

Modern Greek Studies Around the World

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RÉSUMÉ

Cet article tente de présenter un aperçu global des études néohelléniques dans un certain nombre de pays de l'Europe, au Canada, en Afrique et en Asie. L'article tente aussi de cerner la question de chaires consacrées aux dynasties politiques grecques ainsi qu'aux personnalités du monde littéraire et financier.

ABSTRACT

This article provides a panorama of modern Greek studies in several European countries, in Canada and on two continents (Africa and Asia). The author also treats the issue of chairs named after political families or after personalities from the business and literary world in Greece.

Modern Greek studies have been developed in universities in English-speaking, French-speaking, Spanish-speaking and German-speaking countries. Various modern Greek programs may also be found scattered throughout in Italy, India, China, the Balkans and the former Soviet republics.

Here we will refer to modern Greek studies in those parts of the world not mentioned in the preceding articles. We will treat programs in French-speaking countries, Great Britain, Italy, the Balkans, Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and Russia, Turkey, India, China and Japan.

We will also mention the so-called political chairs created by the Greek elites in order to perpetuate the memory of political, economic or literary personalities.

Modern Greek Studies in English-Speaking Countries

Two articles in this thematic issue have already referred to the USA and Australia, so we will limit ourselves to Great Britain, Canada and South Africa.

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Great Britain

In Britain, most of the modern Greek studies programs coexist with classics or Byzantine studies. Undoubtedly the most important department of modern Greek in Great Britain is that of King's College of the University of London. It is actually called «Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies». This department has a long history in the study of Byzantine and modern Greek history as well as Greek language and literature. Begun in 1919 with the inauguration of the *Koraeos Chair*, the first chair holder was the great British historian Arnold J. Toynbee. Other eminent Byzantine specialists followed, including Romilly Jenkins and Cyril Mango. Historians or specialists in modern Greek such as Peter Mackridge, Richard Clogg and Philip Sherrard have also served in this department.

At the University of Birmingham, modern Greek exists alongside Byzantine and Ottoman studies in the aptly named *Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman and Modern Greek Studies*. Recently the undergraduate modern Greek studies program was phased out in favour of Byzantine studies so that modern Greek may be found only in Birmingham's graduate-level programs¹. Modern Greek studies were introduced there in the 1930s by the great classics philologist George Tompson. Although a philologist of classical Greek, Tompson believed in the continuity of Hellenism, from antiquity to nowadays. During the 1960s, Tompson's daughter, Margaret Alexiou, gave courses on the Byzantine period as well as modern Greek before taking the Seferis Chair at Harvard University. In the 1980s, both the autonomous Chair in Byzantine Studies and the Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman and Modern Greek Studies were established².

At the Oxford University, Bywater and Sotheby Professorship of Byzantine and Modern Greek Language and Literature belongs to the «Subfaculty of Byzantine and Modern Greek» within the Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages. Similarly, at Cambridge there is a Modern Greek Section in the Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages.

These four British universities provide courses in Greek language, literature and culture. They are the only ones that offer courses leading to a degree in modern Greek studies. It should be noted, according to Roderick Beaton, that the chairs in Modern Greek held by Dimitris Tziovas at Birmingham and (from October 2006) by David Holton at Cambridge are «personal chairs,» i.e., the result of promotion based on individual merit, and normally not renewable beyond that person's tenure³.

According to Dimitris Tziovas, modern Greek studies in Great Britain are

declining, as are all departments in the humanities. This decline stems from the new economic and political orientations adopted by Great Britain combined with broader changes within the education system. Tziovas points out the decrease in language studies at the secondary level where they are no longer obligatory. The decline in modern Greek studies may also be attributed to a shift in interest to the Balkan countries, which are now members of the European Union, or to the Asian nations, especially China, where the economic motivation to communicate is strong. Tziovas also highlights the fact that British authorities value the teaching of Arabic, Turkish, languages from the former Soviet republics as well as Japanese, Chinese and other Oriental tongues⁴. Actually, this newfound importance stems from the Great Britain's economic and strategic interests. He points out that there are disadvantages inherent in the Greek programs, notably the lack of educational resources. He cites the lack of both manuals for teaching modern Greek and English books for teaching the cultural history of Greece (art, media, music, cinema). Tziovas is critical of how teachers from Greece are sent to teach modern Greek in British or other universities around the world when they have not been adequately trained for the job. He also criticizes the placing of modern Greek studies in classics or Byzantine studies. This regrouping may have been advantageous in the past when academics had some knowledge of ancient, medieval and modern Greek. Unfortunately this is no longer the case. The problem is all the more obvious because classics and Byzantine studies are not linked only to Greece, as in the past. In classics, there is more interest in Latin and Rome; whereas in Byzantine studies, interest has shifted to the Balkans and Eastern European countries. Hence Tziovas demands academic recognition of modern Greek studies because at this point they are not treated as a serious academic discipline⁵.

