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

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