

A half day symposium  
organised by the  
RIA Committee  
for Social Sciences

**FRIDAY, 27 NOVEMBER 2009**

# PUBLIC INTELLECTUALS IN TIMES OF CRISIS: WHAT DO THEY HAVE TO OFFER?

RIA

This timely event will consider the role and function of the 'public intellectual' in contemporary society, particularly during times of crisis or turmoil.

In the past, public intellectuals such as John Kenneth Galbraith possessed the capacity to communicate with the wider public as well as policy makers on the important issues of the day. This event has been organised to debate whether or not public intellectuals remain relevant in society given the technocratic nature of modern government and the 24/7 multi-platform news and entertainment culture. Some of the questions which will be addressed in the course of the symposium include:

- In an era where the notion of 'the public' has been seriously undermined, is there still a role for the 'public intellectual'?
- What role, if any, do public intellectuals play in fomenting informed debate in contemporary society?
- How do we actually define the term 'public intellectual'?
- What exactly do 'public intellectuals' have to offer during times of social, political or economic crisis?
- Can intellectuals contribute to the development of consensus or is their role primarily characterised by diversity?
- Do public intellectuals have a duty to society? If so, are public intellectuals still 'fit for purpose' in the twentieth first century and can they adapt their message to audiences increasingly fragmented by technological and media developments?
  - Have public intellectuals been successful in communicating to the general public about the current economic crisis?

**HAVE YOUR SAY ON THE ROLE OF THE PUBLIC INTELLECTUAL AT A TIME OF CRISIS BY COMING ALONG TO THE SYMPOSIUM AND SUBMITTING YOUR QUESTION TO THE PANEL IN ADVANCE. SEE BELOW\***

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## REGISTRATION FORM

Admission free. To reserve a place please complete the registration form below or visit us online at [www.ria.ie/events](http://www.ria.ie/events).

NAME

ADDRESS

TEL

EMAIL

\*A limited number of audience members will be given the opportunity to pose a question to a combined panel of speakers. It is intended that these questions will serve to kick start debate during the moderated discussion and in doing so will provide a unique forum through which the audience can engage with panel members, both collectively and individually, in exploring the various themes of the symposium. If you wish to submit a question for consideration please do so using the space provided below. If your question is chosen you will be contacted in advance of the symposium.

## PROGRAMME

### WELCOME

1.30pm Professor Nicholas Canny, President Royal Irish Academy

### SESSION 1: ARE PUBLIC INTELLECTUALS RELEVANT?

Chair: Professor Vani Kant Borooah (UU)

1.35pm Professor Frances Ruane (ESRI)  
1.50pm Mr Donncha O'Connell (NUIG)  
2.05pm Professor Tom Garvin (UCD)  
2.20pm Professor Liam O'Dowd (QUB)  
2.35pm Coffee Break

### SESSION 2: REFLECTIONS ON THE PUBLIC INTELLECTUAL'S ROLE

Chair: Professor Mary P. Corcoran, (NUIM)

3.00pm Professor Brian Lucey (TCD)  
3.15pm Professor Pat O'Connor (UL)  
3.30pm Professor Tom Lodge (UL)  
3.45pm 5 Minute Break

### SESSION 3: INTERROGATING THE PUBLIC INTELLECTUAL

Chair: Mr William Crawley (BBC Northern Ireland)

4.50pm Questions & Answers and Moderated Discussion

### CLOSING ADDRESS

5.30pm Professor Declan Kiberd (UCD)

### RECEPTION

6.00pm Conclusion of proceedings followed by a wine and cheese reception