



# The Irish Republican Movement and Contested Memories of the 1980-81 Hunger Strikes

By Stephen Hopkins, University of Leicester

Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> November 4-6pm in 1481/341

This lecture will analyse the politics of contested memory in relation to the contemporary trajectory of the Irish Provisional Republican Movement (Sinn Féin and the IRA).

It will be argued that the republican leadership has effectively sought to construct an 'official memory' (Jelin, 2003) or a 'master narrative' for the movement on critical aspects of the past. The paper will also examine efforts to challenge this 'official memory' from within the milieu of so-called dissident republicanism, particularly in relation to interpretations of crucial events such as the 1980-81 hunger strikes.

Significantly, this analysis draws on the life-writing and memoirs of key individuals with diverging accounts of the past as well as their respective receptions within the broader Catholic and nationalist/republican community – all of which serves to unfold a more nuanced understanding of contemporary 'memory struggles' in Northern Ireland.

Stephen Hopkins is Lecturer in Politics in the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Leicester. His book, *The Politics of Memoir and the Northern Ireland Conflict*, was published in 2013 by Liverpool University Press. He is also the author of several recent articles and book chapters, including 'The Chronicles of Long Kesh: Irish Republican Memoirs and the Contested Memory of the Hunger Strikes', in *Memory Studies* (Vol. 7, No. 4; 2014) and, 'Victims and Memoir-Writing in Northern Ireland: Leaving the Troubles Behind?' in *Lesley Lelouec and Grainne O'Keefe-Vigneron* (eds.), *Ireland and Victims: Confronting the Past, Forging the Future* (Peter Lang, 2012).

