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## Science & Environment

# First woman Physics Nobel winner in 55 years

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7 hours ago

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Nobel Prize



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Dr Strickland shared the prize for discoveries in laser physics

The Nobel Prize in Physics has been awarded to a woman for the first time in 55 years.

Donna Strickland, from Canada, is only the third woman winner of the award, along with Marie Curie, who won in 1903, and Maria Goeppert-Mayer, who was awarded the prize in 1963.

Dr Strickland shares this year's prize with Arthur Ashkin, from the US, and Gerard Mourou, from France.

It recognises their discoveries in the field of laser physics.

Dr Ashkin developed a laser technique described as optical tweezers, which is used to study biological systems.

Drs Mourou and Strickland paved the way for the shortest and most intense laser pulses ever created. They developed a technique called Chirped Pulse Amplification (CPA). It has found uses in laser therapy targeting cancer and in the millions of corrective laser eye surgeries which are performed each year.

Speaking to the BBC, Dr Strickland said it was "surprising" it had been such a long time since a woman had won the award.

However, she stressed that she had "always been treated as an equal", and that "two men also won it with me, and they deserve this prize as much if not more than me".

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Arthur Ashkin and Gerard Mourou were honoured for their contributions to the field

The award comes a few days after a physicist gave a "highly offensive" lecture at the Cern particle physics laboratory in Geneva in which he said that physics had been "built by men" and that male scientists were being discriminated against.

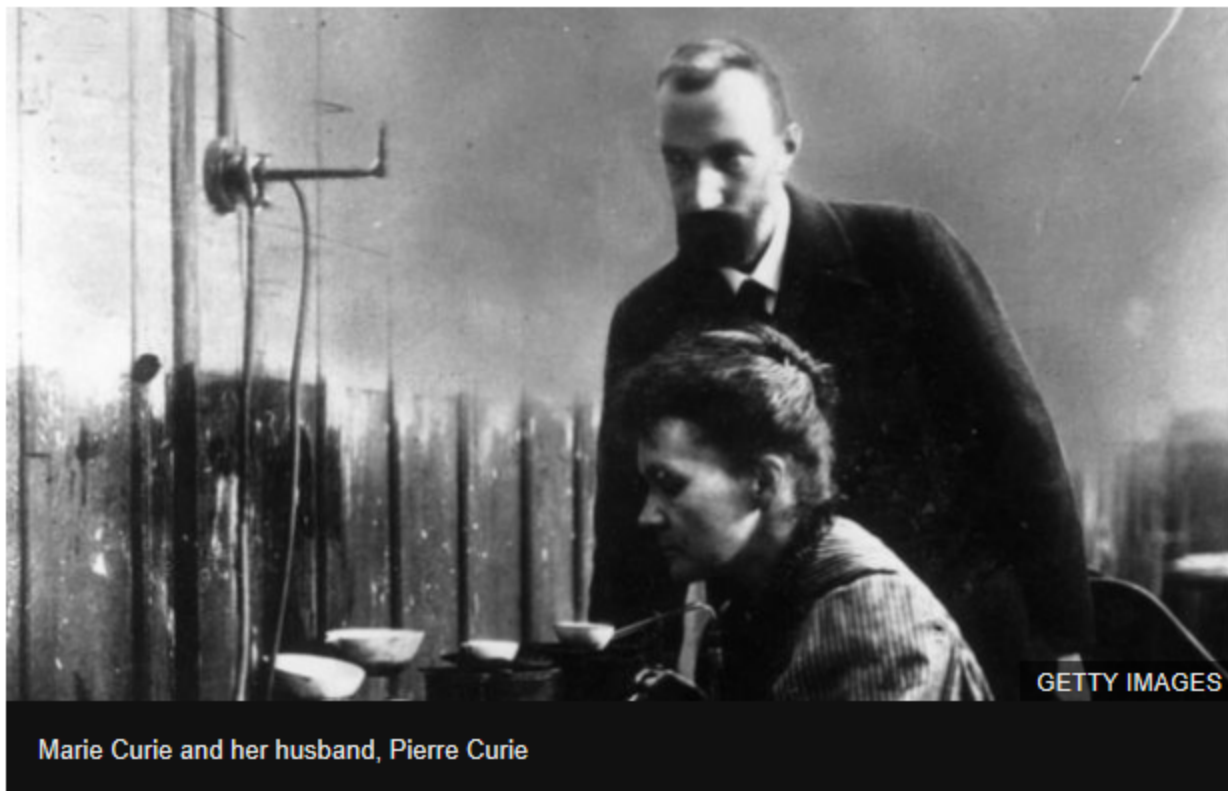
**He has since been suspended by the research centre.**

Dr Strickland called the physicist's remarks "silly" and said she never took such comments "personally".

The last woman to win the physics prize, German-born American physicist Maria Goeppert-Mayer, took the award for her discoveries about the nuclei of atoms.

Polish-born physicist Marie Curie shared the 1903 award with her husband Pierre Curie and Antoine Henri Becquerel for their research into radioactivity.

The award is worth a total of nine million Swedish kronor (£770,686; \$998,618).



Marie Curie and her husband, Pierre Curie

Reacting to her win, Dr Strickland, who is based at the University of Waterloo in Canada, said: "First of all you have to think it's crazy, so that was my first thought. And you do always wonder if it's real.

"As far as sharing it with Gerard, of course he was my supervisor and mentor and he has taken CPA to great heights so he definitely deserves this award. And I'm so happy Art Ashkin also won."

She added: "I think that he made so many discoveries early on that other people have done great things with that it's fantastic that he is finally recognised."

In a statement, the American Institute of Physics (AIP) offered its congratulations to all the winners, adding: "The countless applications made possible by their work, like laser eye surgery, high-power pettawat lasers, and the ability to trap and study individual viruses and bacteria, only promise to increase going forward.



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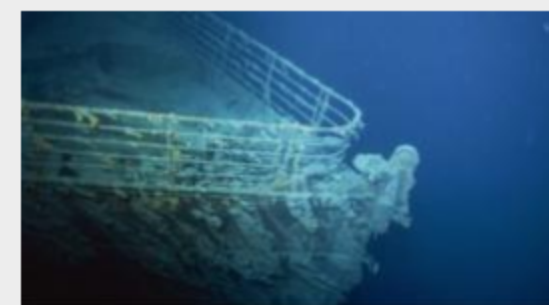
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