Obviously teaching those languages considered of strategic interest goes hand in hand with teaching the history and culture of the corresponding countries. If we take into account the fact that British universities are operating increasingly like businesses, we can easily understand why subjects that do not attract a lot of students and thus fail to make money certainly are not priorities in program development. In this context, a small department with a limited number of students will be hit first. Lastly, the British case shares the weakness symptomatic of several other countries where modern Greek studies exist, namely that the majority of students enrolled in these programs are Greek or of Greek origin.

Given that the northern part of Ireland is within the United Kingdom, we

mention under this rubric the Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman and Modern Greek Studies at Queen's University in Belfast. Founded in 2000, the Centre aims to make a significant advance in the interdisciplinary study of Byzantium, to foster existing collaborations and encourage others, and to create a series of research training courses which will produce literary scholars who can read material culture as well as literature, and art historians and archaeologists with a facility for using text. This Centre does offer graduate degrees. What is said above about English universities may also apply to some extent to Belfast.

Canada

In Canada, modern Greek studies are offered at York University in Toronto; at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia; at McGill University, Concordia University and the Université de Montréal in Montreal. The latter is a French-language university. A chair of modern Greek history was created at York University in 2003 through the efforts of the Hellenic Heritage Foundation which raised the necessary funds.

In 1996, a chair was created in Simon Fraser University, through donations from the Greek community of British Columbia. The community became seriously divided later when it became a chair of history instead of modern Greek studies and Greek language teaching became secondary⁶. Moreover, the Greek Government was obliged to invest a significant amount of money to preserve Greek language courses.

At McGill University, the Chair in Modern Greek and Canadian Greek Studies was created in the early years of the new millennium, thanks in part to the endowment left by the Greek ship-owner, Frixos Papachristidis, and to a contribution from the Greek Government. In principle, this chair was attributed to three Montreal universities: McGill, Concordia and the Université de Montréal. The Greek Government even made its financial support conditional upon this three-way sharing of the chair. In practice, however, the situation was not clearly set out, an ambiguity which has left this chair in a grey area that threatens its very existence or, at the least, its vocation. In fact, McGill University has already expressed a certain attitude to name as chair a non-Greek-speaking professor from the field of ethnic studies.

It should be noted that Greek-language programs had been available in Quebec at McGill University, Université Laval and Université de Montréal since the sixties and seventies. In fact, language courses have been given

periodically at other colleges or universities in Canada, as is the case at Dawson College in Montreal.

There are also centres related to Greek studies, for example, the Centre of Hellenic Civilization within the Classics Department of the University of Manitoba. Outside the university walls, there is the Centre of Hellenic Studies and Research Canada, known by its Greek acronym KEEK. The KEEK is a non-profit organization founded by a team of researchers and academics who share common interests: the study of Hellenism, both in Greece and in the diaspora, and the promotion of the Greek language and culture. Founded in 1979, KEEK has initiated a variety of activities including research projects, seminars and conferences. One of the Centre's efforts to promote Greek culture is the bilingual academic journal, *Etudes helléniques/Hellenic Studies*. The Centre has also played a key role in the development of several other publications.

South Africa

Greek language and culture courses are given in some South African universities. The courses exist within classics department (Rand Afrikaans University (RAU), Dpt. Of Greek and Latin Studies, University of Cape Town (UCT), Dpt. Of Classical Languages and Literatures, University of Pretoria, Dpt. of Philosophy (South African Society for Greek Philosophy and the Humanities). Obviously there is more interest in ancient rather than modern Greek.

