

PSAI Fellow 2009-2011: Prof Paul Arthur

Paul Arthur is that unusual of academic figures, who has (in addition to his teaching and research) played a significant role in bringing political adversaries together and in the process has gained the respect of all political parties in Ireland, north and south, as well as wider afield, particularly in North America. This has been recognised by the award of a number of prestigious fellowships, including the Jefferson Smurfit Distinguished Fellowship in Irish Studies at the University of Missouri in 2000 and a Fulbright Fellowship at Stanford University in 2006-7. His media contributions during the Troubles and the peace process (in Northern Ireland, notably Ulster Television) and in influential broadsheets in the US (*NY Times*) and Britain (*Times*, *Guardian*, *Observer*, for e.g.) won him respect for their informed even-handedness.

His publications, whilst meeting the highest of academic standards, have sought (and usually succeeded) to feed directly into resolving conflict. As such, his reputation has extended far beyond Ireland: he is regularly invited to advise on other conflict zones and speak at international peace conferences. He is particularly sought after in the United States to help develop peace studies programmes and used his recent Fulbright scholarship at Stanford to advise Universities in California, the Dakotas and Oregon (replicating work which he has already achieved in the eastern states, particularly during his period at the US Institute of Peace in Washington, 1997-8).

His Masters programme in Peace and Conflict Studies on the Magee Campus of the University of Ulster has attracted significant numbers of overseas students (again actively applying his expertise to help other conflict zones). This programme regularly attracts prestigious Mitchell scholarships.

Prof Arthur has regularly published (some 70 articles) in leading peer-reviewed journals such as *Irish Political Studies*, *Government and Opposition* and *Parliamentary Affairs*. He is particularly skilled at bringing comparative international politics to an understanding of the Northern Ireland situation and in engaging with often-complicated theory, but making it intelligible to the non-specialist. This is why his work has had such an impact on the practitioners. Nor does he lose sight of the 'ordinary people'. In his piece commissioned for my book *The Long Road to Peace in Northern Ireland*, he showed how those who never make the headlines have contributed so much to conflict transformation.

His lengthy study of how peace was achieved in Northern Ireland, *Special Relationships*, is based on his own lifetime role, from the early days of People's Democracy – on which he is the internationally recognised expert – to his involvement in the confidential political meetings leading up to the Good Friday Agreement. In this he shows how it was the development of constructive diplomacy between Britain and Ireland, which eventually led Northern Ireland politicians to move beyond their often bleak and unconstructive outlooks. The strength of this book lies in its location of recent developments in wider understandings of how diasporas work and their importance in assisting resolution of conflict situations.

Finally, when it comes to knowledge-exchange, Paul Arthur is an exemplary model. The list of bodies that he has advised, served on the boards of and otherwise influenced include: the Northern Ireland Communities Relations Council, the United Nations Research Institute in Social Development, the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Conflict, the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee in the House of Commons into dealing with the past, the Saville Inquiry into Bloody Sunday, the executive of the British-Irish Association, among others.

In every way, as a first-rate scholar, teacher and expert adviser to a number of international bodies, Paul Arthur would be a most worthy recipient of a PSAI Fellowship.