

WELCOME

It is the tradition in Trinity College Dublin that newly appointed Professors are invited to give an inaugural lecture.

The lecture represents the official recognition of their promotion to Professor, and the lecture itself provides an opportunity to showcase their achievements in research, innovation, engagement and teaching activities before an audience of members of the University community, invited stakeholders and the general public. An inaugural lecture is a significant event in an academic staff member's career.

In Trinity College Dublin, inaugural lectures are a ceremonial occasion; academic robes are worn by the inaugural professor and the rest of the platform party.

The Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences is proud to present the inaugural lecture of Professor Ruth Karras.

TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN **INAUGURAL LECTURE**

SEX, VIOLENCE, EXCLUSION: THE SHAPE OF MASCULINE EXPECTATIONS IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE

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ABSTRACT

How can we study masculinity across cultures? This lecture proposes to identify areas of human experience in which societies typically have expectations for men and masculine behaviour, and then examine how those expectations differ between cultures. One such area encompasses strength, aggression, violence, warlikeness, dominance, competitiveness—I will call it 'prowess' for short, as medieval people would. A second area considers biological and social reproduction, which can mean both fathering families and providing for them. A third area could address the display of some emotions (including the masking of other emotions) and a fourth the display of intellectual qualities such as judgment, wisdom, reliability, and creativity. This lecture focuses on the first two areas as medieval societies would have understood them. Of course, we always have to remember to ask 'the expectations for which of the men in that society?'

Medieval Europe was unusual in that it featured an elite class of men—in charge of learning, worship, and morality, including family life—who were in theory excluded from expectations in the area of prowess and of reproduction. While the clergy did not in fact abstain entirely from such ventures, this lecture demonstrates that where they did abstain, they compensated by participating in them metaphorically. By excluding women from their ranks, too, the clergy could turn their bar from participation in common masculine expectations into a virtue. Where women were affected by the 'Eve/Mary dichotomy' in which a woman was seen as either entirely pure or entirely sinful, men could fit into what I call a 'Christ/David dichotomy' in which men could be either virtuous in the imitation of Christ, or sinful but then repentant and demonstrating masculinity both in the sin and in overcoming it. The gender dynamics of medieval Christian society in western Europe may be brought into sharper focus by contrasting them with those of the contemporary Jewish subculture which did not draw the same sharp distinctions between laity and clergy.



Professor Ruth Mazo Karras

Lecky Professor of History



ABOUT ME

Ruth Mazo Karras, the Lecky Professor of History, is a native of Chicago and grew up in the northwestern United States. She received her BA in History from Yale University, her MPhil in European Archaeology from Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar, and her PhD in History from Yale. Before coming to Trinity in 2018, she taught at the University of Pennsylvania, Temple University (Philadelphia), and for 18 years at the University of Minnesota, where she was named Distinguished Teaching Professor for her postgraduate teaching.

Ruth's areas of interest within medieval European history concern the way people in medieval cultures understood their own identities and those of others, how they constructed gender categories, and how they retold old stories for new purposes. She is particularly known for her work in the history of masculinities, in which she published the first book-length study dealing with the Middle Ages (*From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Later Medieval Europe*) and in which her forthcoming book on King David in medieval Christian and Jewish cultures is situated. She is preparing the fourth edition of her book *Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Doing Unto Others*, which has been translated into German and Polish. She is also the author of *Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia*; *Common Women:*

Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England; and *Unmarriages: Women, Men, and Sexual Unions in Medieval Europe* which won the Joan Kelly prize from the American Historical Association for the best book in women's history or feminist theory in 2012. She has also co-edited *Law and the Illicit in Medieval Europe*, *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*, and most recently *Entangled Histories: Knowledge, Authority, and Jewish Culture in the Thirteenth Century*, which represents a recent interest in Jewish as well as Christian history. She is a former co-editor of the journal *Gender & History* and president of the Berkshire Conference of Women Historians; currently she serves as the General Editor of the *Middle Ages Series* for the University of Pennsylvania Press, and President of the Medieval Academy of America. She has held fellowships from the US National Endowment for the Humanities, the Institute for Advanced Study (Princeton), the American Philosophical Society, the American Council of Learned Societies, the Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies (Philadelphia), the Israel Institute of Advanced Studies, and EURIAS.



THE SCHOOL OF HISTORIES AND HUMANITIES

The 2019 QS World University Rankings place Trinity College Dublin in the top 100 in the world for History. The School of Histories and Humanities comprises 44 full-time academic members of staff in three departments and one centre. The School enjoys an international research profile in a remarkable range of disciplines and subject areas: archaeology; ancient philosophy; Latin and Greek language and literature; ancient, medieval and modern history; history of art and architecture; and gender studies.

The School regularly sponsors international conferences and symposia and hosts six major research seminars which provide a forum for distinguished scholars, postgraduates and postdoctoral fellows from throughout the world to present their research. The School also plays a role in the activities of Trinity's leading humanistic research centres, a number of which are located within the School: Trinity Irish Art Research Centre; Trinity Medieval History Research Centre; and the Trinity Centres for Contemporary Irish History, for Irish Scottish and Comparative Studies,

for War Studies, for Gender and Women's Studies, for Mediterranean and Near Eastern Studies, and for Environmental Humanities. Within Ireland, the School has fostered close links with the other universities and enjoys personal and institutional links with other institutions in Europe, North America and Asia.

Postgraduates from many parts of the world are drawn to the School and form a well-established and vibrant community of nearly 200 students. They run regular postgraduate seminars and participate in all School activities. The School is committed to helping postgraduates prepare for careers within and beyond academia. The School offers eight taught M.Phil programmes along with postgraduate training, a variety of career development workshops, and teaching opportunities for senior postgraduates. Many postgraduates have secured competitive funding for their studies from external or College sources.

