



The award-winning newsletter of
students and staff of UCC's Department
of Government and Politics

Issue 83, Wednesday 26 September 2024

GOVERNMENT TIMES

Dr. Liam Weeks Appointed as New Head of Department



Following the departure of **Dr. Mary C. Murphy** to Boston College (see pages 4 and 5), **Dr. Liam Weeks** has taken over as Head of the Department of Government and Politics until 31 December 2027. A graduate of Trinity College Dublin, Liam has been a valued member of staff in UCC's Department of Government and Politics since 2006. His main research interests include comparative politics, but particularly electoral systems, political parties and voting behaviour. He has published widely and his fifth book, titled *Birth of a State: The Anglo-Irish Treaty* and co-authored with Mícheál Ó Fathartaigh, was described by *The Irish Times* as 'compelling analysis'. Liam's work has been cited in Irish parliamentary debates, he has appeared before parliamentary committees in hearings on the electoral commission and the electoral system, has addressed meetings of parliamentary parties and other members of parliament, and he has written opinion pieces for *The Irish Times*, *The Irish Examiner*, *The Sunday Business Post* and other broadsheets.

Table of Contents

Page 1 -	Cover Page: New Head of Department
Page 2 -	Table of contents
Page 3 -	Editorial
Page 4 -	Dr. Mary C. Murphy moves to Boston College
Page 5 -	Dr. Mary C. Murphy moves to Boston College
Page 6 -	CACSSS Excellence Scholarship for Tobias Heyduk
Page 7 -	Populism in Ireland by Christo Pretorius
Page 8 -	Populism in Ireland by Christo Pretorius
Page 9 -	Robyn Murphy Bound for Hockey World Cup
Page 10 -	Dr. Niall Duggan at Malmö University
Page 11 -	Exploring Democracy: A Week in Cologne by Alice Bogue
Page 12 -	Exploring Democracy: A Week in Cologne by Alice Bogue
Page 13 -	On Tour in Italy: Hub in Active European Citizenship
Page 14 -	On Tour in Italy: Hub in Active European Citizenship
Page 15 -	CLRG: Book Explores 125 Years of Irish Local Elections
Page 16 -	CLRG: Book Explores 125 Years of Irish Local Elections
Page 17 -	CLRG: Centenary Commemoration of Cork Corporation Dissolution
Page 18 -	CLRG: Centenary Commemoration of Cork Corporation Dissolution
Page 19 -	Government & Politics Society: <i>West Wing</i> Wednesdays
Page 20 -	'Liberalism and Structural Injustice' seminar by Dr. Vittorio Bufacchi
Page 21 -	Dr. Theresa Reidy on the Weakness of Irish Local Government
Page 22 -	Dr. Theresa Reidy on the Weakness of Irish Local Government
Page 23 -	Our Students Contribute to Budget 2025 Discussions
Page 24 -	Our Students Contribute to Budget 2025 Discussions
Page 25 -	Graduates elected to Cork City Council and Cork County Council



WISHING EVERYONE A WONDERFUL ACADEMIC YEAR

It is brilliant to see the beautiful UCC campus buzzing with life and activity after the summer break and I am thrilled to bring you Issue 83 of *Government Times*, the newsletter produced by students and staff of the Department of Government and Politics. Much has changed in recent months. We were saddened to see **Dr. Mary C. Murphy** depart for Boston College, but we wish her well in her new adventure (pages 4 and 5). Equally, we look forward to a new era in the department under the leadership of **Dr. Liam Weeks**. Our undergraduate students are to the fore in this issue as we highlight the hockey exploits of **Robyn Murphy** (page 9) and the budget views of some of our students (pages 23 and 24), including **Eleanor McCahill** (BSc Government and Political Science), **Shauna Friedel** (BA Politics), **Conor Taylor** (BA Politics) and **Emily Guinane** (BA Politics). With the support of the Hub in Active European Citizenship, **Alice Bogue**, **Kiera Riordan**, **Sofia Rea**, **Caitlin Holland**, and **Erica Julg** recently attended a youth exchange in Cologne – read Alice’s excellent article on pages 11 and 12.

Current PhD candidate, **Tobias Heyduk**, is featured on page 6 and we congratulate him on being awarded a CACSSS Excellence Scholarship. It is fantastic to see our former students do well and the article by **Christo Pretorius** (graduate of the MSc International Public Policy and Diplomacy, see pages 7 and 8) is well worth reading. Speaking of former students, well done to **Ben Dalton O’Sullivan** and **Peter Horgan** (both graduates of the BSc Government and Political Science) on their respective elections to Cork County Council and Cork City Council this June. The current Lord Mayor of Cork, **Dan Boyle**, as well as **Garret Kelleher** and **Joe Lynch** are also graduates of our department and each won a seat in City Hall (see page 25).

While on the topic of local elections (!), my new book, *Democracy on Your Doorstep: 125 Years of Local Elections in Ireland, 1899-2024* is covered on pages 15 and 16. With Christmas only three months away, it might make a nice stocking filler! **Dr. Niall Duggan** presented a conference paper recently in Malmö (page 10), while **Dr. Theresa Reidy** published a thought-provoking opinion piece on the state of Irish local government (pages 21 and 22).

Enjoy Issue 83!

