the ages* (1988)
Margaret Murphy and Michael Potterton, *The Dublin region in the Middle Ages: settlement, land-use and economy* (2010).

**The Anglo-Norman church**

Margaret Murphy, ‘Balancing the concerns of church and state: the archbishops of Dublin 1181-1228’ in Barry, Frame and Simms (eds), *Colony and Frontier in Medieval Ireland*, 41-56.

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**The thirteenth century**


Helen Perros, ‘Crossing the Shannon frontier’ in Barry, Frame and Simms (eds), *Colony and frontier in medieval Ireland*, 117-38.


**Colonial institutions, society and culture**


Art Cosgrove (ed.), *Dublin through the ages* (1989).


Idem, ‘English law in Ireland, 1172-1351’, Northern Ireland Legal Quarterly, 13 (1972), 393-422.


Eadem, The Irish parliament in the middle ages (1952).


Gaelic Ireland in the later middle ages


Kenneth Nicholls, Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland in the later middle ages (1972, revised ed. 2003).


Katharine Simms, From kings to warlords: the changing political structure of Gaelic Ireland in the later middle ages (1987, 2000).


Eadem, ‘The brehons of later medieval Ireland’ in Brebons, sergeants and attorneys, ed. Daire Hogan et al. (1990), 51-76.
Eadem, ‘Bards and barons: the Anglo-Irish aristocracy and the native culture’ in Medieval Frontier Societies ed. Bartlett et al., 177-97.
Eadem, ‘Medieval Armagh: the kingdom of Oirthir (Orior) and its rulers the Uí Anluain (O’Hanlons)’, in A.J. Hughes and W. Nolan (eds), Armagh: history and society (Dublin, 2001), 187-216.
Eadem, ‘Medieval Fermanagh’, in E.M. Murphy and W.J. Roulston (eds), Fermanagh: history and society (Dublin, 2004), 77-103.