

IDH 3035 U46: MATERIAL CULTURE OF THE VIKING AGE

Time and place of class:
Tuesday and Thursday 9.30–10.45 am in GC283B.

Instructor

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Office hours: By appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Minnesota Vikings. *Thor: Love and Thunder*. *The Northman*. Norse mythology adopted by Neo-Pagans and Neo-Nazis. Viking Metal. Runes. The Viking Age ended centuries ago, and still, the Vikings and their world continue to intrigue us. In this course we will explore Viking society and culture from the seventh century to the end of the thirteenth century. We will follow the political, economic, and religious development of Viking societies in Scandinavia, Great Britain, France, Canada, Russia, Central Asia, the Levant, and the Persian Gulf. We will consider the ways that these societies expanded, contracted, and interacted with the societies already in existence in the places where the Vikings chose to plunder and to settle. We will also delve deeper into the written culture of the Vikings in the form of a research project about rune carvings.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

During this semester we will reach the following course objectives:

- Course Objective 1 (CO 1). How society in Scandinavia and the Scandinavian diaspora was structured and organized during the period 600–1300.
- CO 2. How the environment shaped the daily lives of people living in Scandinavia and the Scandinavian diaspora during this time.
- CO 3. How the people of Scandinavia and the Scandinavian diaspora interpreted the world they lived in through their beliefs.
- CO 4. How different groups of people living in Scandinavian and the Scandinavian diaspora interacted with one another and with other groups they encountered.

We achieve these goals by focusing on the following issues in particular:

- Learning Outcome 1 (LO1). Learn about and be able to explain some of the key developments in Scandinavia during the Viking Age, 600–1300.
- LO 2. Become experienced in understanding, analyzing, and critically evaluating historical processes.
- LO 3. Learn and apply the techniques of writing argumentative, thesis-driven, and evidence-based papers using the knowledge acquired through the study of the history of the Viking Age.

This course is a discipline-specific Global Learning Foundations course that counts towards your graduation requirement. One of the themes of this course will therefore be the ways that different groups of people interacted over the period covered by the course. Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to do the following:

- CO 5. Construct an evidence-based argument demonstrating how local, regional, and inter-regional events shaped the interactions of two or more groups in the ancient world, and the development of the Viking world (Global Awareness).
- CO 6. Construct an evidence-based argument that integrates multiple perspectives on issues related to the Viking world. (Global Perspective).
- CO 7. Consider the different perspectives on a problem or controversy related to the Viking world and attempt to reach a resolution to this problem (Global Engagement).

COURSE PREREQUISITES

There are no prerequisites for this course.

REQUIRED TEXTS AND/OR MATERIALS:

- Anders Winroth *The Age of the Vikings* (Princeton University Press, 2014). ISBN: 9780691149851.
- Angus Somerville & Andrew McDonald, *The Viking Age. A Reader*, 3rd edition (University of Toronto Press, 2019). ISBN: 9781442608672.
- Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Valkyrie. The Women of the Viking World*. (Bloomsbury, 2020). ISBN: 9781788314770

RECOMMENDED, NOT REQUIRED:

- Neil Price, *The Children of Ash and Elm* (Basic Books, 2020).

Additional readings will be made available on Canvas.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING POLICIES

During the semester you will be responsible for coming to class on time and be prepared to participate in in-class discussions and presentations. After the last class of each week, you will be expected to reply to a content-based question on Canvas. Towards the end of the semester, you will be expected to complete one research assignment which will be submitted as a research paper on Canvas and presented in-class in front of your classmates.

Exams

This course does not have exams.

Grading scale (%)

A 95–100	B 83–86	C 70–76
A- 90–94	B- 80–82	D 60–69
B+ 87–89	C+ 77–79	F –59

Excused Absences

Excused absences may be granted in the event of serious medical issues (with a doctor's note), religious holiday, the death of an immediate family member, military duty, a court date, and participation in some college events. It is your responsible to contact your instructor in a timely manner and request absence be excused.

Religious Observances

Every effort will be made, where feasible and practical, to accommodate students whose religious practices coincide with class requirements or scheduling. Please make sure to notify your instructor at the beginning of the semester of which dates you will be absent or any anticipated problems with completing course work.