Dr. Aodh Quinlivan

Editor, *Government Times*

a.quinlivan@ucc.ie



New Leadership for Boston College Irish Institute



Dr. Mary C. Murphy, an expert on the complex relationship between Ireland, Northern Ireland, and Europe, especially in the post-Brexit era, has been appointed as director of the Boston College Irish Institute. The head of the University College Cork's Department of Government and Politics since January 2023, Murphy formally began her duties as Irish Institute director, and as a professor in BC's Political Science Department, in August.

Murphy is co-author of *A Troubled Constitutional Future: Northern Ireland After Brexit*, which was selected for the University Association for Contemporary European Studies Best Book Prize in 2023. UACES described *A Troubled Constitutional Future* as 'an informative, well-researched book on the complexities of the UK-Irish relationship, the impact of Brexit on Northern Ireland and its potential constitutional consequences...it weaves together insights from the different communities in and around Northern Ireland and

highlights the challenges to be addressed.’ Her other publications also include *Europe and Northern Ireland’s Future: Negotiating Brexit’s Unique Case* and *Northern Ireland and the European Union: The Dynamics of a Changing Relationship*.

‘I feel very privileged to be joining the Boston College community and to be taking up the directorship of the Irish Institute. Boston College has long played a pivotal and valued role in supporting the economic, social, political, and cultural landscape of the island of Ireland. I look forward to building on that immense legacy over the years ahead and to positioning BC as a premier location for the study of Ireland in the United States.

I also welcome the opportunity for the Irish Institute to continue to encourage the consolidation of peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, to support North-South and British-Irish relations, and to help the island of Ireland to adjust and respond to the challenges it faces in the post-Brexit era. At a time of widespread political and economic upheaval, Boston College and the Irish Institute are committed to contributing positively to U.S.-Irish relations and to the future of both parts of the island of Ireland. I am hugely excited to be part of that endeavour.’

Murphy’s appointment represents a new beginning for the Irish Institute, launched in 1998 and widely praised for offering programmes and initiatives to promote reconciliation between Ireland and Northern Ireland through increased mutual understanding and cross-border partnerships.



**Congratulations, Mary, we wish you well in
your new role.**



Following on from our story on the previous two pages, *The Irish Times* of Saturday 21 September featured an interview of Dr. Mary C. Murphy by Freya McClements.



SCHOLARSHIP FOR TOBIAS

Tobias Heyduk has been awarded a PhD Excellence Scholarship from the Graduate School in the College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences.

Tobias began his studies in the Department of Government and Politics in January 2024. His PhD title is: 'Administrative Autonomy in Cross-Border Co-operation', and he is being supervised by Drs Liam Weeks and Aodh Quinlivan.



MSc IPPD Graduate Publishes Article on Populism in Ireland

Populism in Ireland: Sinn Féin and the Alternative to Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil's Political Dominance

September 4, 2024



Sinn Féin leader Mary Lou McDonald meets with supporters at the Cost of Living Coalition protest in Dublin, Ireland, on September 24, 2022. Photo: Liam Murphy.

Congratulations to **Christo Pretorius** (graduate of the MSc International Public Policy and Diplomacy) on the recent publication of his article in the academic journal *Populism & Politics*. Christo's investigates populism in Ireland, but more specifically the populist left-leaning party Sinn Féin. Although having a checkered past, in the last decade the party has seen a surge in popularity as the alternative voting option. Up until now academic literature discussing the populist nature of Sinn Féin often struggles to define it as such, and so, using political psychology and a clear definition of populism, this article not only categorises the party as a populist, but also discusses its history and what effect it has had (or lack thereof) on its popularity in the leadup to the last few elections.

Furthermore, the article concludes by investigating why the momentum the party had as the alternative choice slowed down, and how this vacuum allowed other fringe populist parties to see greater success during the 2024 elections.

As for the other populist parties in the nation, while politically irrelevant and on the fringes for now, they stand to gain the most from Sinn Féin's loss.

Independent Ireland's Ciaran Mullooly's decision to join a pro-European parliament group despite the party's Eurosceptic stance has raised the eyebrows of many, which might negatively affect the party's ability to win over disgruntled voters in the next election. PBP-S continually fails to make any headway during elections, although left-leaning working-class voters may cast their lot in with PBP-S should they decide to stop supporting Sinn Féin. Most of all, Aontú stands to gain the most, offering disgruntled voters a new alternative to the alternative Sinn Féin, and attracting working class voters away from Independent Ireland, particularly given that The Think Ireland 2024 election poll suggests that this group predominantly support 'other right' parties (Cunningham, 2024).

However, Sinn Féin shouldn't be counted out just yet, as they currently hold the majority in the Northern Irish Assembly—an unprecedented result that may drive further election promises in the Republic advocating for reunification (Pogatchnik, 2024). If Sinn Féin successfully refines its policies and regains public support, it could have a chance at making gains in the upcoming general election, reversing its currently declining popularity in polls, which now place them behind Fine Gael for the first time since September 2021 (REDC & Business Post, 2024). That said, Fine Gael's response to immigration could explain their rise in the polls, a trend that might continue into the next election if the momentum persists (Clarke, 2024). While predicting the results of the next election may be futile, it is certainly one to watch closely.

