

Syllabus

SCAN 327 The Vikings

January 2007

Room: Hauge Admin. 209
Time: 8:30 to 10:50 a.m.
Professor: Troy Storfjell
Office Hours: Monday through Friday, 11 a.m. to 12 noon
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Textbooks:

- Kevin Crossley-Holland, *The Norse Myths*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980.
- John Haywood, *The Penguin Historical Atlas of the Vikings*. New York: Penguin Books, 1995.
- Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson, trans., *The Vinland Sagas: The Norse Discovery of America*. New York: Penguin Books, 1965.
- Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards, trans., *Egil's Saga*. New York: Penguin Books, 1977.
- Peter Sawyer, ed., *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Vikings*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997.

Description

Bursting onto the European stage at the end of the eighth century, the Vikings carved a bloody swath across early medieval Christendom, terrorizing the locals from Ireland to Byzantium. Yet the Old Norse were more than violent raiders. They were also savvy merchants, gifted craftsmen, hardworking farmers, and cunning political players who built kingdoms in Europe, established relations with the Muslim world, and even made it to the shores of North America. This course will explore the culture, history, arts and worldviews of the Old Norse, including their mythology, the saga literature, and their conversion to Christianity. We will also investigate how the Vikings have been understood and represented through the centuries between their days and ours, and will ask questions about how our knowledge of the Vikings is produced.

Objectives:

At the end of this four-week course, you should have developed a thorough historical overview of Old Norse society, culture, and mythology, and the history of Viking interaction with other peoples, and you should be able to work with the runic alphabet and runic inscriptions. You should also have acquired a nuanced understanding of how our knowledge of the Vikings is produced, and how it is informed by our own historical and discursive situation. (If history is a society's relationship with its archives,

as Michel Foucault argues, what does our historical knowledge of the Vikings tell us about ourselves? And, more generally, how can we “know” the past?)

You should be able to discuss these matters articulately, accounting for diverse points of view, subjecting your own ideas and those of others to rigorous critique, and demonstrate an ability to adjust your analyses. You should also be able to express your thinking on these matters clearly in college-level academic writing

Grading:

| | |
|------------------------|-----|
| Participation | 10% |
| Runes | 5% |
| Quizzes | 20% |
| Annotated Bibliography | 15% |
| Midterm Exam | 25% |
| Final Exam | 25% |

Participation

Active participation is an important educational component of this course. Thus merely attending and paying quiet attention is not enough for a good participation grade. (Alone it will only earn you a C.) You must take regular part in both small group and class discussion in order to earn a top participation grade (in addition to attending regularly).

Runes

Since the only written records the pre-Christian Old Norse left to posterity were written (or carved) in the runic alphabet, or *futhark*, you will be learning Viking Age runes, as well as some elementary Old Norse vocabulary. We will use this to translate several runic inscriptions over the course of the term. In the last week, there will be a rune quiz in class, measuring your mastery of the *futhark* and runic inscriptions.

Quizzes

A series of four on-line quizzes will be administered through the Sakai site. These quizzes are open-book, and will cover material from assigned readings, lectures, discussions, and the Sakai site. Each quiz is worth 5 percent of the overall grade (thus together all four are worth 20 percent).

Annotated Bibliography

Ideally students should write a research paper for most 300-level humanities classes. But, since this class is intensively compressed into one month, there is little time left over for researching and writing after you do your daily reading. Instead of writing a full-scale paper, therefore, you will write an annotated bibliography of reliable, scholarly sources related to an aspect of Viking history, society, culture, mythology, or saga literature. You will write a short paragraph about each of the sources, describing and evaluating its content. More details will be given in class.

Midterm Exam

The midterm will be a take-home essay exam, and will cover readings, lectures, discussions, and the Sakai site for this course. The midterm will be due on Friday, January 19, during the regularly scheduled lecture time.