Physical, Mental and Sensory Challenges

The Disability Resource Center collaborates with students, faculty, staff, and community members to create diverse learning environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive and sustainable. The DRC provides FIU students with disabilities the necessary support to successfully complete their education and participate in activities available to all students. If you have a diagnosed disability and plan to utilize academic accommodations, please contact the DRC at 305-348-3532 (MMC) or at 305-919-5345 (BBC) to schedule an appointment. You can also visit them in person in GC 190 at MMC or in WUC 131 at BBC campus.

HONORS COLLEGE POLICIES AND REQUIREMENTS

Academic Misconduct Procedures and Policies

In The Honors College, the term “honor” refers both to academic accomplishment and character. Students in Honors should therefore adhere to and be held to the highest standards of personal academic accountability. Academic dishonesty in any form, including plagiarism, is antithetical to the very definition of being an Honors student at FIU. Consequently, an Honors College student found responsible for academic misconduct will be dismissed from the College.

An Honors faculty member may bring charges of academic misconduct against an Honors student if the faculty member suspects plagiarism or other forms of academic misconduct. The faculty member will decide whether to pursue informal resolution, file formal resolution charges, or take no further action, and will follow the procedures outlined in the Academic Misconduct Procedures available at <https://studentaffairs.fiu.edu/get-support/student-conduct-and-academic-integrity/academic-integrity/index.php> . Please refer to the following documents for additional information:

FIU Student Handbook: <https://studentaffairs.fiu.edu/about/student-handbook/index.php>

Student Portfolios

The Honors College will be using a portfolio method to assess students’ learning outcomes. The portfolio allows for maximum flexibility in gauging student learning. Students decide (with instructor consultation) what “artifacts” or assignments to include for consideration in their portfolios to demonstrate successful achievement of each of five key student learning outcomes over the 4-year Honors experience. Portfolios provide a rich context for students to show what they have learned and to explain their learning process. Because the Honors curriculum is meant to be thought-provoking and reflective, student self-assessment through portfolios will facilitate learning and provide in-depth assessment. Each Honors College course includes at least one assignment that could potentially fit portfolio requirements. <http://honors.fiu.edu/current-students/portfolio/>

Honors Engagement

Requirements Honors College students are required to accumulate at least 20 engagement points each academic year (Fall and Spring) by attending Honors College activities. Students attending only one semester (Fall or Spring) are required to accumulate 10 engagement points. Each activity has a point value. Students may select which events and activities they want to attend.

The new system is designed to be more flexible for students, offering events at various days and times (including some weekend events) and allowing for a variety of ways to meet the requirements. Please plan accordingly. <http://honors.fiu.edu/current-students/citizenship/>

Community Service

Honors College students must also complete 20 volunteer service hours. These hours DO NOT count toward the 20 engagement points discussed above. <http://honors.fiu.edu/current-students/community-service/>

Honors Education in the Arts (HEARTS)

The HEARTS program is designed to give Honors College students opportunities to “explore and appreciate different artistic and cultural traditions and modes of artistic expression. HEARTS will also serve as a clearinghouse (and curatorial framework) for our students to experience the arts on campus and in the community by providing them with information about cultural activities and access to performances with free or discounted tickets.

<http://honors.fiu.edu/current-students/hearts/>

RESOURCES

Panthers Care & Counseling & Psychological Services

If you are looking for help for yourself or a fellow classmate, Panthers Care encourages you to express any concerns you may come across as it relates to any personal behavior concerns or worries you have, for the classmate’s well-being or yours; you are encouraged to share your concerns with FIU’s Panthers Care website.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) offers free and confidential help for anxiety, depression, stress, and other concerns that life brings. Learn more about CAPS at caps.fiu.edu. Professional counselors are available for same-day appointments. Don’t wait to call 305-348-2277 to set up a time to talk or visit the online self-help portal.

Your Instructor

I am here to help you succeed in this class, and I am happy to answer any questions you might have. The best way to reach me is by email, or make an appointment on Zoom. When you e-mail me, I will do my best to reply within 24 hrs. However, if you send me an email on Friday afternoon you might not get a reply until Monday. **If you have any general questions regarding the course, please consult this syllabus first. If your question still has not been answered, you are welcome to e-mail me, and I will try and help you.**

SYLLABUS DISCLAIMER

Instructors retain the right to modify the course syllabus for any reason throughout the semester to facilitate better learning.