Link to full article:

[Populism in Ireland: Sinn Féin and the Alternative to Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil's Political Dominance - ECPS \(populismstudies.org\)](https://populismstudies.org/2024/05/24/populism-in-ireland-sinn-fein-and-the-alternative-to-fine-gael-and-fianna-fail-political-dominance-ecps/)



Robyn is bound for the World Cup!



Above: Quercus Scholar, Robyn Murphy (right), and fellow UCC student, Julia McCarthy, on duty with the U-21 Irish Hockey Squad

BSc Government and Political Science second year student, **Robyn Murphy**, represented Ireland this summer at the Women's Euro Hockey Under-21 Championships in Terrassa, Spain. The goal of the Irish team was to claim one of the six spots up for grabs for the World Cup in 2025. The team was successful and took a World Cup qualifying place, along with the Netherlands, Spain, England, Germany and Belgium. The host nation is yet to be determined, and the tournament will be held in either July or December 2025. The tournament will feature 24 teams for the first time.

Based on her outstanding performances at the European Championships, Robyn has been called up to train with the Irish Senior Panel for the next four months. Congratulations Robyn, we are very proud of you.



Dr. Niall Duggan at Malmö University



Dr. Niall Duggan recently presented a paper entitled ‘African Agency in Geopolitical Times: Playing with EU and China Ontological Security’ at the second ACRN workshop. The Africa-China Research Network (ACRN) held two workshop days at Malmö University covering the topic the ‘New Cold War’ in Africa. This was Followed by presentations at the Swedish Foreign Ministry in Stockholm. The event was funded by Malmö University and Riksbankens Jubileumsfond.



RIKSBANKENS
JUBILEUMSFOND

FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF
THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES



<https://www.ucc.ie/en/hub-in-active-european-citizenship/>

Exploring Democracy: A week in Cologne

By Alice Bogue, BSc Government and Political Science, Year III

Before returning to UCC for the upcoming academic year, I was delighted to have the opportunity to work with the Hub in Active European Citizenship to represent Cork City Council as a delegate for a week-long youth exchange in Cork's twin city of Cologne. I was accompanied by four other delegates: Kiera Riordan, Sofia Rea, Caitlin Holland, and Erica Julg. During this exchange, we gathered with young people from all over Europe to engage in lively discussions and exchange ideas about the health of our democracies.



Above: The group met with Lord Mayor, Councillor Dan Boyle, before departing for Cologne.

This programme allowed participants to choose from an array of 3-day workshops that included ‘Creative Expressions of Political Participation’, ‘Participation in Democratic Structures’ and many more. The workshop that caught my eye was ‘International (youth) exchanges in a digital world’. Together with delegates from Turkey, Germany, and Italy, we explored the impacts of AI and its influence on today’s political landscape, while also addressing the important issue of fake news and its role in shaping public perception.

We spent the week immersed in close quarters with passionate individuals from Ukraine, Germany, Poland, Italy, Romania, and Turkey. We engaged in stimulating conversations about our nation's culture, history, and even our own personal experiences. We were fortunate to be joined by enthusiastic local volunteers who guided us around the city, taking us to key spots like the city hall, a local brewery, and the scenic city lake.



Participating in this youth exchange provided us with a unique opportunity to learn from each individual and their distinctive experience with democracy in their respective country. It also enabled us to overcome challenges like language barriers and cultural misunderstandings. While we each lead different lives in various countries, we share common concerns about the threats to democracy in Europe and a shared hope for the future. Through meaningful youth engagements like this youth exchange, we can promote unity, foster compromise, and build lasting friendships with individuals we would have never had the chance to meet





On Tour in Italy

The [Hub in Active European Citizenship](#) travelled to Trento (Italy) in September for the 54th Annual University Association for Contemporary European Studies (UACES) Conference. With 120 panels and over 400 presentations, the conference covered a multitude of topics.

The Hub hosted a workshop on '*Toolkits for Teaching European Integration Across Educational Levels*'. The workshop showcased our interactive techniques for engaging adolescents in issues of European integration (derived from the DABtheEU programme). With participants from France, Netherlands, Turkey, United Kingdom, Italy, Poland, and Cyprus, the workshop led to a lengthy discussion on how the European politics can be animated at post-primary and third level education. This unearthed an interesting new boardgame by Jan Grzymiski (Jagiellonian University, Kraków) called 'How To Win Brexit'.

In a *Communication and Culture* panel, Dr. Philip Murphy presented a paper on 'Expertise and Efficacy: A Study of Post-Primary teachers' Experience Teaching European Politics'. The panel featured papers on: the Eurocentric nature of pro-cycling, the cultural impact of Eurovision on perceptions of the EU in Israel, the promotion of European integration through the Tour de France, and analysing *Parlement* (TV Series) as a tool for understanding EU politics. The papers epitomise the variety of theories and techniques applied in contemporary European studies.



