

History 313: The Viking Age (Spring 2023)



Course Information:

History 313, Spring 2023 (CRN: 10275). Time: MWF 11:00-11:50. Room: MHRA 1204

Professor's Information:

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Graduate Assistant

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 12-1 PM; Fridays 9-11 AM; and by appointment.

Course Description

At the end of the 8th 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 a look at 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.

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*, 3rd edition, ed. A. Somerville and R.A. McDonald (Univ. of Toronto Press, 2019). ISBN: 9781487570477
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. Ebook: *The Viking World*, ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price (Routledge, 2012). UNCG has this as an ebook, so I did not require you to purchase it.

Course Requirements

Participation	boost to grade
Discussion Prompts, Quizzes, and Short Assignments	20%
Research Project	
Annotated Bibliography	5%
Research Project	25%
Midterm: in-class, plus take-home essay	25%
Final exam: in class, plus take-home essay	25%

Explanation of Assignments

1. Participation (Course/Department SLOs 2, 5)

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)

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. Take-Home Midterm Exam (Course/Department SLOs 1, 2, 4, 5)

For the midterm, students will write responses to 4-5 short questions based on the primary sources and secondary sources we have read to that point.

4. Take-Home Final Exam (Course/Department SLOs 1, 2, 4, 5)

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 complete a short research project. You have two options. The first is the traditional, essay-style option. For this option, you will select a saga from a list provided by me. You should read the saga, and then choose one analytical category (from a list also supplied by me) as a framework for a 6-8-page essay that analyzes how your saga treats that category. I also require you to locate at least one secondary source (not assigned for the class) pertinent either to the topic or to the analytical category and incorporate it into your essay. The second option is to produce a creative work, whether a piece of art, a bit of woodworking or metalworking, something brewed or cooked, a set of skaldic verses, or a written tale or excerpt in the style of the sagas. In the past, student creative projects have included creating a runestone, constructing shields, building a scale model of a ship or longhouse, brewing mead, writing skaldic verse, and so forth. The 'output' of the project will be a 5-minute video that demonstrates all aspects of your completed project and that discusses the challenges you encountered in researching and constructing it. In addition to the video, you should turn in a 1-2 page written summary of your process, along with a bibliography of 2-5 secondary sources that were pertinent to your research. If you are interested in the creative research project, you should be aware that some projects (e.g., brewing mead) take significant time; you must make your choice early in the semester so as to give yourself time to complete the project. I strongly recommend you contact me early if you are interested in this option. Also, I will require you to declare your intention as to which option (traditional or creative) you will pursue by a date about half-way through the semester; after this point, you will be required to pursue the traditional option.

Regardless of which option you choose, there are two deadlines associated with the project:

a. Justification and Annotated Bibliography (Course/Department SLOs 3)

You must submit a bibliography including the primary source (i.e., the saga you have selected, if you are doing the traditional option) and the secondary source(s) (both options) that you intend to use for your project. Along with the bibliographic list, you should write a one paragraph justification for your project that explains your choice of bibliographic items (sort of a rough draft for the 'argument').

b. Research Project (Course/Department SLOs 2, 3, 4)

As noted above, you will produce EITHER a 6-8-page essay investigating a specific theme/category within a specific saga, OR you will complete a creative project of an alternate type.

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-	

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?).

Week 1: Introduction

1. January 9: Course Intro
2. January 11: 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, eds., 304-310
 4. Anthony Faulkes, "Snorri Sturluson: His Life and Work," in Brink and Price, eds., 311-314
 5. Somerville and McDonald, 6-15
3. January 13: Popular (Mis-) Conceptions
 1. Fitzhugh and Ward, 365-373
 2. Watch: *Vinland Saga*, episode 1 (anime/manga):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eSKQ-vc9AWs&ab_channel=AnimeFree
 3. Watch: *the Saga of Bjorn* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MV5w262XvCU>)
 4. FYI: *Vikings* (History Channel), TV Series, 6 seasons, 2013-2020.
 5. Optional "fun": *the Vikings* (1958 film; dir. Richard Fleischer): many clips available for free on youtube