Final Exam

The final exam will be a take-home essay exam. It will cover material from the entire term, and will also deal with material from readings, lectures, discussions, and the Sakai site. The final exam is due on Friday, February 2, during the regularly scheduled class time.

Policies

Attendance:

Attendance is a mandatory component of this course. Absences will be excused only for one of the following:

- illness, verified with a note from a health care provider;
- a death in the family;
- an interview for a post-graduation job or for graduate school;
- participation in an organized, university-sponsored off-campus event (i.e., sporting event, concert, etc.); or
- religious observance.

Note that even if an absence is excused, students will still miss important material and exercises, and will be held accountable for that material.

Each unexcused absence subtracts one percent (out of a maximum of ten) from your participation grade. (I.e., if you are absent ten times, your participation grade is zero.) **It is possible to have a negative participation grade.**

Academic Integrity:

Students must not cheat or plagiarize, and they must not condone these behaviors or assist others who cheat or plagiarize. Academic misconduct not only jeopardizes the career of the individual student involved, but it also undermines the scholastic achievements of all students and attacks the mission of this institution. Students are inherently responsible to do their own work, thereby insuring the integrity of their academic records.

What is Academic Dishonesty?

The most common forms of academic dishonesty are cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes, but is not limited to:

- Submitting material that is not yours as part of your course performance, such as copying from another student's exam, allowing another student to copy from your exam; or
- Using information or devices not allowed by the faculty; such as formulas or a

computer program or data, or unauthorized materials, such as a copy of an examination before it is given; or

- Fabricating information, such as data for a lab report; or
- Violating procedures prescribed to protect the integrity of an assignment, test, or other evaluation; or
- Collaborating with others on assignments without the instructor's consent; or
- Cooperating with or helping another student to cheat; or
- Other forms of dishonest behavior, such as having another person take an exam for you, altering exam answers and requesting the exam be re-graded; or, communicating with anyone other than a proctor or instructor during an exam.

Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to:

- Directly quoting the words of others without using quotation marks or indented format to identify them; or
- Using sources (published or unpublished) without identifying them, such as the Internet (and particularly making use of an Internet paper writing service); or
- Paraphrasing materials or ideas of others without identifying the sources.

If you are unsure about something that you want to do or the proper use of materials, then ask your instructor for clarification. Students may also read PLU's Academic Dishonesty policy in full at www.plu.edu/academics/integ.

Disability Information:

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible. If you have any questions concerning the services available for students with disabilities at PLU, please contact Alene Klein, in Counseling and Testing, located in Ramstad 106 or call x7206.

Schedule

Week 1:

Mon., Jan. 8 Getting Started: Syllabus & NOVA film

Tues., Jan. 9 Introduction [38 pp]

- Peter Sawyer, “The Age of the Vikings and Before” *Oxford History* (1-18)
- Haywood (8-27)
 - “The Causes of the Viking Age”
 - “Timeline”
 - “I: The Origins of the Vikings”
 - “The Scandinavian Environment”
 - “Scandinavia Before the Vikings”
 - “Pagan Religion and Burial Customs”
- (in class) Runic alphabet introduced

Wed., Jan. 10 Old Norse Society [38pp]

- Jan Bill, “Ships and Seamanship,” *Oxford History* (182-201)
- Haywood (28-45)
 - “II: Scandinavian in the Viking Age”
 - “From Chieftoms to Kingdoms”
 - “Rural Settlement”
 - “Trade and Trade Routes”
 - “Ships and Seafaring”
 - “Viking Towns”
 - “Women in the Viking Age”
- Annotated Bibliography prompt handed out.