**The promotion of
European integration
through the Tour de
France.**

HUB
IN
ACTIVE
EUROPEAN
CITIZENSHIP



54th Annual Conference

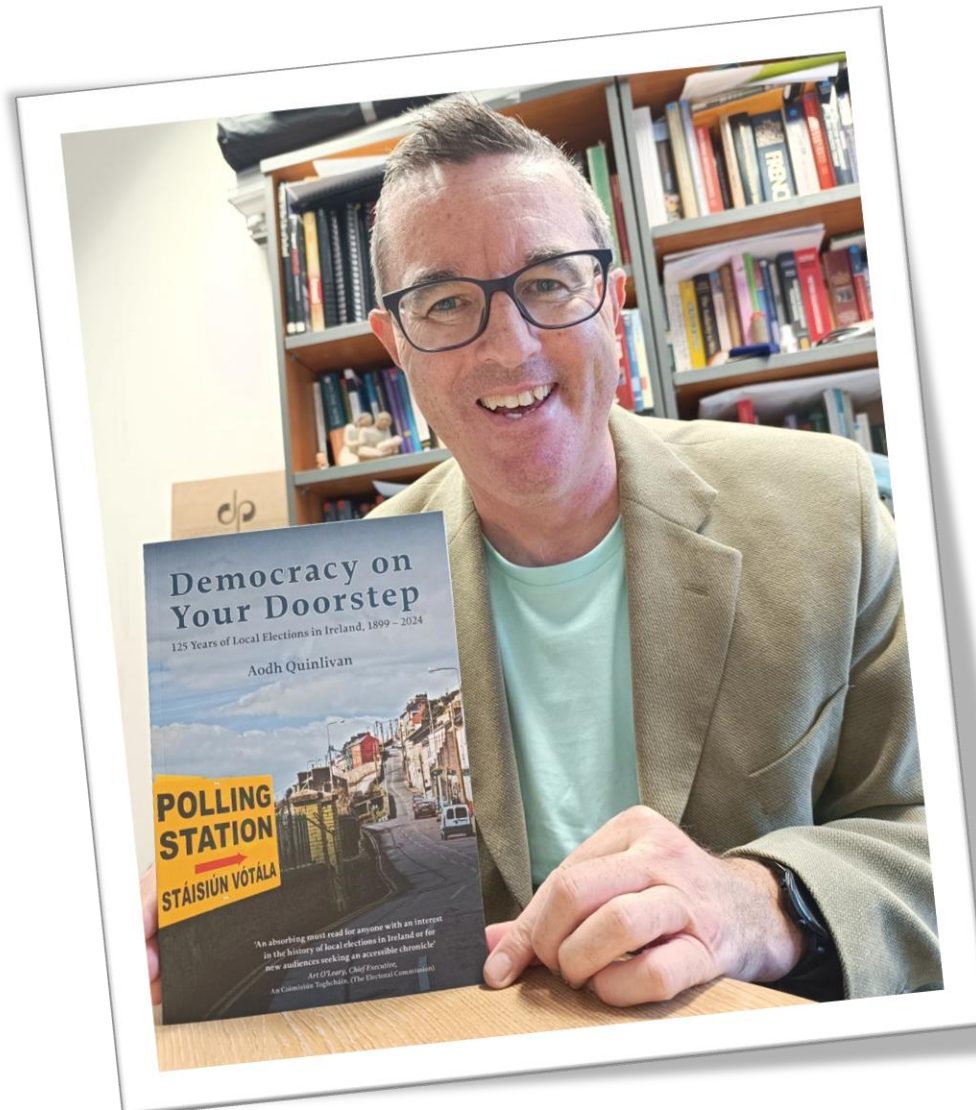
University of Trento

1-4 September 2024
#UACES2024



Dr. Philip Murphy presented a paper on 'Expertise and Efficacy: A Study of Post-Primary teachers' Experience Teaching European Politics' in Trento, Italy.

125 YEARS OF LOCAL ELECTIONS EXPLORED IN NEW BOOK



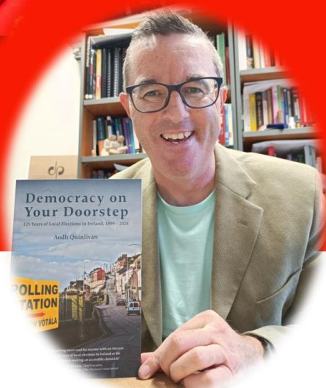
Dr. Aodh Quinlivan has written a new book with the support of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. *Democracy on Your Doorstep* examines each set of local elections in Ireland from 1899 to 2024 inclusive. Commenting on the publication, Alan Dillon TD, Minister of State for Local Government and Planning, noted: ‘This book represents a remarkable achievement as the first of its kind to analyse each local election individually. Throughout that journey, Aodh shines a spotlight on fascinating characters and stories from across the country, painting a colourful picture of the way we have approached local government over the last 125 years.’ The Chief Executive of the Electoral Commission, Art O’Leary, has described the book as ‘an absorbing must-read’ for anyone with an interest in local government.

In *Democracy on Your Doorstep*, Quinlivan attempts the difficult task of categorising the 26 sets of local elections since 1899. The six elections from 1899 to 1914 represent the national struggle for Home Rule. The seminal election of 1920 stands alone due to the success of Sinn Féin and the use of the local councils in the war against British authorities. The elections after the Civil War, in 1925 and 1928, were absorbing due to the efforts - mainly of Cumann na nGaedheal – to depoliticise local government and make it less partisan. Those efforts largely failed and the 17 local contests that have taken place since 1934 have tended to match, with some variations, the results of Dáil elections.

