

Lorcan McLaren

PhD Researcher in Quantitative & Computational Social Science
Connected_Politics Lab · UCD School of Politics & International Relations
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Education

University College Dublin September 2023 – Present
PhD Quantitative & Computational Social Science

- **Thesis:** Taking the Green Pill – Moral Language, Emotion, and Persuasion in the Climate Crisis
- **Advisor:** Dr. James P. Cross

University College Dublin 2021 – 2022
MSc Politics & Data Science

- **Thesis:** Polarising Rhetoric and Twitter Rage
- **Advisor:** Dr. James P. Cross

Trinity College Dublin 2016 – 2020
BA Computer Science, Linguistics & French

- **Thesis:** Automatic Gaze Annotation and Conversational Dominance in the MULTISIMO Corpus
- **Advisor:** Dr. Carl Vogel

Research Experience

Connected_Politics Lab, University College Dublin November 2024 – Present
Research Assistant

University College Dublin, with Swiss National Science Foundation July 2023 – February 2024
Research Assistant

Computational Linguistics Group, Trinity College Dublin May – August 2020
Research Assistant

Industry Experience

Dataminr 2022 – 2023
Data Analyst, R&D

- Built ingests to exploit new data sources via APIs and web scraping
- Developed automated workflows for data extraction, transformation, and quality assurance in consultation with subject matter experts
- Built, maintained, and updated visualisation dashboards and tools to monitor data health
- Developed protocols to systematise processes for future work

Editor, Domain Expert 2021 – 2022

- Monitored streams of potentially newsworthy content from around the globe and alerted clients on breaking news
- Developed new techniques for discovering breaking news events using social media and other publicly available data
- Tracked misinformation related to COVID-19 and election integrity across multiple jurisdictions in a variety of languages

Working Papers

McLaren, L., Cross, J.P., Krakowska, Z., Rauner, R. and Schoonvelde, M. (2025) ‘Magic Words or Methodical Work? Challenging Conventional Wisdom in LLM-Based Political Text Annotation’.

McLaren, L. (2025) ‘When Climate Change Hits Home: Natural Disasters and Climate Rhetoric in the European Parliament’.

McLaren, L. (2024) ‘Here and Now or There and Then? The Psychological Distance of Climate Change in Parliamentary Speech’.

Peer-Reviewed Publications

McLaren, L., Koutsombogera, M. and Vogel, C. (2020) ‘A Heuristic Method for Automatic Gaze Detection in Constrained Multi-Modal Dialogue Corpora’, in *2020 11th IEEE International Conference on Cognitive Infocommunications*, pp. 55–60.

McLaren, L., Koutsombogera, M. and Vogel, C. (2020) ‘Gaze, Dominance and Dialogue Role in the MULTISIMO Corpus’, in *2020 11th IEEE International Conference on Cognitive Infocommunications*, pp. 83–88.

Presentations

McLaren, L. October 2024. Taking the green pill: Moral language, psychological distance and the climate crisis in the European Parliament. Oral presentation: PSAI general conference, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland.

McLaren, L. May 2024. Psychological distance and the climate crisis in the European Parliament. Oral presentation: COMPTXT conference, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Netherlands.

McLaren, L. December 2023. Measuring, mapping, and assessing the impact of emotional appeals in European politics. Oral presentation: Connected_Politics Lab, University College Dublin, Ireland.

Teaching

Spring 2025, 2026	AI and Large Language Models , Postgraduate, Module Instructor
Autumn 2023, 2024	Introduction to EU Politics , Undergraduate, Teaching Assistant
Spring 2024	Research Methods in Political Science , Undergraduate, Teaching Assistant

Scholarships & Grants

2025 – 2027	Government of Ireland Scholarship , Research Ireland	€68,000
2025	PEC Travel Funding , Political Studies Association of Ireland	€400
2024 – 2025	Climate Fellowship , UCD Earth Institute	€1,000
2023 – 2025	SPIRe Research Committee Funding , UCD School of Politics & International Relations	€3,000

2023 – 2027	Iseult Honohan Scholarship, UCD School of Politics & International Relations	€124,190
2020	Erasmus Mundus Scholarship, European Commission	€17,250

Awards

2020	Best Paper Award, IEEE International Conference on Cognitive Infocommunications
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Service, Leadership & Professional Development

Service & Leadership

2024 – 2026	Convenor, PSAI Computational Methods Specialist Group
2017 – 2018	Student Convenor, TCD School of Computer Science & Statistics
2016 – 2017	Deputy Chair, TCD Students' Union Lobby Group Student Convenor, TCD School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences

Professional Memberships

Political Studies Association of Ireland · American Political Science Association · European Consortium for Political Research