

November 16, 2021

**Fund for Irish Studies at Princeton University presents**

**“The Coffin Ship: Life and Death at Sea during the Great Famine”**

***Lecture by Cian T. McMahon closes the fall offerings in the 2021-2022 series, which will return in February***

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**Photo Caption:** Cian T. McMahon

**Photo Credit:** Courtesy of Cian T. McMahon

**Who/What:** Cian T. McMahon, Associate Professor in the Department of History and Honors College at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, presents, “The Coffin Ship: Life and Death at Sea during the Great Famine,” a lecture drawn from his new book, *The Coffin Ship*, on the Irish migration experience, which places the sailing ship alongside the tenement and the factory floor as a central, dynamic element of migration history. Introduced by Paul Muldoon, Princeton’s Howard G.B. Clark ’21 University Professor in the Humanities and Co-chair of the Fund for Irish Studies.

**When:** Friday, December 3, 2021, at 4:30 p.m.

**Where:** Online via Zoom Webinar

**Admission:** Free and open to the public (Zoom registration required)

**Accessibility:** Event will be live captioned. Viewers in need of other access accommodations are invited to contact the Lewis Center at least one week in advance at LewisCenter@princeton.edu

**For more information and the Zoom link:**

<https://arts.princeton.edu/events/fund-for-irish-studies-cian-mc-mahon/>

PRINCETON, NJ – Princeton University’s Fund for Irish Studies presents “The Coffin Ship: Life and Death at Sea during the Great Famine,” a lecture by Cian T. McMahon, Associate Professor in the Department of History and Honors College at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, on Friday, December 3, 2021, at 4:30 p.m. via Zoom Webinar. Princeton’s Howard G.B. Clark ’21 University Professor in the Humanities and Co-chair of the Fund for Irish Studies Paul Muldoon, will provide a welcome and introduction. The event is part of the 2021-2022 lecture series, which is virtual for the fall. The lecture is free and open to the public.

McMahon will discuss his new book, *The Coffin Ship* (NYU Press, 2021), which analyzes letters and diaries of Irish immigrants who fled Ireland during the Great Famine. The Great Irish Famine occurred from 1845 to 1855 as a result of a potato blight that destroyed the Lumper potato crop, robbing more than one-third of the Irish population of its most substantial means of sustenance. According to RTE News, the national news and public broadcaster in Ireland, over a million people died due to the extensive food shortage and subsequent epidemics, and a further 1.25 million people fled Ireland, with over 900,000 Irish immigrants arriving in New York, USA. For McMahon, the standard story of Ireland’s Great Famine exodus is one of tired clichés, half-truths, and dry statistics. *The Coffin Ship* focuses on the journey across the Atlantic, an oft-ignored but vital component of the migration experience. His transnational history examines the dynamic social networks and connections to the worldwide Irish diaspora that the emigrants built while voyaging overseas. In his book, McMahon makes an argument for placing the sailing ship alongside the tenement and the factory floor as a central, dynamic element of Irish migration history.

McMahon is an associate professor in the Department of History and Honors College at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, where he teaches courses focusing on society and culture in modern Ireland, immigration and identity in American history, and great migrations in human history. His first book, *The Global Dimensions of Irish Identity: Race, Nation, and the Popular Press, 1840-1880* (University of North Carolina Press, 2015), won honorable mention for the Donald Murphy Prize for Distinguished First Book from the American Conference of Irish Studies. He is a member of the American Conference for Irish Studies, the Immigration & Ethnic History Society, and the American Historical Association.

Muldoon is the Howard G.B. Clark ’21 University Professor in the Humanities at Princeton, as well as the founding chair of the Lewis Center for the Arts. As an internationally renowned Irish poet, Muldoon has been described by *The Times Literary Supplement* as “the most significant English-language poet born since the second World War.” Muldoon won a Pulitzer Prize in 2003 for his ninth collection of poems, *Poems 1968-1998* (2001). Additionally, Muldoon has won the 1994 T.S. Eliot Prize, the 2003 Griffin International Prize for Excellence in Poetry, the 2004 Shakespeare Prize, and the 2006 European Prize for Poetry, among others. His fourteenth volume of poems, *Howdie-Skelp,* was just released this month by Farrar Straus & Giroux. Muldoon is editor of the recently released Paul McCartney boxed, two-volume set, *The Lyrics: 1956 to the Present*, illuminating the stories behind 154 of McCartney’s song lyrics.

Muldoon co-chairs The Fund for Irish Studies with Fintan O’Toole, the Visiting Leonard L. Milberg ’53 Professor in Irish Letters. The Fund for Irish Studies affords all Princeton students, and the community at large, a wider and deeper sense of the languages, literatures, drama, visual arts, history, politics, and economics not only of Ireland but of “Ireland in the world.” The lecture series is co-produced by the Lewis Center for the Arts.

Information about the Fund for Irish Studies lecture series’ virtual events can be found at [fis.princeton.edu](https://fis.princeton.edu/). This lecture is the final scheduled event for this fall. The series plans to resume in-person events in the spring. Additional events in the works will feature poet James Longenbach; Helen Phelan, Professor of Arts Practice at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick; Fintan O’Toole presenting the Robert Fagles Memorial Lecture; acclaimed writer Colm Tóibín presented in collaboration with Labyrinth Books; journalist Susan McKay; and novelist Danielle McLaughlin.

The Fund for Irish Studies is generously sponsored by the Durkin Family Trust and the James J. Kerrigan, Jr. ’45 and Margaret M. Kerrigan Fund for Irish Studies.

The lecture will be live captioned. Viewers in need of other access accommodations are invited to contact the Lewis Center at least one week in advance at [LewisCenter@princeton.edu](mailto:LewisCenter@princeton.edu).

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