The Lives of Winston Churchill: from Victorian Britain to end of empire, 1876-1965

Winston Churchill is best remembered as the British Prime Minister who led his country to victory in the Second World War. These five years were the pinnacle of his achievement, but his long life and career reflects a more complicated personal history in a period which witnessed immeasurable social, cultural and political change. This course will explore Churchill’s life in its various manifestations: from his upbringing as a young aristocrat and journalist in the Boer War, through his career in parliament when he earned notoriety as a contrarian and leading opponent of appeasement, to his prime ministerial career, his literary and rhetorical output, and his later eclipse, as Britain moved into the post-war decades of welfare state, decolonisation and free love. Churchill will be the main focus of these classes, but they will also offer an insight into the broader context of his life, and the ideas and institutions which inspired his career, even if they did not necessarily survive his wartime triumphs.

Class themes:

1. Aristocrat and Journalist, 1874-1901
2. MP, Minister, the Great War, Ireland, 1901-22
3. Bugbear and Prime Minister, 1922-40
4. War Statesman, 1940-45
5. Cold Warrior, Welfare State Prime Minister, Writer, Icon, 1945-65

Dr Eoin Devlin is a member of the Faculty of History, a teaching associate at Downing College, and a research fellow at the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities at the 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.