

## History 313: The Viking Age



### Course Information:

History 313, Spring 2020 (CRN: 10761). Time: MWF 10:00-10:50. Room: MHRA 2209

### Professor's Information:

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**Office Hours:** Mondays 11-12, Wednesdays 11-12 and by appointment

### Course Description

At the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE, Scandinavian peoples erupted onto the historical stage in what has become known as the Viking diaspora. For the next several centuries, Scandinavian people interacted with settled cultures in Francia, Britain, the Baltic, and Eastern Europe through trade, raiding, and settlement. This course provides an examination of the Viking Age through a close examination of sources – both written and material – produced during this period. It first explores the nature of pre-migration Scandinavian life and culture, looking particularly at social structures, gender norms, religion and magic. It then moves to examine the dialectical relationship with Scandinavian peoples and the more 'settled' people of continental Europe; themes include the conversion of Scandinavia to Christianity, Vikings voyages of discovery and settlement, and the heavy impact of Viking raids in Francia, Britain, and Eastern Europe.

### General Education Historical Perspectives Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Use a historical approach to analyze and contextualize primary and secondary sources representing divergent perspectives.
2. Use evidence to interpret the past coherently, orally and/or in writing.

### General Education Global Perspectives Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Find, interpret, and evaluate information on diverse cultures.
2. Describe interconnections among regions of the world. (Must include substantial focus on at least one culture, nation, or sub-nationality beyond Great Britain and North America).
3. Use diverse cultural frames of reference and alternative perspectives to analyze issues.

### Course- and Department-Specific Student Learning Objectives

1. Analyze historical duration, succession, and change in terms of human agency and larger systems or structures in a wide variety of places and periods.
2. Use historical thinking to contextualize and analyze primary and secondary sources representing different points of view.
3. Locate and Evaluate appropriate scholarly materials to our subject matter.
4. Use evidence-based reasoning to interpret the past coherently while developing and presenting an original written argument
5. Recognize and explain the causes, events and impact of the Viking diaspora circa 750-1050 CE

### Teaching Strategies

This is a lecture course, albeit one in which students are expected to participate with questions, comments, and occasional brief discussions. Written work focuses on the interpretation of primary sources, the evaluation of secondary sources, and the completion of a short research project.

### Required Texts:

1. *The Viking Age: A Reader*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. A. Somerville and R.A. McDonald (Univ. of Toronto Press, 2014). ISBN: 9781442608672
2. *Egil's Saga*, tr. Bernard Scudder (Penguin, 2005). ISBN: 9780140447705
3. William FitzHugh and Elisabeth Ward, eds., *Vikings: the North Atlantic Saga* (Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000). ISBN: 9781560989950
4. Stefan Brink, ed., with the collaboration of Neil Price, eds., *the Viking World* (Routledge, 2011). ISBN: 9780415692625

### Course Requirements

Participation	boost to grade
Discussion Prompts, Quizzes, and Short Assignments	20%
Research Project	
Annotated Bibliography	10%
Research Project	20%
Midterm: in-class, plus take-home essay	20%
Final exam: in class, plus take-home essay	20%
Modern Moment	10%

## **Explanation of Assignments**

### 1. Participation (Course/Department SLOs 2, 5; GHP SLO 2; GL SLOs 1, 2, 3)

Students who regularly ask questions, respond to my questions, and generally show their engagement with the class will receive a boost to their final grade average.

### 2. Discussion Prompts, Quizzes and Short Assignments (Course/Dept. SLOs 2, 4, 5; GHP SLOs 1, 2; GL SLOs, 2, 3)

Beginning in week 3, I will ask you to complete at least one short assignment per week. Some weeks this may be a 10-question canvas quiz (for the entire class). Other weeks, I'll divide the class into thirds and each day 1/3 of the class will post a quotation from the reading and 2 interpretive questions about it at least two hours before class starts. On other occasions I may ask for other short assignments.