/Dr. Erika Harlitz-Kern

Schedule



Module 1: The Viking World

- Week 1: What Do We Really Know about the Vikings?
Required reading: Winroth chapter 2 (p. 15–44); Price, “Introduction” (.pdf); Hadley, “In Search of the Vikings. The Problems and Possibilities of Interdisciplinary Approaches” (.pdf); The Nordic Countries (.pptx).
Discuss: What are the challenges we face when we try and learn about the Vikings, and why is that so?
- Week 2: How the Vikings Viewed the World.
Required reading: Winroth chapter 4 (p. 71–97); Jóhanna Katrín chapter 6 (p. 169–196); Price chapter 1 (.pdf); The Maritime Worldview (.pptx); Primary source: Somerville & McDonald (2019) (p. 74–84; 509–511).
Discuss: How would you describe Viking Age Scandinavians’ view of this and other worlds? Explain why.
- Week 3: Norse Mythology.
Required reading: Winroth chapter 8 (p. 181–189); Jesse L Byock, “Introduction” (.pdf); Norse Mythology (.pptx); Primary source: Snorri Sturluson, *The Prose Edda* (.pdf)
Discuss: How would you describe the pre-Christian religion of Viking Age Scandinavia? Explain why.
- Week 4: Pagan to Christian.
Required reading: Winroth chapter 8 (p. 198–211); Sara E Ellis Nilsson, *The Conversion and Early Christianization in Scandinavia* (.pdf); Primary sources: Somerville & McDonald (2019) (p. 368–400).
Discuss: Take a stand: Did Christianity in Viking Age Scandinavia spread through conversion, Christianization, both or neither?

Module 2: Viking Society

- Week 5: Growing Up Viking.
Required reading: Somerville & McDonald (2013) chapter 2 (p. 39–47); Jóhanna Katrín chapters 1 and 2 (p. 19–71); Naumann et al, “Changes in Dietary Practices and Social Organization” (.pdf).
Discuss: What was the connection between social rank in Viking Age Scandinavian society and the treatment of girls and young women, and why was that so?
- Week 6: At Home on the Farm.
Required reading: Winroth chapter 7 (p. 157–180); Jóhanna Katrín chapters 3, 4, and 5 (p. 73–168); Women Indoors. Men Outdoors (.pptx); Primary source: Somerville & McDonald (2019) (p. 38–42).
Discuss: How would you describe the relationships between the people who lived on a

typical farm in Viking Age Scandinavia? Explain why you have chosen to describe them this way.

- Week 7: Arts and Letters

Required reading: Winroth chapter 9 (p. 213–240).

Required listening: The Rune Cast episode 1 (45 mins), episode 3 (31 mins.), episode 4 (18 mins.)

Discuss: Take a stand: Are rune carvings examples of a literary culture in Viking Age Scandinavia? If yes, why? If no, why not?

Module 3: Viking History.

- Week 8: Raiders or Settlers?

Required reading: Winroth chapter 3 (p. 45–70); Science, “Why Did Greenland’s Vikings Disappear?” (link on Canvas); L’Anse aux Meadows (.pptx); Primary source: Somerville & McDonald (2019) (p. 206–208, 242–244, 246–252, 319–330).

Discuss: Take a stand. Were the Scandinavians of the Viking Age raiders or settlers, neither or both?

- Week 9: Migrants or Merchants?

Required reading: Winroth chapter 5 (p. 99–130); Montgomery, “Vikings and Rus in Arabic Sources” (2019) (p. 289–302); The Eastern Trade Network (.pptx); Primary source: Somerville & McDonald (2019) (p. 289–302).

Discuss: What are the differences and/or commonalities between the activities of the Scandinavians who went east compared to those who went west?

- Week 10: From Chieftains to Kings.

Required reading: Winroth chapter 6 (p. 131–156); Somerville & McDonald (2013) (p. 48–56); Sverre Bagge, “Early State Formation in Scandinavia” (.pdf); Primary source: Somerville & McDonald (2019) (p. 420–445).

Discuss: How were the activities of Viking Age Scandinavians abroad and the process of state formation at home connected?

Module 4: Runestone Research Project.

- Week 11: Introduction of the runestone research project and the online database *Runor* (<https://app.raa.se/open/runor/search>).
- Week 12: Submission of research report and presentation of the runestones selected as source material from the online database *Runor*.
- Week 13: In-class research paper workshop.
- Week 14: Submission of research paper and in-class presentations of runestone research project.
- Week 15: In-class presentations of runestone research project (continued).

