

Celtic Philology

CO-ORDINATORS: PROF. PAUL RUSSELL & PROF. NÍ MHAONAIGH

This course is intended to provide a basic understanding of the origin, history and developments of the Celtic languages, from the earliest records of Continental Celtic through to the modern period. The history and the grammar of the medieval Celtic languages in particular will be studied, in relation to one another and to their Indo-European background. Prospective students should typically have taken both Celtic language and literature papers (Medieval Welsh and Medieval Irish) for their Part I; if they have taken only one, they are advised to take the other Part I paper in Part II or at the very least be attending the classes in that language. No other linguistic knowledge is presumed.

The basic teaching of the course consists of eight introductory lectures and in the Michaelmas term, as well as eight further lectures and eight text seminars in the Lent term. Material relating to a particular general topic is presented in the lecture, whereas the seminars will focus on a range of texts in various Celtic languages from a linguistic and philological point of view. University lectures and seminars will be supplemented by a series of eight supervisions, typically one or two in Michaelmas, two or three in Lent and four in Easter. These will provide students with an opportunity to develop their essay writing skills on a range of philological topics discussed in the lectures. In addition, the supervisions in the Easter Term will allow the students to sharpen their analytical skills both in essay writing and in linguistic comment on texts.

By the end of the course students should have gained an understanding of the history and development of the Celtic languages as a branch of the Indo-European family, and of the individual Celtic languages; they should be able to interpret linguistic evidence in order to describe and analyse the development of the languages; they should also be familiar with the areas of debate and controversy within the subject.

The course is examined at the end of the academic year in a single three-hour examination paper. Students are required to answer one question on the texts set for linguistic comment and three essay questions from a choice of about twelve questions. All questions have equal weight.