Week 2: Northern Europe Before the Viking Age

4. January 16: **NO CLASS** (MLK Jr. Day)
5. January 18: Francia, Britain, Ireland and the North Sea before the Vikings
That's right, no readings! (It's a miracle!)
6. January 20: Scandinavia Before the Viking Age
 1. Lotte Hedeager, "Scandinavia Before the Viking Age," in Brink and Price, eds., p. 11-22
 2. Fitzhugh and Ward, 27-30, 34-41
 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 23: the Farm
 1. Fitzhugh and Ward, 42-54
 2. Jan-Henrik Fallgren, "Farm and Village in the Viking Age," in Brink and Price, eds., 67-76
8. January 25: Free and Unfree: Social Status
 1. Stefan Brink, "Slavery in the Viking Age," in Brink and Price, eds., p. 49-56
 2. Somerville and McDonald, 17-28, 38-42, 337-342
9. January 27: Crafts and Poetry
 1. Annika Larsson, "Viking Age Textiles," in Brink and Price, eds., p. 181-185
 2. John Ljungvikist, "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 and McDonald, 120-121

Week 4: Gender and Magic

10. January 30: Gender Roles
 1. Audur Magnúsdóttir, "Women and Sexual Politics," in Brink and Price, eds., 40-48
 2. Somerville and McDonald, 85-90, 91-93, 96-111
11. February 1: Marriage, Divorce, and Sexuality
 - Somerville and McDonald, 111-120, 125-153
12. February 3: Sorcery and Magic
 1. Neil Price, "Sorcery and Circumpolar Traditions in Old Norse Beliefs," in Brink and Price, 244-248
 2. Fitzhugh and Ward, 70-71
 3. Canvas: *Njal's Saga*, tr. Magnusson and Pálsson, chaps.10-14 (p. 57-68)
 4. Somerville and McDonald, 121-125

Week 5: Norse Religion?

13. February 6: 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 and McDonald, 43-53, 58-69
14. February 8: "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
15. February 10: Popular Religion
 1. Catherina Raudvere, "Popular Religion in the Viking Age," in Brink and Price, 235-243
 2. Somerville and McDonald, 69-84

Week 6: Power Structures

16. February 13: Warriors and their Weapons
 1. Anne Pedersen, "Viking Weaponry," in Brink and Price, eds., 204-211
 2. Somerville and McDonald, 155-166, 173-186, 349-356, and 509 (verses 1 and 38)

17. February 15: Jarls, Chiefs, and Kings
1. Fitzhugh and Ward, 72-85
 2. Canvas: Elise Roesdahl, *The Vikings*, 64-77
18. February 17: 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 and McDonald, 334-337

Due: Research Topic: Choice of Traditional or Creative Option

Week 7: States and Conversion

19. February 20: State Formation
1. Claus Krag, "The Creation of Norway," in Brink and Price, eds., 645-651
 2. Else Roesdahl, "The Emergence of Denmark and the Reign of Harald Bluetooth," in Brink and Price, eds., 652-664
 3. Niels Lund, "Cnut the Great and his Empire," in Brink and Price, eds., 665-667
 4. Somerville and McDonald, 419-429
20. February 22: 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 and McDonald, 367-398
21. February 24: Conversion, pt. 2
1. Somerville and McDonald, 398-417
 2. Canvas: *Njal's Saga*, tr. Magnusson and Pálsson, chaps. 100-105 (p. 216-226)

Week 8: Ships and Trade

22. February 27: Viking Ships
1. Fitzhugh and Ward, 86-97
 2. Jan Bill, "Viking Ships and the Sea," in Brink and Price, eds., 170-180
 3. Somerville and McDonald, 187-201
23. March 1: Trading Communities and Towns
1. Søren Michael Sindbæk, "Local and Long-Distance Exchange," in Brink and Price, eds., 150-158
 2. Svein H. Gullbekk, "Coinage and Monetary Economies," in Brink and Price, eds., 159-169
 3. Dagfinn Skre, "The Development of Urbanism in Scandinavia," in Brink and Price, eds., 83-93
 4. Somerville and McDonald, 332-334
24. March 3: TBD

DUE: MIDTERM EXAM by 12:00 midnight [to be submitted to canvas]

Week 9: SPRING BREAK

March 4: No class

March 6: No class

March 8: No class

Week 10: The Vikings in Britain

25. March 13: Early Raids and Settlement

1. Fitzhugh and Ward, 127-141
2. Julian D. Richards, "Viking Settlement in England," in Brink and Price, eds., 368-374
3. Dawn M. Hadley, "The Creation of the Danelaw," in Brink and Price, eds., 375-378
4. Richard Hall, "York," in Brink and Price, eds., 379-384
5. Somerville and McDonald, 203-211
6. (Skim) Gillian Fellows-Jensen, "Scandinavian Place Names in the British Isles," in Brink and Price, 391-400

