



Thursday, February 19, 2004

Irish history topic of next President's Colloquium

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

In the 800 years of violence that has characterized Ireland's relations with Great Britain, the 1916 Easter Rebellion stands as a historical linchpin. More than 1,500 Irish Volunteers and members of the Irish Citizen Army seized strategic points in Dublin and engaged in a weeklong battle with British soldiers. Though the rebels were defeated and their organizers executed, the nationalistic movement that ensued in Ireland led to nearly 80 years of guerrilla warfare in a fight for its independence from Britain.

An analysis of these events form part of Associate Professor of History Seán Farrell Moran's lecture, "Ireland, the Irish, and the 'Terrible Beauty' of Irish History," to be given at the next President's Colloquium on Thursday, March 4, in the Oakland Center Banquet Rooms. A reception begins at 11:30 a.m., with the presentation following at noon. The event is open to the public, but seating is limited. Call (248) 370-4648 to make reservations.

"The course of Irish history has been very dramatic and the particular issue of national identity has been prominent," Moran said. "Historians tend to focus on the rational process of Irish politics and how Ireland has achieved some political identity. But there's also a history of violence compelled by non-rational elements, and my work tries to provide an understanding of these motivating forces."

Unlike most historians, poets and artists have been more successful in conveying an understanding of Ireland's non-rational political forces, Moran said. The phrase "terrible beauty" in the title of Moran's lecture comes from a line in the poem "Easter 1916" by Irish poet William Butler Yeats.

"The initial writings on Irish history were very nationalistic," said Moran, a dual citizen of Ireland and the United States. "But revisionist history has been very controversial in Ireland. Many are uncomfortable with looking at the non-rational elements in Irish politics."

Moran gained some amount of fame in Ireland when his book "**Patrick Pearse and the Politics of Redemption**" was published in 1994 by the Catholic University of America Press. Moran applied psychoanalytic principles to explain how Pearse came to be a violent revolutionary and the most important figure involved in the Easter Rebellion. The book received widespread attention and received mixed reviews from two of Ireland's largest newspapers.

"I don't write psychohistory, but my writing has been informed by insights gained from modern psychiatry," said Moran, who previously worked in the Mental Health Care Unit of Georgetown University Hospital. "Historians generally have a much higher profile in Ireland than they do in the United States. One newspaper praised my book as insightful, another said I was totally off the mark. One interesting side note is when I went to Ireland after publishing the book, the first time I used my credit card [the merchant] recognized my name as the author of the book."

At Oakland, Moran teaches courses on Irish and Scottish history and says today is a "golden age" for Irish studies.

"There are about 50 million people in the United States who identify themselves as Irish and we have an active Irish community in metro Detroit," Moran said. "My courses on Ireland are always full and the students are very enthusiastic and engaged. Since coming to Oakland (in 1990), I've also given about 30 talks to community groups about Ireland, which is something I really enjoy doing."

Moran also is the head of the Midwest region for the **American Conference for Irish Studies**, a multidisciplinary scholarly organization with about 1,500 members in the United States, Ireland, Canada and other countries around the world. He currently is working on a textbook on Irish history as well as one exploring the history of the concept of "hope."

The President's Colloquium Series, established in 1995, showcases the achievements of Oakland University

researchers, promotes communication and collaboration among scientists, and recognizes the outstanding work of "Nobel Class" scientists.

SUMMARY

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