Thu., Jan. 11 Old Norse Mythology I [51 pp]

- Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, “Religions Old and New,” *Oxford History* (202-224)
- *The Norse Myths*, “Introduction” (xiv-xli)

Fri., Jan. 12 Old Norse Mythology II [61 pp]

- *The Norse Myths* chapters 1-9 (3-47)
- *The Norse Myths* Notes on 1-9 (181-196)
- **Annotated Bibliography topics due**

Week 2:

Mon., Jan. 15 MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. HOLIDAY—NO CLASS

Tues., Jan. 16 Old Norse Mythology III [60 pp]

- *The Norse Myths* chapters 10-16 (48-94)
- *The Norse Myths* Notes on 10-16 (196-208)

Wed., Jan. 17 Old Norse Mythology IV [57 pp]

- *The Norse Myths* chapters 17-25 (95-135)
- *The Norse Myths* Notes on 17-25 (208-223)

Thu., Jan. 18 Old Norse Mythology V [46 pp]

- *The Norse Myths* chapters 26-32 (136-176)
- *The Norse Myths* Notes on 26-32 (222-236)
- **Annotated Bibliography sources due**

Fri., Jan. 19

- **Midterm Exam due**
- Film *Erik the Viking*

Week 3:

Mon., Jan. 22 Vikings and Franks [49 pp]

- Haywood (46-65)
 - “III: The Viking Raids”
 - “The Raids Begin”
 - “The Raids Intensify”
 - “The Vikings in the Mediterranean”
 - “The Franks Fight Back”
 - “The Great Army in England”
 - “The Great Raids on Francia”
- Nelson, “The Frankish Empire,” *Oxford History* (19-47)

Tues., Jan. 23 Vikings in England [41 pp]

- Haywood (66-71)
 - “The Great Army in England”
 - “The Great Raids on Francia”
 - “Wessex Defended”
 - “The Conquest of the Danelaw”
 - “The Kingdom of York”
- Keynes, “The Vikings in England, c.790-1016,” *Oxford History* (48-82)

Wed., Jan. 24 Vikings and Celts [41pp]

- Haywood (72-85)
 - “Vikings in Ireland I”
 - “Vikings in Ireland II”
 - “The Vikings in Scotland”
 - “Scandinavian Place Names in Britain”
 - “The Duchy of Normandy”
 - “The Vikings in Brittany”
 - “The Viking Warrior”
- Ó Corráin, “Ireland, Wales, Man, and the Hebrides,” *Oxford History* (83-109)

Thu., Jan. 25 The Viking North Atlantic

- Haywood (86-99) [62 pp]
 - “IV: The North Atlantic Saga”
 - “The Faeroes and Iceland”
 - “The Settlement of Iceland”
 - “Icelandic Literature”
 - “The Vikings in Greenland”
 - “Voyages to Vinland”
- Sveinbjörn Rafnsson, “The Atlantic Islands,” *Oxford History* (110-133)
- “Grænlandiga Saga,” *The Vinland Sagas* (49-72)

Fri., Jan. 26 Egil I [72 pp]

- *Egil's Saga* chapters 1-38 (21-92)

Week 4:

Mon., Jan. 29 Egil II [89 pp]

- *Egil's Saga* chapters 39-68 (92-180)

Tues., Jan. 30 Egil III [60 pp]

- *Egil's Saga* chapters 69-87 (180-239)

Wed., Jan. 31 The Lands of the Rus [32 pp]

- Haywood (100-109)
 - “V: The Vikings in the East”
 - “The Swedes in the East”
 - “From Scandinavian to Slav”
- Thomas S. Noonan, “Scandinavians in Russia” (134-155)
- **Rune quiz**

Thu., Feb. 1 Twilight of the Vikings [52 pp]

- Haywood (110-135)
 - “VI: The Transformation of the Vikings”
 - “The Danes Conquer England”
 - “The Empire of Cnut”
 - “The Thunderbolt of the North”
 - “The Struggle for England
 - “The Kingdom of Man and the Isles”
 - “The Twilight of Viking Scotland”
 - “The Early Scandinavian Church”
 - “Scandinavia After the Vikings”
- Niels Lund, “The Danish Empire and the End of the Viking Age,” *Oxford History* (156-181)
- **Annotated Bibliography due**

Fri., Feb. 2

- **Final Exam due**
- Film TBA