

Religion in Scandinavia

Instructor: Prof. Cormack

Office and mailbox: 4 Glebe St. room 102 (enter from porch)

Phone: 953-8033 Email: cormackm@cofc.edu

Office Hours: MTWF 10:00-11 (or by appointment)

The best way to get in touch with me is by email, or by seeing me after class. Failing that, leave a message for me in my mailbox. Leaving messages on my phone mail is NOT a good way to reach me; I check my email and mailbox far more often.

This course takes a chronological perspective on religion in Northern Europe, primarily Scandinavia, traversing two conversion periods: from pre-Christian religions to Christianity, from pre-Reformation Christianity to Lutheranism. It will be based for the most part on careful reading of primary sources, and evaluation of such sources as evidence for religious belief and practice will be an important part of the course. In particular, we will look backward (and forward) from medieval Christian accounts of the pagan past to modern-day descendants of medieval beliefs as they appear in folklore. 'Religion' will be interpreted widely to incorporate all sorts of beliefs and practices pertaining to the supernatural (gods, elves, witches, magic, ghosts, religious institutions, etc.).

Books Available at College Bookstore and University Books

We will read all or part of these. Copies will be on reserve:

R. I. Page, *Runes*

The Poetic Edda, tr. Carolyne Larrington, Oxford University Press, 1966

Snorri Sturluson, *Edda* tr. Anthony Faulkes, Everyman, 1987

Eyrbyggja saga, transl. Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards, Penguin Book, 1972

Jón Magnússon, *And Though This World with Troubles Filled*, tr. Michael Fell

In addition, assignments will be made from the Electronic Readings for this class.

Grading Scale

A 94 points
A- 90 points
B+ 87 points
B 83 points
B- 80 points
C+ 77 points

C 73 points
C- 70 points
D+ 67 points
D 63 points
D 60 points
F below 60

Grades will be based on:

- 2 Hour Exams and one Final Exam, 20 points each. These will all be essay exams, with map questions.
- Project and Research Paper 25 points (5 points for annotated bibliography, 5 points for an oral presentation of your topic, 15 points for the completed, handed in paper.)
- Short essays 15 points.
- Class participation (intelligent discussion showing that you have thought about the readings) 5 points

Please note that the above assignments are listed as 'points' which are equivalent of percentages, but can be **ADDED UP TO GET YOUR TOTAL GRADE**.

As you will see, the total is in fact 105 points, not 100. This is because you can earn up to five extra points on the short essays. There is no other form of 'extra credit' for this class.

Short Essays.

Worth 2.5 points each, you can earn up to 15 points total for these typed essays of no more than two pages. (The normal grade is '2', so four of these with that grade are the equivalent of a B- on a ten-point exam.) They are **BASED ON THE ASSIGNED READINGS** and should be **BROUGHT TO THE CLASS FOR WHICH THEY ARE ASSIGNED**. They **CANNOT BE MADE UP**; there will be enough options (roughly one per week, barring weeks with exams) that you should be able to plan your time. I will announce the precise topics in advance of reading assignments; it's up to you to be in class to find out what they are. I have, in fact, listed many of them for the first few weeks of class. This is because you are **STRONGLY URGED** to do these assignments **EARLY** in the semester. Leaving them until the last minute is not a good idea - your grade tends to be lower, and there are all your papers and other assignments competing for your time later on. Note, however, that there may be some fine-tuning to the assignments, reflecting class interests; so don't rush off and try to write them immediately!

Project and Research Paper:

I will provide more details about these in class. Briefly, everyone will choose a topic in consultation with me. Individual gods or other supernatural beings, 'holy' sites, folklore motifs etc., are good topics. You will create an annotated bibliography which you will hand in by Oct. 17. In an oral presentation of 5 - 10 minutes you will tell the class about the **EVIDENCE** for your topic - primary and secondary - as well as your thesis about it.

Papers, exams, etc. should always be delivered to me personally. Until they are in my hands, I have no evidence that you have written them. Above all, **DO NOT LEAVE THEM STUCK UNDER THE DOOR!** The office is open til 4 PM on weekdays. If you leave work in my mailbox, confirm by email that you have done so. **NB:** For added security, **ALWAYS** make sure you have a xerox copy (or computer printout) of any work you hand in. **IT IS UP TO YOU TO KEEP COPIES OF YOUR ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES.** Since grades are additive, you can easily calculate how many points you have achieved at any point in the class, as well as the approximate number of points left. For the purpose of such calculations, don't count on more than one short essay per week, and

none on weeks with an exam or other major assignment. (If I do assign more than one per week, of course you may do them, but don't wait til the last month of class and think you will have the opportunity of doing 6-8 of them!)

Missed classes/exams:

I assume all class members are adults and able to manage their time in such a way as to be in their seats when class starts. Class participation includes attendance and preparedness. NOTE: THE FACT THAT THE COURSE IS BASED ON PRIMARY READINGS MEANS THAT CLASS ATTENDANCE IS REALLY IMPORTANT - THERE IS NO TEXTBOOK YOU CAN USE AS A BACKUP.