### 3. Midterm Exam (Course/Department SLOs 1, 2, 4, 5; GHP SLOs 1, 2; GL SLOs 1, 2, 3)

The midterm will have two parts, an in-class portion and a take-home portion. For the in-class portion, students will write responses to 3-4 short questions based on the primary sources and secondary sources we have read to that point. For the take-home portion, students will write a 3-page essay in response to one of several synthesis questions that I provide. These synthesis questions will focus around comparison and change over time.

### 4. Final Exam (Course/Department SLOs 1, 2, 4, 5; GHP SLOs 1, 2; GL SLOs 1, 2, 3)

The format of the final is identical to the midterm and will cover only the material since the midterm.

### 5. Research Project

In the second half of the semester, students will choose one topic from the syllabus (each class meeting has a topic; you should choose one that interests you) and conduct additional research into that subject. The project requires you to find some scholarly literature about your topic and to produce a final product, either a paper of 6-8 pages, or a piece of art, a short work of music, some viking-style literature, some representative food, or a physical object. Those who choose the non-paper option will need to have their project approved by me at least 2 weeks before it is due.

#### a. Initial Topic and Justification

#### b. Annotated Bibliography (Course/Department SLOs 3; GL SLOs 1)

Students must assemble a bibliography of primary and secondary sources concerning their subject. Sources cannot be those assigned for the class and must be reputable and scholarly. Depending on the topic, I expect 1-3 primary sources and 3-5 secondary sources. Guidelines on how to present the bibliography and its annotations will be presented in class.

#### c. Research Project (Course/Department SLOs 2, 3, 4; GHP SLOs 1, 2; GL SLOs 1)

As noted above, you will produce EITHER a 6-8 research paper that poses a specific question about your subject and answers it using the sources you gathered for your bibliography, OR a project of an alternate source. In the case of the latter, you must still produce a 1-2 page paper in which you outline how your bibliography items helped you produce the project.

### 6. Modern Moment (Course/Department SLOs 4, 5; GHP SLO 2)

From a list of sources that I provide (to be supplemented by student suggestions, provided I approve), students will evaluate one piece of modern popular culture concerning the Vikings (film, TV, manga, novel, comic strip, etc.). This analysis should focus on the representation of Vikings and incorporate insight from the primary and secondary sources read during the semester.

**Grading Scale:**

100-97% = A+	89-87 = B+	59 or lower = F
96-93 = A	86-83 = B	
92-90 = A-	82-80 = B-	
79-77 = C+	69-67 = D+	
76-73 = C	66-63 = D	
70-72 = C-	60-62 = D-	

**Attendance Policy**

Attendance is mandatory. You are allowed to miss 3 classes without explanation; I will not, however post lectures or otherwise tell you what you missed when you were absent. For every absence after the first three, I will deduct 1 point from your final cumulative course grade.

**Academic Honor Code**

Each student is required to sign the Academic Integrity Policy on all major work submitted for the course. Refer to this address on the UNCG website for more details:

<http://studentconduct.uncg.edu/policy/academicintegrity/complete/>.

**Additional Requirements and Advice**

1. In case later consultation should prove necessary, students are asked to keep copies of all graded assignments until at least the end of the semester.
2. All course requirements must be completed to receive a grade for the class.
3. **Late work** will be penalized by 1/3 of a letter grade (ie., A to A-) per day it is late unless previous arrangements have been made with the instructor.
4. **Plagiarism** is a serious academic offense that occurs when someone - whether knowingly or not - uses the words or ideas of someone else without giving that person credit for those words or ideas with a formal citation. I therefore expect that all work will be your own. Should I find evidence to the contrary, I will consider any and/or all of the punitive sanctions made available to me by the university. When in doubt, cite your source. If you are unclear about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me in private - I'm happy to discuss it.

## SEQUENCE OF CLASSES:

### Notes on Readings:

1. When to Read: You are expected to do the readings in full before the class for which they are assigned.
2. How to Read: I recognize full well that medieval texts can sometimes seem dense and unforgiving. Don't despair! Our collective mission is to force them, through discussion and analysis, to reveal their secrets. I don't expect you to be masters of a topic after doing the reading, especially if it is hard. I do expect, however, you to think carefully both about the surface meaning of the medieval author's text (what he or she said) and about the significance or value that each text may hold for modern readers. In the case of works by modern authors, you should attempt to understand the author's main argument (that is, of what is the author trying to convince you? What does s/he want you to believe? Why?) and to spend some time evaluating it (does the author succeed? Why or why not? Do you buy it? Why or why not? Does the author present enough - and convincing enough - evidence to persuade you?).

