1776 Professor of French

Michael Cronin

'What have the French ever done for us?': From the existentialist café to making the planet great again
Michael Cronin is 1776 Professor of French (Chair). He is a graduate of Trinity College Dublin (BA mod. in French and English) and holds an MA from University College Dublin and a PhD from Trinity College Dublin. He has taught in the Université François Rabelais (Tours), the École Normale Supérieure (Cachan) and Dublin City University and has held Visiting Professorships in the Université Paris 8 (France), KU Leuven (Belgium), Universidad Ricardo Palma (Peru) and the Université de Moncton (Canada).

He is the author of eleven monographs, co-editor of seven volumes and author of over one hundred refereed articles and book chapters. His work has been translated into more than sixteen languages.

Michael's main research interests are in the area of translation, intercultural communication, travel literature and minority languages and cultures. He has received funding for major projects from the Irish Research Council in the Humanities and Social Sciences and the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions. He served as Literature Advisor for the Arts Council of Ireland, is a former Chairperson of Poetry Ireland and is currently on the working group of the Culture 2025 national policy committee.

He is an elected Member of the Royal Irish Academy, an elected Member of the Academia Europeae/Academy of Europe and is an Officer in the Ordre des Palmes Académiques. He is an Honorary Member of the Irish Translators and Interpreters Association. He is co-editor of the Routledge series New Perspectives in Translation and Interpreting Studies and is Editor-in-Chief of the journal MTM.
ABSTRACT

'What have the French ever done for us?': From the existentialist café to making the planet great again

The lecture discusses the the implications of climate change for a new understanding of French studies and its relevance for wider debates on the future of Humanities, education and sovereignty. A feature of French philosophical writing from Michel de Montaigne, Blaise Pascal and Voltaire to Simone de Beauvoir and Juila Kristeva has been a deliberate attention to the writing itself, to the medium of expression. Literature and philosophy are not two separate but conjoined activities.

French ecological writing - Félix Guattari, Michel Serres, Bruno Latour, Corine Pelluchon - is no different and in contrast to English-language writing on the environment pays a much greater attention to the different registers of language to advance its argument. It will be argued that the French notion of écocritique is not only different in its modes of expression but has a much broader sense of what makes up political ecology.

A common thread in much recent ecological writing in France is the necessity to embrace an earth-based or terracentric view of our activities in order to challenge both the notion of human exceptionalism and to re-orient our politics in the age of the anthropocene. The terracentric will first be considered as a way of approaching French Studies from a different perspective, a one more suited to our present ecological dilemmas. Secondly, we will explore how this new perspective demands a radical rethinking of the role of universities. Thirdly, attending to the much neglected role of modern languages in the public sphere in Ireland, we will consider how French ecological readings can help us to rethink a role for Ireland in a post-Brexit future.
DEPARTMENT OF FRENCH

The teaching of modern European languages in Trinity College Dublin goes back to 1776 and the Chair of French (1776) is the oldest in the world. The Department of French is a vibrant department with a committed and dynamic staff who have a wide range of teaching and research interests in the area of French studies. It is a leading French department on these islands. It enjoys a high international reputation in its teaching and research and attracts highly qualified and motivated students from Ireland and abroad to its undergraduate programmes in French (TSM), Business Studies and French, European Studies, Law and French, and Computer Science and Language. The department also contributes to the School's postgraduate courses, particularly in European Studies, Comparative Literature and Literary Translation. It has Erasmus links with the major universities in the Francophone world and its graduates hold academic posts in French departments across the globe.

The department is part of the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies (SLLCS), one of the largest of the twelve Schools in the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. It is made up of the Departments of French, Germanic Studies, Hispanic Studies, Italian, Irish and Celtic Languages, Near and Middle Eastern Studies, Russian and Slavonic Studies, the Centre for European Studies, the Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies and the Centre for Literary Translation. It has a vibrant research culture and its members contribute prominently to the universities five Arts & Humanities led research themes, especially the Identities in Transformation theme. Over the centuries we have produced generations of high-achieving graduates, including, in Samuel Beckett, one Nobel Prize winner.