Cambridge Scientists and Explorers, 17th Century to the present day

This course explores the histories and scientific discoveries of eminent Cambridge alumni who played a significant role in transforming our understanding of the natural world and the universe. We will focus on the discoveries and contributions of selected mathematicians, physicists, biologists, chemists and explorers including Sir Isaac Newton, Charles Darwin, Robert Scott, James Watson, Francis Crick and Rosamund Franklin - the discoverers of DNA’s structure, Alan Turing and Stephen Hawking. Covering even a fraction of the enormous part Cambridge has played in the history of modern science would be impossible in a short course, so focusing on a few key figures will provide a context for the understanding of scientific discovery at Cambridge from the seventeenth century to the present day. This course does not require any prior knowledge of science or technical understanding of the fields explored – it is a historical and cultural introduction to the lives and the work of these famous figures, their most significant contributions, and their careers at Cambridge and beyond.

Dr Eoin Devlin is a member of the Faculty of History and a teaching associate at Downing College, University of Cambridge. He was educated at University College Dublin, Trinity College, Dublin, and the University of Cambridge. He is currently working on a book exploring the relationship between James II and the popes in the 1680s and 90s, which will be published by Cambridge University Press. His broader research interests focus on Anglo-European social and diplomatic relations, as well as English responses to baroque culture. At Cambridge, he lectures on early modern Britain and Ireland, modern Ireland, and global Catholicism. He supervises courses on early modern British and European political, cultural, social and economic history.