TITLE OF COURSE:  An Gorta Mor: The Great Hunger in Irish Memory

INSTRUCTOR(S) NAME:  Dr. James Walsh

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COURSE MEETING DATES:  Wednesdays (January 15 - February 5, 2020) 1:00-3:00 pm

COURSE MEETING LOCATION:  Ruffatto Hall, Room 401
Note Field Trip Location for Session 3 (January 29) to Casa Mayan on Auraria campus

INSTRUCTOR BIO:  Dr. James Walsh is an Associate Professor in Political Science at the University of Colorado Denver, where he has taught for twenty two years. He specializes in Irish Diasporic Studies, as well as Labor and Immigration History and Politics. Walsh is also the founder of the Romero Theater Troupe, an all-volunteer “organic” community theater that uses the stage to preserve the history of human rights struggles.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:  This course will examine the most devastating period in Irish history, when nearly three million people died or abandoned Ireland between 1845-1852. We will explore the history of Ireland that led up to the Famine, including imperial policies imposed upon Ireland by England, the ideological framework that led to England’s response to mass hunger in Ireland, survival strategies employed by the Irish, the immigrant experience on “coffin ships” to North America, the reception that the Irish faced in North American cities, strategies employed in North America to organize and gain political and economic power. Throughout, we will look at An Gorta Mor in Irish and Irish American memory, attempting to understand the legacy of this moment and its enduring impact around the world.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS:
Tim Pat Coogan, Famine Plot.
John Kelly, The Graves are Walking: The Great Famine and the Saga of the Irish People
Cecil Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger: Ireland.

SYLLABUS

Session #1 – An overview of the course, along with historical context leading up to the Great Hunger, including the political, cultural, and social context of early nineteenth century Ireland

Session #2– Examine the survival strategies and ideological framework of the Great Hunger, attempting to understand why the Irish responded the ways that they did, and why the English followed the direction that they did. We will also examine the experience of immigration on the “coffin ships” and strategies of organizing and finding work in North America.

Session #3– Meet at Casa Mayan on Auraria campus, exploring the history of the Irish in Denver, where they lived, the work that they did, and what forces brought them to early Colorado. We will draw a link between famine Ireland and the mining districts of Colorado

Session #4 – Final class will examine the years that followed the Great Hunger in both Ireland and North America and how this event has forever shaped each region. We will also explore the legacy of this tragedy and how it continues to influence policies around hunger and poverty.