Read the syllabus for exam and assignment dates. If you anticipate a conflict, it is far better to deal with the problem **BEFORE** it arises than afterwards. I am always willing to work with a student who plans ahead to arrange make-up (or make-before) exams. If you miss an exam without having made prior arrangements, you receive an automatic F unless I receive notification from the dean of students that you have a valid excuse. It is necessary to take all 3 exams and complete the research paper in order to pass the course.

CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM STATEMENT

All students are subject to the Honor Code. See the Code of Conduct in the Student Handbook, which can be accessed at

http://www.cofc.edu/studentaffairs/general_info/studenthandbook.html#honor

Please note that the definition of cheating includes handing in work you have already used in another course, unless you have written permission from BOTH instructors.

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course. Assignments on which cheating or plagiarism are suspected will be forwarded to the Dean of Students, who will bring the issue before the Honor Board. If a verdict of cheating or plagiarism is delivered by the Honor Board, the result will be an F for the ENTIRE COURSE, not just the assignment.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

This is a new course. Please note that this schedule is PROVISIONAL. There may be changes in timing as we progress. It is therefore essential for YOU TO ATTEND CLASS and make sure of the PRECISE assignments for the next week. I do not take kindly to receiving emails asking about assignments from students who could not be bothered to attend class.

Aug. 27: Introduction to the course.

Aug. 29: read TACITUS **Tacitus, *Germania*** Use the College Ebook, *Tacitus' Agricola, Germany, and Dialogue On Orators* pp. 57 - 87 (NOTE ABOUT EBOOKS. IF YOU DECIDE TO USE THIS OPTION, PRINT IT OUT ASAP. This is a slow process . . .) or Penguin or other translation. There is a slightly archaic translation at: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/tacitus-germanygord.html> **Short essay and discussion:**

What do you think of Tacitus's 'noble savage'? How noble is he?

What does Tacitus tell us about government, warfare (warrior ethos), religion, and women among the Germans? How might he be using these topics to criticize Rome of his own time (c. 56-117 CE)? s

Week of Sept 1 **Monday:** R. I. Page, *Runes*. Read the entire book.

Wednesday: *Runes*. (contd.) Short Essay and Discussion: What is the evidence for, and against, the idea that runes are a 'magical' alphabet?

Friday: ER Early Christian Contacts

Short Essay: What do these extracts from the lives of missionary saints tell us about Scandinavian culture and religion? Christian culture and religion at this time?

Week of Sept. 8 **Monday:** ER Lidén, 'From Pagan Sanctuary to Christian Church'

Wednesday: ER Sørheim 'Lead Mortuary Crosses'

Friday: ER Early Norwegian Law; Scanian Church Law

Short Essay: Based on this selection of laws, what are the main concerns of the legislators regarding religious belief, practice, and institutions?

Sept. 15 ff. ER **Grágás, Christian Laws' Section** Short Essay: What are the main concerns of these laws? Contrast with the concerns of Norwegian and Scanian Laws. How would people be aware of them?

Sept 22 ff. ER Monday: Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*

Wednesday: Scaldic Verse (handout)

EXAM SEPT 26

Sept 29 ff. Monday: Scaldic verse; Short essay based on the poetry
Wednesday: Snorri Sturluson, 'Gylfaginning' (contrast w. Heimskringla)
Friday: Larrington, *Poetic Edda* 'Voluspá'

Oct. 6 ff. Larrington, *Poetic Edda* Hávamál and more if time permits . . .

**TUESDAY OCT 7 IS THE LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW FROM THIS COURSE
WITH A GRADE OF W**

FALL BREAK OCT 13 *Eyrbyggja saga*
ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE FRIDAY

Oct 20 ff. ER *Jóns saga byskups*

Oct. 27 ff. Luther's Small Catechism **OCT 31 Exam 2**

Nov. 3 ff. **CLASS PRESENTATIONS OF RESEARCH TOPICS**

Nov. 10 ff. ER Jón Steffensen, 'Margrétar saga and its History in Iceland,'

ER Beyer, On the Transformation of Apparition Stories

**RESEARCH PAPERS DUE BY 4 PM NOV 14. IF YOU HAND IN YOUR PAPER
BY THIS DATE, I WILL READ AND COMMENT ON IT. If your grade is below B
minus, you will have an option of rewriting for a higher grade, paper to be due on a date
to be decided on an individual basis. IF YOU DO NOT HAND IT IN, YOU HAVE AN
AUTOMATIC EXTENSION UNTIL 4 PM DEC. 1 but no further.**

Nov. 17 ff. Jón Magnússon, *Although this World with Devils Filled*

Nov. 24 ff. ER Stokker, *Legend of the Black Book Minister*

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Dec 1 ff. Monday: **PAPERS DUE IF NOT ALREADY HANDED IN**

ER: Gunnel, Christmas Visitors

ER: Hafstein, From the Elves' Point of View

Dec. 8 Last Day of Classes. Final Review.

EXAM DEC 15