

COURSE DETAIL

THE MADNESS OF CROWDS: THE SOUTH SEA BUBBLE OF 1720

Country

Ireland

Host Institution

Trinity College Dublin

Program(s)

Trinity College Dublin

UCEAP Course Level

Upper Division

UCEAP Subject Area(s)

History

UCEAP Course Number

120

UCEAP Course Suffix**UCEAP Official Title**

THE MADNESS OF CROWDS: THE SOUTH SEA BUBBLE OF 1720

UCEAP Transcript Title

SOUTH SEA BUBBLE

UCEAP Quarter Units

5.00

UCEAP Semester Units

3.30

Course Description

In Autumn 1720 the South Sea Bubble burst. Generally regarded as one of the first great stock-market crashes, this was a seismic moment in the early history of global financial capitalism. Drawing on a wide range of primary sources including private correspondence, pamphlets, poems, prints and other printed ephemera, this course traces the fortunes of the South Sea Company, its slave trading activities, and its investors over the course of a dramatic year which featured economic chaos, speculative fever and fears about plague across Northern Europe. Students learn how and why investors chose to invest in the South Sea Company and the many other bubble companies that followed in its wake. It explores the cultural impact of the crash and the anxieties it generated in contemporary Britain and Ireland looking at the commentary of Jonathan Swift, George Berkeley, and William Hogarth amongst others. It also discusses the post-bubble blame-game, the role of xenophobia, the treatment of female investors and the political fallout of the crisis.

Language(s) of Instruction

English

Host Institution Course Number

HIU33110

Host Institution Course Title

THE MADNESS OF CROWDS: THE SOUTH SEA BUBBLE OF 1720

Host Institution Course Details

<https://www.tcd.ie/history/assets/pdf/ug/25-26/list3/crowds.pdf>

Host Institution Campus

Host Institution Faculty

School of History

Host Institution Degree

Host Institution Department

Course Last Reviewed

2025-2026

[Print](#)