

## Representing alterity in society in crisis

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**Professor Michael Toolan** (</staff/profiles/elal/toolan-michael.aspx>) has been invited to give a plenary lecture at a conference on Alterity at the University of Genoa, Italy, on Tuesday 28 July.

Extract from the **conference website** (<http://www.unige.it/eventi/eventi.php?id=784>):



"Despite claims of progress being made in the removal of barriers to equal opportunity, the facts often belie the situation, since the creation and maintenance of Alterity continues to represent a mode of subjugation and/or an instrument employed to keep social groups divided and so create or maintain inequality among them.

Indeed, in the world we live in boundaries are always in a state of flux, "responding" to (reacting to and shaping) socio-economic and historical forces and adapting to meet new "needs". In this light, the Other has been variously identified in terms of class, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, depending on time and place, and Otherness has certainly not been overcome as a means of division. What should not be forgotten is that the opposition to the Other has always represented an efficacious tool to divide and rule, as the racist discourses on class, ethnicity, gender, age or religion bring out forcefully, and Otherness continues to be exploited to political, economic and social ends, a phenomenon whose importance increases in most societies, where the divide between rich and poor is growing continually, where the earth's resources are continually wasted, and exploited to the benefit of the richer parts of the globe."