<b>Date/Topic</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Assignments</b>
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### **Week 1: Introduction**

1. January 13:  
Course Intro

2. January 15:  
Definitions,  
Geography, and  
Sources for the  
Viking Age

1. Stefan Brink, "Who were the Vikings?", in Brink and Price, eds., p. 4-7
2. Fitzhugh and Ward, 11-17, 31-34
3. Lars Lönnroth, "The Icelandic Sagas," in Brink and Price, 304-310
4. Anthony Faulkes, "Snorri Sturluson: His Life and Work," in Brink and Price, eds., 311-314
5. Somerville, 6-15

3. January 17:  
Popular (Mis-)  
Conceptions

1. Fitzhugh and Ward, 365-373
2. Watch: Vinland Saga, Ch. 1 (manga):  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHG\\_1uQj5k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHG_1uQj5k)
3. Watch: the Saga of Bjorn  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MV5w262XvCU>)
4. FYI: the Vikings (History Channel), TV Series, 2013-
5. Optional: the Vikings (1958 film; dir. Richard Fleischer):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BpxwBgGyQ0>

### **Week 2: Northern Europe Before the Viking Age**

4. January 20:  
NO CLASS

**MLK Jr. DAY**

5. January 22: No readings! (It's a miracle!)  
Francia, Britain,  
Ireland and the  
North Sea before  
the Vikings
6. January 24: 1. Lotte Hedeager, "Scandinavia Before the Viking Age,"  
Scandinavia in Brink and Price, eds., p. 11-22  
Before the 2. Fitzhugh and Ward, 27-30, 34-41  
Viking Age 3. Canvas: Caroline Ahlström Arcini, *The Viking Age: a  
Time of Many Faces* (Oxbow Books, 2018), 55-71.

### Week 3: Life in Scandinavia

7. January 27: the 1. Fitzhugh and Ward, 42-54 Group 1  
Farm 2. Jan-Henrik Fallgren, "Farm and Village in the Viking  
Age," in Brink and Price, eds., 67-76
8. January 29: 1. Stefan Brink, "Slavery in the Viking Age," in Brink and Group 2  
Free and Unfree: Price, eds., p. 49-56  
Social Status 2. Somerville, 17-28, 38-42, 337-342
9. January 31: 1. Annika Larsson, "Viking Age Textiles," in Brink and Group 3  
Crafts and Price, eds., p. 181-185  
Poetry 2. John Ljungkvist, "Handicrafts," in Brink and Price,  
eds., p. 186-192  
3. Judith Jesch, "Poetry in the Viking Age," in Brink and  
Price, eds., p. 291-303  
4. Somerville, 120-121

### Week 4: Gender and Magic

10. February 3: 1. Audur Magnúsdóttir, "Women and Sexual Politics," in Group 1  
Gender Roles Brink and Price, eds., 40-48  
2. Somerville, 85-90, 91-93, 96-111
11. February 5: Somerville, 111-120, 125-153 Group 2  
Marriage,  
Divorce, and  
Sexuality
12. February 7: 1. Neil Price, "Sorcery and Circumpolar Traditions in Old Group 3  
Sorcery and Norse Beliefs," in Brink and Price, 244-248  
Magic 2. Fitzhugh and Ward, 70-71  
3. Canvas: : *Njal's Saga*, tr. Magnusson and Pálsson,  
chaps.10-14 (p. 57-68)  
4. Somerville, 121-125

**Week 5: Norse Religion?**

13. February 10: Pagan Rituals and Beliefs

1. Fitzhugh and Ward, 55-60
2. Anders Hultgard, "the Religion of the Vikings," in Brink and Price, 212-218
3. Somerville, 43-53, 58-69

