



UCD SCHOOL OF HISTORY & ARCHIVES

MA IN HISTORY - AMERICAN HISTORY

American History

Programme Directors: Professor Maurice Bric [maurice.bric@ucd.ie]

What will I study?

The Idea of America (Semester 1)

Professor Maurice J Bric

America is many things to many people and fixing the "idea" (referring to the mental representation and conception of America and, more particularly, the United States) in a historical moment of time can seem problematic. The module aims to introduce students to the formation and development of ways people have conceived of America. The module consists of a weekly two-hour seminar structured around both the positive and negative aspects of a particular historical idea of America, including the United States and Canada. This is not a narrative module and neither is it confined to purely American ideas - the global perspective is also explored. This module offers a historical understanding of the key ideas of America, the debates surrounding them and the way they have developed and changed over time.

The Making of United States Foreign Policy from FDR to GWB (Semester 2)

Dr Sandra Scanlon

This module uses a range of source materials to explore the making of United States foreign policy from the Roosevelt to the Bush administrations. Students will consider the various influences on presidential foreign policymaking, including ideology, public opinion and relationships with allies. Domestic constraints on presidential policymaking influenced the grand strategies pursued by administrations from Franklin Roosevelt's attempts to overcome Congressional isolationism during the 1930s to George W. Bush's efforts to sell the Iraq War to a reluctant public in 2002-3. Case studies are used to explore the relationship between domestic political considerations and foreign policy, for example American responses to the Holocaust are examined to determine the extent of their influence on President Truman's decision to recognise Israel in 1948. While the role of lobby groups and ideological political action committees expanded over this period, the emergence of television news and the Internet changed the ways in which the public learned of international events; each altered the context in which the president could create and 'sell' his foreign policies.

In addition to these two core courses, students take one option (either in Semester I or in Semester 2) from the wide variety of courses available in the School. These options include a course from the Mary Ball Washington Professor of American History. The holder of this chair changes from year to year. He/she will also be available to students for advice on dissertations.



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In addition to the above academic modules, students will also take research training. This training focuses on those skills required by research students to develop their work and introduce students to different types of methodologies and archives. Of great importance is the seminar itself which allows students to present their ideas, to structure an argument, and to have these challenged. In this way, we encourage a variety of skills which can be used in ways other than research.

The culmination of the programme is a 15,000 word dissertation which is based on original research and due at the end of July. Each student will be supervised by a member of the School who will meet with him/her to assess progress and to discuss the project. There is also an opportunity to present aspects of their work to their peers.

Who does this MA?

The underlying objective of this MA is not only to provide upper-level students with a sense of how the United States has evolved but more particularly to allow them to explore in greater detail areas in which they have a special interest. As such, both the overarching core courses and the more detailed optional modules allow the student to realise both a particular and a general knowledge of the United States within the conceptual framework of “how America is perceived”.

In more general terms, this MA will give students a keener and more informed knowledge of politics and society in the United States and how they impact on the world at large. We receive students from diverse backgrounds and our students return to many backgrounds. Some of course decide to pursue further study and we give such students every encouragement to do so.