

Dear Colleagues and Students,

You are kindly invited to the seminar entitled "British Concepts of Race and Nation in Plans to Partition Ireland and Palestine, 1911-1938" organized by the Department of History.

**Date:** 20 May 2024, Monday

**Time:** 16.30

**Avenue:** A-130 Seminar Room

**Title:** British Concepts of Race and Nation in Plans to Partition Ireland and Palestine, 1911-1938.

**Speaker:** Dr. Michael Christopher Rast, University of St. Thomas

**Abstract:**

In 1920, the British Parliament passed an act to create two states in Ireland. Northern Ireland would be majority Protestant in religion and unionist in politics, most people there desirous of maintaining their status within the United Kingdom. The rest of Ireland was primarily Catholic and nationalist, aspiring to complete independence. Drawing on this model, British administrators published plans in 1937 to divide Palestine--where they had exercised power since 1918--into two states. One of these polities was to be peopled primarily by Arabs, comprising Muslims and Christians, the other would be majority Jewish.

These two partition plans were not a recognition of these groups' right to self-determination. British administrators believed that Ireland's Catholic nationalists and Protestant unionists were separate nations, distinguished by inherent racial characteristics. They thought the same of Palestine's Arabs and Jews. Moreover, the attributes Britons ascribed to Irish Catholics were strikingly similar to those they perceived in Palestinian Arabs, as were their descriptions of Protestant unionists and Jews. Using archival sources and public discourse, I will discuss the many parallels between plans to partition Ireland and Palestine, particularly British classifications of people into different national and racial groups that they believed should be politically isolated from one another.

**Bio:**

Mike Rast is currently Assistant Professor of European History at the University of St. Thomas, Houston, Texas. He holds a Ph.D. from the School of Irish Studies at Concordia University, Montreal, Canada, and an M.A. in History from Georgia State University, Atlanta. Dr. Rast is the author of the monograph "Shaping Ireland's Independence: Nationalist, Unionist, and British Solutions to the Irish Question, 1909-1925", published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2019, as well as numerous articles on modern British and Irish history.