Group 1

14. February 12: "the Norse Pantheon" and its Creation

1. Jens-Peter Schjodt, "The Old Norse Gods," in Brink and Price, 219-222
2. Olof Sundqvist, "Cult Leaders, Rulers and Religion," in Brink and Price, 223-226
3. Margaret Clunies Ross, "The creation of Old Norse Mythology," in Brink and Price, 231-234

Group 2

15. February 14: Popular Religion

1. Catherina Raudvere, "Popular Religion in the Viking Age," in Brink and Price, 235-243
2. Somerville, 69-84

Group 3

**Week 6: Power Structures**

16. February 17: Warriors and their Weapons

1. Anne Pedersen, "Viking Weaponry," in Brink and Price, eds., 204-211
2. Somerville, 155-166, 173-186, 349-356, and 509 (verses 1 and 38)

Group 3

17. February 19: Jarls, Chiefs, and Kings

1. Fitzhugh and Ward, 72-85
2. Canvas: Elise Roesdahl, *The Vikings*, 64-77

Group 2

18. February 21: Plunder: Raiders or Traders, or both?

1. Fitzhugh and Ward, 99-102
2. Gareth Williams, "Raiding and Warfare," in Brink and Price, eds., 193-204
3. Somerville, 334-337

**DUE: Research Topic: Initial Topic and Justification**

**Week 7: Conversion**

22. February 24: Conversion, pt 1

1. Skim: Fitzhugh and Ward, 60-71, mostly for images
2. Stefan Brink, "Christianisation and the Emergence of the Early Church in Scandinavia," in Brink and Price, eds., p. 621-628
3. Anne-Sofie Graslund, "The Material Culture of the Christianisations," in Brink and Price, eds., p. 639-644
4. Somerville, 367-398

Group 1

23. February 26: Conversion, pt. 2

1. Somerville, 398-417
2. Canvas: *Njal's Saga*, tr. Magnusson and Pálsson, chaps. 100-105 (p. 216-226)

February 28

**MIDTERM EXAM**

**DUE: Midterm in-class and take-home**

March 2, March 4, March 6: **NO CLASS**

**SPRING BREAK**

**Week 8: Ships, Trade and Plunder**

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| 19. March 9:<br>Viking Ships                         | 1. Fitzhugh and Ward, 86-97<br>2. Jan Bill, "Viking Ships and the Sea," in Brink and Price, eds., 170-180<br>3. Somerville, 187-201  | Group 2 |
| 20. March 11:<br>Trading<br>Communities<br>and Towns | 1. Søren Michael Sindbæk, "Local and Long-Distance Exchange," in Brink and Price, eds., 150-158<br>2. Svein H. Gullbekk, "Coinage and Monetary Economies," in Brink and Price, eds., 159-169<br>3. Dagfinn Skre, "The Development of Urbanism in Scandinavia," in Brink and Price, eds., 83-93<br>4. Somerville, 332-334 | Group 1 |
| 21. March 13:<br>State Formation                     | 1. Claus Krag, "The Creation of Norway," in Brink and Price, eds., 645-651<br>2. Else Roesdahl, "The Emergence of Denmark and the Reign of Harald Bluetooth," in Brink and Price, eds., 652-664<br>3. Niels Lund, "Cnut the Great and his Empire," in Brink and Price, eds., 665-667<br>4. Somerville, 419-429           | Group 3 |

**Week 9: Early Viking Raids in Britain**

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| 25. March 16:<br>Early Raids and<br>Settlement         | 1. Fitzhugh and Ward, 127-141<br>2. Julian D. Richards, "Viking Settlement in England," in Brink and Price, eds., 368-374<br>3. Dawn M. Hadley, "The Creation of the Danelaw," in Brink and Price, eds., 375-378<br>4. Richard Hall, "York," in Brink and Price, eds., 379-384<br>5. Somerville, 203-211<br>6. (Skim) Gillian Fellows-Jensen, "Scandinavian Place Names in the British Isles," in Brink and Price, 391-400 | <b>DUE: Research Project: Annotated Bibliography</b> |
| 26. March 18:<br>Alfred Strikes<br>Back                | 1. Somerville, 245-256   |  |
| 27. March 20:<br>Vikings in<br>Ireland and<br>Scotland | 1. Fitzhugh and Ward, 143-145, 146-153, 154-163<br>2. James H. Barrett, "The Norse in Scotland," in Brink and Price, eds., 411-427<br>3. Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "The Vikings and Ireland," in Brink and Price, eds., 428-433<br>4. Somerville, 211-224, 256-268  | Quiz (Canvas)  |