In 1934, Fianna Fáil emerged as the strongest grouping in local government, followed by the United Ireland Party or Fine Gael. Fast forward 90 years to 2024 and Fianna Fáil was, once again, the strongest party of local government with 248 seats, closely followed by Fine Gael on 245. Expressing his delight at the publication of his 10th book, Dr. Quinlivan stated: ‘The aim of *Democracy on Your Doorstep* is modest, merely to tell the stories behind the city and county council elections over the past 125 years and to give a flavour of the colour, excitement, and controversy ... not to mention some of the characters involved. They include notable Corkonians like Martin Corry and Bernie Murphy.’

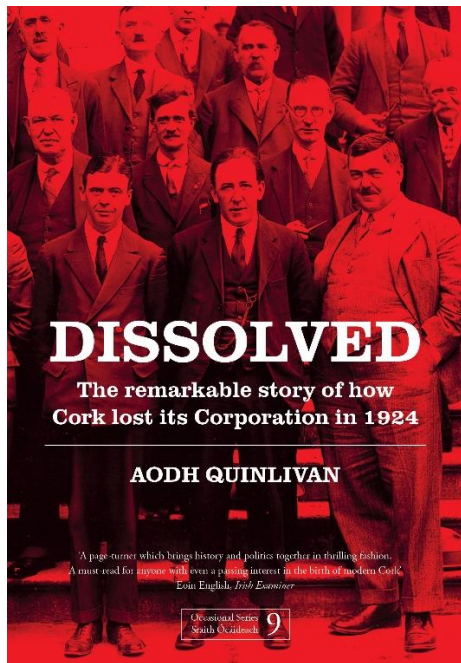


Councillor Bernie Murphy, famously elected to Cork Corporation (as it was then called) in 1985 features in *Democracy on Your Doorstep*.



Democracy on Your Doorstep is both impressive and comprehensive. It is a welcome addition to the still understocked library of books on local government in Ireland. It helps to bring to life the importance of government closest to and most accessible by the people – **Councillor Dan Boyle, Lord Mayor of Cork, 2024/2025**

1924 Dissolution of Cork Corporation to be Commemorated



Above: *Dissolved*, a book by Dr. Aodh Quinlivan about the dissolution of Cork Corporation was launched in Cork City Hall in October 2017. The picture of the right shows Aodh sharing a light-hearted moment with Professor Patrick O'Shea (UCC President), Councillor Tony Fitzgerald (Lord Mayor) and Liam Ronayne (City Librarian).

One hundred years ago, on 21 August 1924, a public inquiry into the performance of Cork Corporation commenced in the meeting chamber of the Courthouse. Minister for Local Government and Public Health, Séamus Burke TD, appointed Nicholas O'Dwyer to chair the inquiry pursuant to Section 12 of the Local Government (Temporary Provisions) Act 1923. Limerick-born, O'Dwyer, Chief Engineering Inspector in the Department of Local Government and Public Health, was to receive £3, 3 shillings per day for his services. The preliminary day of the inquiry started on 21 August and the proceedings were not open to the public. The legal representatives of the two main parties - the Cork Progressive Association (CPA) and Cork Corporation – were in attendance. The CPA, which had called for the inquiry, was represented by local solicitor, Harry Donegan. The Corporation was represented by the City Law Agent, Barry St. J. Galvin, and by the barrister, James F. Meagher.

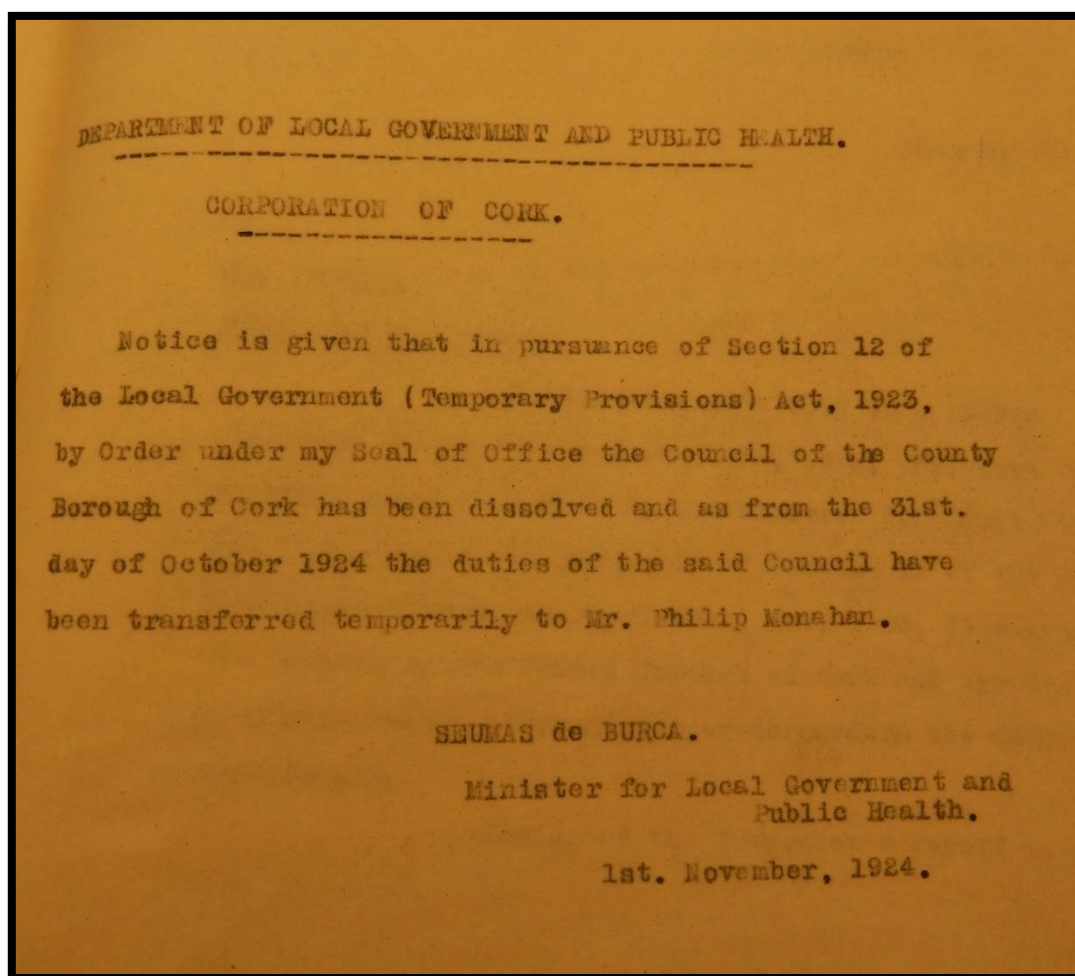
Subsequently, the inquiry ran for nine dramatic and tension-filled days until it concluded on Saturday 6 September. The public galleries were full each day as Corkonians were enthralled by the evidence provided by the likes of Richard Beamish TD and Lord Mayor Seán French – the latter spent three days in the witness box.