Modern Greek Studies in French-Speaking Countries

France

In French-speaking countries, there is a long tradition of teaching Greek and Greek literature. This tradition stems in part from the teaching of ancient Greek in classics departments. Given the ongoing decline in classics, there is an equivalent slide in modern Greek studies.

In France, the Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales (INALCO) has served as a cross-roads for the teaching of Greek, both language and culture since the beginning of the twentieth century. In fact INALCO academics have included such figures as Jean Psycharis, known for supporting demotic Greek, and André Mirabel, known for promoting Greek, both language and literature in France.

Other French universities have worked to develop modern Greek studies. At the Université de Nancy II there is an Institute for Modern Greek studies. At the Université Charles de Gaulle Lille III and the Université de Nice-

Sophia Antipolis, there are university centres for modern Greek studies. There is the Institut d'études néohelléniques at Paris IV (la Sorbonne). At the Université de Lyon III, the Université Paul Valéry Montpellier III, and the Université de Strasbourg II, there are Greek courses and sometimes literature or culture courses.

The INALCO does grant degrees in Greek language and culture; whereas, other universities give only credits. It is worth pointing out that there is a chair of Greek history at the Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales in Paris.

Other French-Speaking Countries

In Belgium, Greek is taught at the Catholic University of Louvain, the Université Libre de Bruxelles, as well as at the Universities of Liege and of Gent.

In Switzerland, modern Greek language and literature courses are given at the University of Geneva. Some Greek courses are also offered at the Universities of Zurich and of Berne.

In the French-speaking province of Canada, modern Greek language and literature are taught at the Université de Montréal.

Modern Greek Studies in Turkey

The University of Ankara began teaching ancient Greek in 1935. Modern Greek language and literature were introduced in the faculty of languages, history and geography in 1990. Some modern Greek courses are offered at the Istanbul University and modern Greek language classes are given at the Bogazici University and Sabanci University.

Modern Greek Studies in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union

There is a long tradition of teaching Greek language and civilization courses in Russia and other counties of the former Soviet Union. After the republics broke away, modern Greek studies were in the same difficult situation as the universities themselves. On the other hand, the university programs in former Soviet universities have been reorganized and restructured so that modern Greek studies are striving to maintain their status. This is not an easy task.

In Russia, modern Greek studies are taught along with Byzantine studies as is the case at Lomonossov University or within linguistics as is the case at St. Petersburg University.

In Georgia, modern Greek studies are taught at the University of Tbilisi in the classics department along with Byzantine studies. Despite the problems present in this country, modern Greek specialists created the *Georgian Society of Neohellenists* in 1999.

Greek language and literature courses are taught at the University of Sofia in Bulgaria, the University of Zagreb in Croatia, the Charles University in Prague, the Albanian universities of Tyrana and Girokastra, as well as at certain Hungarian, Polish and Romanian universities.

Romania has a long tradition in teaching Greek language and literature. The presence of Greeks in key positions in Romania during the Ottoman Empire led to the spread of Greek letters and the rise of a Greek enlightenment. In modern times, modern Greek studies has celebrated over 90 years of life in Romania. Indeed, the great historian Nicolae Iorga introduced Byzantine and modern Greek studies some 70 years ago when he founded the Institute of South-Eastern European Studies. Since then, modern Greek studies may be found in various universities and research centres across the country, for example in Bucarest, Iasion and Craiova. There is a *Romanian Society of Modern Greek Studies*. Romania's archives are full of documents that refer to the Greek intellectual presence since the Ottoman Empire. It is said that the Greek language has a 350-year old presence in Romania.

Italy

Modern Greek studies have a long tradition in this country ever since the Fall of Constantinople and the immigration of Greek intellectuals to Italy. It is well known that these same intellectuals contributed to the Italian Renaissance. Closer to today, modern Greek studies have blossomed in various Italian universities, in certain cases in conjunction with Byzantine studies. Indeed, this is the case of the Universities of Rome and of Padua. Here modern Greek studies are offered with Byzantine studies. Elsewhere, modern Greek studies may be found within Mediterranean language and literature departments. There is, of course, the *Hellenic Institute of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Studies* in Venice.

Holland and Scandinavia

Modern Greek studies and Byzantine studies are usually paired in Holland. In fact, at the University of Groningue, there is a department of

Modern Greek and Byzantine Studies. At the University of Amsterdam, there is the Seminar in Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies.

