

HIST 301 MODERN IRELAND 1850 – 2000

Essay List 2011

1. 'The Famine emigration has often been seen as one of the great tragedies in Irish history, and in human terms this is of course correct. Nonetheless, in the long run this emigration played an important role in increasing the living standards of those who stayed behind.' Discuss.
2. 'By the time of James Stephens's downfall Irish republicanism had acquired a definite shape and a marginal but stable position in the Irish political scene.' Discuss.
3. 'The influence and legacy of Paul Cullen has become the pivotal site in debates and reassessments of the development of modern Irish Catholicism and of the growth of the institutional power and influence of the Catholic Church in Ireland.' Discuss.
4. 'That in commemorating the initiation of the National Land agitation by an anniversary meeting in Irishtown we are manifesting the vitality of that movement which during the past twelve months has shaken the feudalistic system of land laws to its foundations, called forth the inherent and hitherto inert resoluteness of the farmers of Ireland in the assertion of their rights and demonstrated the power of the democracy of our country by the triumphs achieved over class supremacy, and the intelligence and order exhibited by people in over one hundred great demonstrations during the past year.' Interpret and discuss.
5. 'Isaac Butt founded the Home Rule movement and popularised the concept of Home Rule yet his achievement remains in the shadow of that of his successor, Parnell.' Discuss.
6. 'In their determination to preserve and extend the use of Irish as a spoken language and artistic medium, members of the Gaelic League profoundly influenced Irish culture and literature in the twentieth century.' Discuss.
7. 'Between 1868 and 1905, Conservative defence of the Union was repackaged in Ireland as imaginative administration and economic improvement.' Discuss.
8. 'Carson held that home rule would be disastrous for Ireland and, sharing the widespread illusion that Southern Ireland could not survive as a viable economic entity without the support of industrial Belfast, he seized on the Ulster question more to prevent self government for Ireland than to achieve it for Ulster.' Discuss.
9. 'Militant trade unionism was a spent force in Ireland following the triumph of William Martin Murphy and the advent of European war.' Discuss.

10. 'John Redmond showed skill and determination in exploiting the opportunities provided by a first upheaval, the political crisis initiated by the house of lords. But his background and temperament left him unable to respond effectively to a second 'revolution': the abandonment of normal constitutional procedures by conservatives and unionists, and the ensuing militarisation of Irish public life.' Discuss.
11. 'The impact of the Rising on popular nationalism was neither immediately obvious nor unambiguous. No single organisation could claim to represent all of the participating groups; none of the surviving leaders were prominent public figures; no clear policy had been affirmed by the rebels beyond the establishment of a republic.' Discuss.
12. 'Although the republicans during the War of Independence failed to secure sufficient money, arms or skills to gain military control over most regions, their guerrilla campaign and immobilisation of the civil administration made it intolerably costly for the crown forces to maintain their footing.' Discuss.
13. 'The degeneration of political division over the Treaty into armed conflict between the provisional government and its "Irregular" opponents was predictable, but not inevitable.' Discuss.
14. 'In Ireland in 1922 there was no State and no organised forces. The Provisional Government was simply eight men in the City Hall standing amidst the ruins of one administration, with the foundations of another not yet laid, and with wild men screaming through the keyholes.' Assess Cumann na nGaedheal's performance in the period 1922-32 in light of Kevin O'Higgins's statement.
15. 'With adroit skill, during the 1930s de Valera translated his personal vision of Irish sovereignty into a political reality.' Discuss.
16. 'Benevolent neutrality best served British as well as Irish interests.' Discuss.
17. 'The attractions of city life in Britain were an inducement to leave Ireland in the 1950s, as were the regular wages and steady employment opportunities.' Discuss.
18. 'By the time Lemass became Taoiseach, in 1959, he had come to realise that his options were at once narrower and broader than they had been. Narrower because any government's capacity to influence the growth and development of a small open economy was in fact much more limited than traditional thinking (particularly within Fianna Fáil) had supposed it to be. Broader, because the world – or at least Europe – was now the stage for development, and the fixation on Britain could be radically modified.' Discuss.
19. 'Only belatedly from the late 1950s did Irish women benefit from economic and social modernisation'. Discuss.

20. 'The first instincts of Unionists, having been put in charge by Westminster, were to ensure that their power should be both undiluted and permanent'. Discuss.

21. What factors led to the Good Friday Agreement?