pg. 17 *Government Times*, 2024/25 academic year

At times, Nicholas O'Dwyer struggled to retain control as proceedings became heated and, on at least one occasion, opposing witnesses nearly came to blows. While tension filled the air in the Courthouse, the nine days of the inquiry also brought moments of light relief and humour.

Following the inquiry, Nicholas O'Dwyer presented his report to Minister for Local Government and Public Health, Séamus Burke TD, on 15 October 1924. The report was weak and inconclusive; despite this, to no-one's surprise, Minister Burke ordered the dissolution of Cork Corporation with effect from noon on 31 October. He appointed Philip Monahan as Commissioner to run the affairs of the Corporation. As the clock struck noon on 31 October, Commissioner Monahan entered the Courthouse during a council meeting. He ordered the councillors present to take their belongings and leave immediately. Monahan was now in charge and Cork Corporation would remain dissolved for four and-a-half years.

Lord Mayor of Cork, Councillor Dan Boyle, has proposed to mark the centenary of the dissolution of Cork Corporation with a re-enactment event in Cork Courthouse on Thursday 31 October. The event is taking place in conjunction with UCC's Centre for Local and Regional Governance and the 'script' is being written by Dr. Aodh Quinlivan. More details to follow!



WHY NOT ENJOY A *WEST WING* WEDNESDAY?

West Wing Wednesdays

Join us for a screening of *The West Wing*
Our new regular social gathering



Wednesday September 11th
West Wing 5



18:30

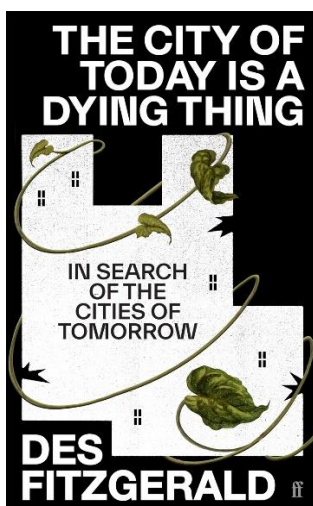


UCC's Government and Politics Society has been running a new social event each Wednesday with the screening of an episode of *The West Wing*. The popular show debuted 25 years ago, on 22 September 1999, and ran for seven seasons. The political drama's many accolades include 26 Emmy Awards out of 95 nominations, as well as two Golden Globe Awards and two consecutive Peabody Awards. Why not pop along next Wednesday? Bring the popcorn!

RESEARCH SEMINAR SERIES BEGINS WITH LIVELY DISCUSSION ON LIBERALISM



Dr. Vittorio Bufacchi (Department of Philosophy) began our departmental research seminar series on Tuesday 24 September with a stimulating discussion on liberalism and structural injustice. Vittorio argued that we have moved from three historical cases of structural injustice – slavery, natural hierarchies, and colonialism – to three modern cases, namely exploitation, inequality, and domination. In his view, liberalism has not provided the solutions to these injustices; in fact, liberalism has repeatedly attempted to provide the same answer – more rights. The case was cogently presented that perhaps we need to move beyond liberalism and emphasise more duties rather than more rights. The seminar was well attended by staff, post-graduate and under-graduate students and a lively discussion followed Vittorio's presentation. All in all, it was a great start to our 2024/2025 seminar series!



NEXT SEMINAR

Professor Des Fitzgerald

Tuesday 15 October

ORB 2.03

ALL WELCOME!