In Denmark, Greek is taught at the University of Copenhagen's Department of East European Studies. In Sweden, Greek is offered through the classics department of the University of Göteborg and at Stockholm University's Classical Language Institute.

Asia

Some Chinese, Japanese and Indian universities do offer Greek courses. In the Universities of Beijing and Shanghai, there are a few students who take primarily language courses for practical reasons. In Japan (University of Tokyo, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Kyoto University, Dept. of Classics, Faculty of Letters, Hiroshima University, Faculty of Letters) and India (Jawaharlal Nehru University, Chair in Classical Greek Studies in the School of Language, Literature and Cultural Studies, Rohikhand University, Department of Ancient History and Culture, Indian Society for Greek and Roman Studies), modern Greek courses may occasionally be found within other classical language departments.

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Africa

In Africa, modern Greek studies have existed in Egypt where there once were large Greek communities. In Alexandria, city of Constantine Cavafy and dozens of other Greek intellectuals, there remain mere vestiges of the Greek presence. The modern language is taught within the classics department of the Alexandria University. At the University of Cairo, Greek is taught in the foreign languages department. In both cases, there are no more than 30 students.

This presentation of the teaching of Greek in various universities around

the globe is far from exhaustive. We should not exaggerate this modest presence with a limited number of students and in most cases only rudimentary courses that do not lead to a degree. At the most, those who take Greek courses receive a few credits. All in all, the term marginal seems applicable to modern Greek language and literature courses⁷.

The “Dynasty” Chairs

In recent years, Greek political ‘dynasties’ have discovered a new way to keep the family name alive: chairs in various foreign universities, especially in the USA. These chairs usually follow the creation of eponymous foundations in Greece, another relatively new custom in Greek politics.

Besides politicians, other Greek personalities from the literary or business world have tried their luck with a chair or foundation. Again, these chairs are usually established in American universities. The fashion of naming university chairs after Greek personalities began in the 1970s with the George Seferis Chair at Harvard University. Other efforts include the Onassis Foundation at New York University; the Constantin Karamanlis Chair at Tufts University; the Kokkalis Foundation at Harvard; the Constantinos Mitsotakis at Stanford University in California. Ironically, Andreas Papandreou, who taught for years at universities in Canada and the United States, does not have a chair named after him in these countries. It is true that his family did not want a Papandreou chair of modern Greek studies financed by the Greek community to be established at York University. On the other hand, there were efforts to create a chair of economics and politics at the same university, but the required funding from the Greek government under Simitis did not materialize⁸.

The George Seferis Chair at Harvard

This chair, created in the mid-seventies, was financed by the Greek government. Although it began well, with time the chair lost its prestige and risks losing its Greek character. It seems that the Greek government did not negotiate the Harvard agreement very carefully. As a result, after G.P. Savvidis, the first professor to hold the chair, his successor, Margaret Alexiou (world-renowned anthropologist) was not a specialist in modern Greek studies. Worse, after her retirement, the chair has remained empty and many fear that it will change its vocation⁹.

In fact, this type of change in the mission of a chair that occurred in the modern Greek chair at Harvard is not unique. We have seen a similar pattern

at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver and risk seeing it again at McGill University in Quebec.

The Onassis Centre at the New York University

Created in 1989 by the Onassis Foundation, headquartered in Athens, this Centre has not been successful. Initially there was an ambitious project that included the creation of five academic positions in different areas of modern Greek studies. After the first director, eminent historian Spyros Vryonis Jr. left, the project was downgraded¹⁰.

The Eleftherios Venizelos Chair of Contemporary Greek Studies at the London School of Economics

This chair was funded by Greek ship-owners in 1996. Originally concerned with contemporary Greek issues, this chair also may change missions and move away from its initial goals. In fact the London School of Economics is trying to integrate the Chair into a much larger program far from Greek studies¹¹.

The Constantin Karamanlis Chair

This chair was created at Tufts University by the family of the late Greek prime minister with the help of his political friends. Inaugurated in 2000, it was funded by Greek ship-owners and Greek foundations.

The Constantin Mitsotakis Chair

This chair was inaugurated at Stanford University in 2005 with the former Greek Prime Minister Constantin Mitsotakis himself present. It was financed by the extremely wealthy American-Greek family of Angelos Tsakopoulos¹².