**Week 10: Vikings and Iceland**

28. March 30: The Settlement of Iceland

1. Fitzhugh and Ward, 164-174
2. Gísli Sigurðsson, "The North Atlantic Expansion," in Brink and Price, eds., 562-566
3. Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, "Iceland," in Brink and Price, 571-578
4. Somerville, 305-319

Group 1

29. April 1: Icelandic Law and Society

1. Fitzhugh and Ward, 175-185
2. Canvas: excerpts from Gragas
3. Canvas: *Njal's Saga*, tr. Magnusson and Pálsson, chaps. 138-145 (pp. 290-323)

Group 2

30. April 3: Feuding

1. Canvas: : *Njal's Saga*, tr. Magnusson and Pálsson, chaps. 35-40 (pp. 97-108)
2. Somerville, 356-365 (burning of Njal)
3. Guðrún Nordal, "The Sagas of the Icelanders," in Brink and Price, eds., 315-318
4. Begin reading *Egil's Saga*, intro and p. 1-50

Group 3

**Week 11: Case Study: Icelandic Saga**

31. April 6: Egil's Saga, part I

1. Optional: Fitzhugh and Ward, 186-187
2. *Egil's Saga*, pp. 51-100

Discussion in class

32. April 8: Egil's Saga, part II

1. *Egil's saga*, pp. 101-150

Discussion in class

33. April 10: Egil's Saga, Part III

1. *Egil's Saga*, pp. 151-205

Discussion in class

**Week 12: Vikings and Franks**

34. April 6: the Viking Raids

1. Fitzhugh and Price, 116-126
2. Johan Callmer, "Scandinavia and the Continent in the Viking Age," 439-452
3. Somerville, 224-240

35. April 8: The Siege of Paris and the Settlement of Normandy

1. Somerville, 240-242
2. Jean Renaud, "The Duchy of Normandy," in Brink and Price, eds., 453-457
3. Somerville, 268-274

Quiz (canvas)

36. April 10: **NO CLASS**     **SPRING HOLIDAY**

**Week 13: Greenland and Vinland**

37. April 13: Greenland
1. Fitzhugh and Ward, 17-25, 189-192, also 193-207? Also 304-317
  2. Gísli Sigurðsson, "The North Atlantic Expansion," in Brink and Price, eds., 566-567
  3. Jette Arneborg, "The Norse Settlements in Greenland," in Brink and Price, 588-597
  4. Somerville, 319-322

38. April 15: Vikings and North America
1. Fitzhugh and Ward, 208-231, 238-247
  2. Gísli Sigurðsson, "The North Atlantic Expansion," in Brink and Price, eds., 567-569
  3. Birgitta Wallace, "The Discovery of Vinland," in Brink and Price, 604-612
  3. Somerville, 322-330

39. April 17: The End of the Greenland Settlement
1. Fitzhugh and Ward, 270-279, 281-294, 327-339

**DUE: Research Project: Final Project**

**Week 14: the Rus and the East**

40. April 20: Vikings in East
1. Fitzhugh and Ward, 103-115
  2. Heiki Valk, "The Vikings and the Eastern Baltic," in Brink and Price, eds., 485-495
  3. Somerville 275-282

Group 1

41. April 22: Settling Rus, Vikings in Constantinople
1. Jonathan Shepard, "The Viking Rus and Byzantium," in Brink and Price, eds., 496-516
  2. Somerville, 282-304

Group 2

42. April 24: The End of the Viking Age?
1. Somerville, 451-470

Group 3

**Week 15: Impact and Representation**

43. April 27: Impact of the Vikings
1. Fitzhugh and Ward, 374-400

**DUE: Modern Moment**

44. April 29: Remembering the Vikings
1. 2. Somerville, 480-488, 498-507

May 4 (Monday) **Final Exam** (in-class and take-home)