Dr. Theresa Reidy: Ireland has weakest local government system in Europe

In advance of this summer's local elections, Dr. Theresa Reidy had a thought-provoking opinion piece in the *Irish Examiner*, as reproduced here.

It is hard to be motivated about the upcoming local elections. Ireland was ranked last out of 39 countries in a local autonomy self-rule index in 2016. Ireland was 36th out of 39 countries for its institutional capacity, 37th out of 39 for its policy scope, 36th out of 39 for policy discretion. The pattern was even worse on the financial indicators. Ireland spends a miniscule amount at local level and raises even less in revenue. The 2016 report, and many like it, do not make for comfortable reading: Ireland has the weakest system of local government in Europe. The pattern of the last 100 years has been one of stripping roles and responsibilities from local government. Successive national governments have been obsessed with local government structures. Multiple reports and waves of reforms have almost always ended in abolition or amalgamation of different layers. Most recently, town councils were abolished in 2014 and local authorities in Limerick, Tipperary, and Waterford were amalgamated. Powers have also been stripped away from local government; most health responsibilities were removed in 2005 with the establishment of the HSE, education was reorganised in 2015 with the creation of education and training boards, water services will finally be reassigned fully to Irish Water in 2026. Many of these changes were important and well justified but there has been little effort to replace these functions. While most EU countries have been growing the provision of childcare and other social care services at local level, local government service provision is either static or going backwards in Ireland.



At independence, Ireland adapted the feeble system of local government created by the British colonial administration. Researchers that work on local government will often point to a deep suspicion of local decision-making among both political and administrative elites. Corruption, especially in planning and housing at local level, is a major stain and shapes views of local government, even now decades after the major problems were addressed. There is also the challenge that our civil and public servants are trained in the highly centralised power structures of Ireland, and there is an automatic presumption that central is best. In public debates, we do not acknowledge nearly enough how odd and imbalanced governance is in Ireland. Ireland has a population of 5.1m people but just 31 local authority areas. That means that, on average, we have

almost 165,000 citizens per local authority. This contrasts enormously with similar, small EU member states. With an almost identical population, Denmark has 98 local authorities and they have 60,000 citizens per municipality, on average. Portugal with a population of over 10m people has 308 local authorities and, on average, 34,000 people per municipality. The picture is even worse when we look at the number of councillors that we elect. With just 949 councillors, each one is responsible, on average, for almost 5,400 people. However, there are deep disparities obscured by these averages, and councillors in the large urban centres of Cork and Dublin have much higher population ratios. Irish councillors are the most overworked in Europe. In fact, their workload is immense. In the last decade, many sitting councillors have decided to leave local politics, citing workload and poor pay.



The size of the Dáil has been increased for the next general election but there has been no corresponding change for local government. Being a local councillor is a part-time job. Are they just supposed to work themselves into the ground or are they to do less for the people of Ireland? No one in central government has even bothered to discuss this seriously. This is not meant to dissuade you from voting. Rather, it is to encourage you to spare a thought for the amount of work that incumbents have been dealing with and to support all those still choosing to put themselves forward to work for their communities. However, if you do get a government representative on your doorstep, do not let the opportunity go, ask them what they are doing to empower local government. Our most serious challenges in health and housing often have roots in disparate local conditions which were not fully appreciated when decisions were being taken. You only have to look at the appalling outcome of centralised decisions on access to accident and emergency services in the mid-west.

However, the mid-west is also a lone bright spot on the local government horizon. Voters in Limerick will get to choose their first directly elected mayor on June 7. In 2019, voters in Cork, Waterford, and Limerick participated in local referendums on establishing directly elected mayoral positions in their areas. The sensible people of Limerick grabbed the opportunity, knowing that it held possibility. Foolishly in Cork and Waterford, the voters said no. Second referendums have been mentioned but not seriously. And the Government has already abandoned plans for a promised referendum to have a directly elected mayor in Dublin. The quick history of local government tells us that moments to improve the system are rare and should be seized immediately. The new mayoral position in Limerick expands the structures and the powers by a 'little bit' that can be exercised at local level. It was disappointing but not surprising that more power was not devolved to the mayor. However, the mayor's real power will lie in their direct election, and the ability that comes with that to speak on behalf of the people of Limerick with authority and legitimacy. The election is lively, mayoral posters are everywhere, and the local media are doing interviews and holding debates with all the contenders. Whoever wins, Limerick will win. Because Limerick will now have an extra voice in politics and that matters a great deal in our much under-resourced local government system.

OUR STUDENTS TALK TO *THE ECHO* IN ADVANCE OF BUDGET 2025

Funding for public transport, student accommodation and mental health services are among the issues of highest concern for students ahead of Budget 2025. *The Echo* spoke to students at University College Cork from the Bsc in Government and Political Science, the BA in Politics and the BA in Economics, ahead of next week's budget announcement, with some awaiting the announcement 'like an album drop.'

Students said they were also concerned about issues including course fees, increasing funding for higher education facilities and wider eligibility for student grants. Touching on the issue of rising costs for people across the board, the students explained how they felt that the current eligibility requirements for SUSI were punitive for those who choose to work part-time while studying, as the current threshold has become 'a burden.'