Other chairs have been dedicated to personalities from the literary or business sectors. Undoubtedly the first historically was the *Koraeos Chair* inaugurated in 1919 at King's College at the University of London. The first chair holder was the great British historian Arnold J. Toynbee.

In the United States, there is the *Constantin Cavafy Chair* established in 2001 at the University of Michigan¹³ and the *Nikos Kazantzakis Chair* founded in 1983 at San Francisco University¹⁴. As already mentioned, the *Frixos Papachristidis Chair of Modern Greek and Canadian Greek Studies* in Montreal was named in honour of a Greek ship-owner who lived in the city for many years. At Yale there is the program of the *Niarchos Foundation*,

established in 2001 and named after the Greek ship-owner Stavros Niarchos. At Harvard, there is the *Kokkalis program* which honours Socratis Kokkalis, a Greek businessman in the telecommunications sector and owner of the Olympiako soccer team. This last program covers South-eastern and Central Europe but with Greece as a regional actor in international relations¹⁵.

One odd example in between chairs was the *Spyros Basil Vryonis Center for the Study of Hellenism* was established in Los Angeles in 1985 and later transferred to Sacramento. This was an independent institution outside academia but financed by the Angelo Tsakopoulos family. The Vryonis Center's goal was the study of Hellenism, its role and presence in the contemporary world. The Centre was practically closed when the Tsakopoulos family stopped financing it. The Center's rich library was transferred to the University of Sacramento¹⁶.

At a time when American universities are using all means possible to attract endowments from major business figures, there seems to be a potential for Greek politicians, alongside their compatriot ship-owners and entrepreneurs, who wish to have their name associated with these hallowed halls of learning. Problems arise usually in maintaining the founding mission of these chairs, namely that of teaching Greek language and culture. On the basis of what we have seen thus far, it seems that if the appropriate measures are not taken, these chairs may change vocation completely in a future not too far-off¹⁷.

NOTES

1. Mikella Hartoulari «Kati einai sapio...» (*Something is rotten...*), *Ta Nea*, 08-04-2006.
2. Dimitris Tziovas, *interview Athens News Agency, ANACulture.gr*, Cf. Tziovas, Dimitris *The Future of Modern Greek Studies in Higher Education in the United Kingdom: Lost in Academia*, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, Volume 24, Number 1, May 2006.
3. Dimitris Tziovas, *op. cit.*, who succeeded Margaret Alexiou as professor of modern Greek studies in 1985.
- Roderick Beaton, *Modern Greek Studies in the United Kingdom: Suggestions for the Future*, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 24.2 (2006) 447-453, note1.
4. Dimitris Tziovas, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies, op.cit.*, pages 202-204.
5. Dimitris Tziovas, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies, op. cit.*, page 206.
6. *Gnomi*, the Greek newspaper of Vancouver, December 1, 1998. The archives of

the Centre of Hellenic Studies and Research Canada there hold dozens of documents related to the debate over the change in the Chair at Simon Fraser University.

7. Information on the presence of Modern Greek Studies around the world coming from the following sources: Greek Ministries of Culture and Education; Secretariat for Education for the Greek diaspora on the web.

8. Alexis Papahelas, «I mahi ton edron» (*The Battle of the Chairs*), *To Vima*, 09-10-2005.

9. Mikella Hartoulari, «To Kalo kai to Kalytero» (*The Good and the Better*), *Ta Nea*, 20-08-2005, also by the same author, «Kati Einai Sapio» (*Something is rotten...*), *Ta Nea*, 08-04-2006.

10. See Alexandre Kitroeff in this issue.

11. Alexis Papahelas, «The Battle of the Chairs», *To Vima*, 09-10-2005.

12. Alexis Papahelas, «The Battle of the Chairs», *To Vima, op. cit.*, *I Kathimerini*, 25-05-06.

13. Interview, Vasilis Lambropoulos, Greek radio, EPAS, 06-04-2006.

14. Thanasis Maskaleris, Interview, *Antifonitis*, 10-12-1998.

15. See Alexandre Kitroeff in this issue.

16. Interview with Spyros Vryonis, Jr.

17. Alexis Papahelas, «The Battle of the Chairs», *op.cit.*