UCC students Eleanor McCahill, Dylan McEvoy, Shauna Faiedel, Conor Taylor and Emily Guinane met with *The Echo* on campus to discuss what the budget means to young people. Picture Chani Anderson

'I felt like I was being punished for working over the summer, just because I wanted to save up for my postgrad,' said **Conor Taylor**, a third-year BA in Politics student. 'I've had my maintenance grant cut in half because of it.' **Eleanor McCahill**, a third-year BSc in Government and Political Science student said: 'It's almost like a double-edged sword. It's punishing people for taking the initiative to go out and work, and make their own money, [and] I think that's wrong because we're trying our best.' The students also raised concern about the accessibility of the language used as part of the budget. 'The language isn't accessible to everyone, I think it can be quite daunting for people to actually understand,' said Ms. McCahill. 'If it was maybe easier for people to understand or put in the media in different ways, it might encourage more people to actually show an interest.'

Mr. Taylor added: 'I personally find that when you're reading it, it's full of technical jargon. In the past I've tried to read as much as possible, [but] I'm dyslexic, and I struggle eventually. I understand what's being said,

but it's not going in.' While university students have received increased support to alleviate cost-of-living pressures since last year's budget, some say that these measures have done little to tackle the crisis faced by those in full-time education. Among the measures was a €300 increase in the SUSI grant since January, and an additional €250 rental tax credit. Speaking to *The Echo*, Eleanor McCahill, a third-year Bsc-in-government-and-political-science student, said that she was unaware of the additional supports, due to a lack of advertising.

'I definitely think it would have helped if I was aware of it before,' said Ms McCahill. 'But it doesn't fix the overarching and much bigger problem: When you're paying thousands, €250 isn't a lot, in the grand scheme of things.' Second-year BA-in-economics student **Dylan McEvoy** said: 'It's a bit of support, so it's welcomed, but it is a bit of a token song. Rent is increasing by about €300 each year, and the stipend is €250, so people are still worse off than last year.' In reference to the additional supports provided to SUSI grant holders, **Shauna Friedel**, a first-year BA-in-politics student, said: 'I think the increase definitely did help, but it still isn't enough to cover everything what a student needs.'

To combat the rising pressures faced by students who work part-time while in education, the three students interviewed all agreed that an increase to the minimum wage, which stands at €12.70 per hour for those aged above 20, and an increase to the SUSI grant threshold, would enable students to live more comfortably. 'I definitely think an increase in the [minimum] wage would help,' said Ms. McCahill. 'It should be closer to €14.' Mr. McEvoy added: 'People are getting paid under the minimum wage because they're not old enough, and that just seems ridiculous to me. €12.70 was good for this year, but I think it should be keeping pace with inflation.' Ms. Friedel added: 'I think there needs to be a base point number for everyone.'



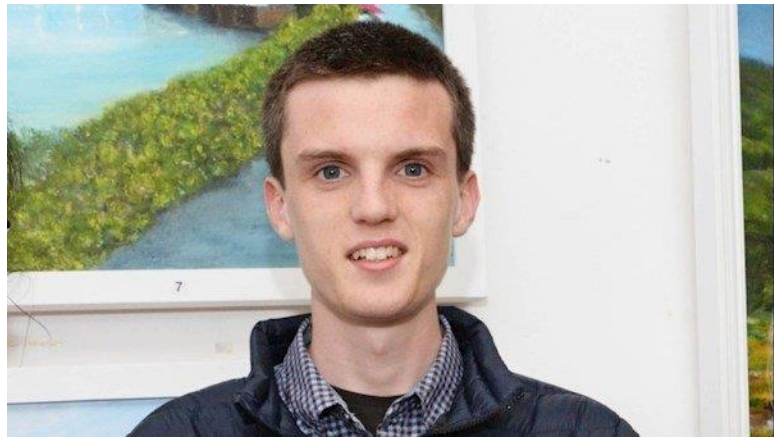
Eleanor McCahill — Third year Bsc Government and Political Science: I think accommodation and mental health services would come to the forefront of my mind because they affect everyone at some stage. It's well known that we've got students who are going to class hungry, they're picking paying their rent overpaying for food, so I think supports for students are going to be vitally important to me, and to a lot of people.



Emily Guinane – Third year BA Politics: I'd love to see more funding in higher education, and I think that's something that all of us, not just government and politics students, but every student in the university would love, and to see some changes in regard to SUSI. On a more personal level, more funding for public transport is something I'd like to see as well, there's a shortage of [bus] drivers, and that's why there's hardly any routes.

SEE FULL ARTICLE BY RACHEL LYSAGHT AT [HTTPS://WWW.ECHOLIVE.IE](https://www.echolive.ie)

Congratulations to our graduates who won seats in the 2024 local elections!



**Left: Dan Boyle (Cork City Council): Dan was subsequently elected as Lord Mayor of Cork for 2024/2025;
Right: Ben Dalton O'Sullivan (Cork County Council).**



Garret Kelleher (left), Joe Lynch (middle) and Peter Horgan (right) were all elected to Cork City Council.

Government Times is a joint collaboration between students and staff. Therefore we encourage students of the Department of Government and Politics to get actively involved.

If you would like to become a student editor of the newsletter, please e-mail a.quinlivan@ucc.ie by Friday 11 October with any ideas you might have.