26. March 15: Resistance and Settlement

1. Somerville and McDonald, 245-256

27. March 17: Vikings in Ireland and Scotland

1. Fitzhugh and Ward, 143-145, 146-153, 154-163
2. James H. Barrett, "The Norse in Scotland," in Brink and Price, eds., 411-427
3. Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "The Vikings and Ireland," in Brink and Price, eds., 428-433
4. Somerville and McDonald, 211-224, 256-268

DUE: Research Project: Justification and Annotated Bibliography

Week 11: Vikings and Iceland

28. March 20: 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 and McDonald, 305-319

29. March 22: 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)

30. March 24: Feuding

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

Week 12: Vikings and Franks

31. March 27: the Viking Raids

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

32. March 29: The Siege of Paris and the Settlement of Normandy

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

3. Somerville and McDonald, 268-274

33. March 31: Catch-Up

Week 13: Case Study: Egil's Saga

34. April 3: Egil's Saga, part I

1. Optional: Fitzhugh and Ward, 186-187
2. *Egil's Saga*, pp. 1-70

35. April 5: Egil's Saga, part II

1. *Egil's saga*, pp. 71-140

36. April 7: **NO CLASS**. Spring Holiday

Week 14: Egil's Saga, and the Settlement of Greenland and Vinland

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

1. *Egil's Saga*, pp. 141-205

38. April 12: Greenland

1. Fitzhugh and Ward, 189-192, 281-294, 304-317, 327-339
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 and McDonald, 319-322

39. April 14: Vikings and North America

1. Fitzhugh and Ward, 193-207, 208-231, 238-247, 270-279
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 and McDonald, 322-330

Week 15: Rus, and Catch-Up

40. April 17: The Vikings in the East, Settling Rus, and Byzantium

1. Fitzhugh and Ward, 103-115
2. Heiki Valk, "The Vikings and the Eastern Baltic," in Brink and Price, eds., 485-495
3. Jonathan Shepard, "The Viking Rus and Byzantium," in Brink and Price, eds., 496-516
4. Somerville and McDonald 275-304

41. April 19: TBD

DUE: Research Project: Final Project

42. April 21: TBD

Week 16: Impact and Representation

43. April 24: Impact of the Vikings

1. Fitzhugh and Ward, 374-400

44. April 26: Remembering the Vikings

1. Somerville and McDonald, 480-488, 498-507

Week 17

May 3 (Wednesday) **Final Exam** due at 8:00 AM (to be submitted to canvas)

COURSE POLICIES

Academic Integrity Policy

Students are expected abide by UNCG's [Academic Integrity Policy](#). Plagiarism or cheating will result in major penalties, and will be reported to the OSSR. In some cases, plagiarism or cheating can result in suspension or expulsion. Note that use of chatbot software to 'write' papers is a breach of the academic integrity policy.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is expected at all class meetings. Missing more than 2 lectures or 1 discussion section without prior permission will result in a one-point deduction from the final grade average for each subsequent absence.

Late Work Policy

Assignments are due on the date and at the time listed on the syllabus; if a crisis (such as illness) arises, it is your responsibility to contact me. If you do not contact me, the work (when eventually received) will be penalized, usually at the rate of 1/3 of a letter grade per day. Major assignments for the class **MUST** be completed in order to receive a passing grade; this includes the exams, any papers, and anything else specifically labelled as such.

Additional Policies

1. In case later consultation should prove necessary, students should keep copies of all graded assignments until the end of the semester (at least).
 2. All formal course requirements must be completed to receive a grade for the class.
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CANVAS Site

All materials for the course (except for the required books) will be posted on the Canvas site for the course. This is particularly important for announcements and some course readings. It is a good idea to check the Canvas site regularly. You can get to Canvas from the UNCG homepage.

IMPORTANT UNCG RESOURCES [with thanks to Dr. Rupert]

We are very fortunate that UNCG has a wide array of excellent services to support students at every level. These are your go-to experts for specific problems and issues. While many standard university procedures have been modified in these pandemic times, and some offices may have restricted in-person visiting hours, all are fully open and available to help. The links will take you directly to their updated Websites.

[Shield our Spartans](#): it is important that you regularly review UNCG's Covid-19 updates and strictly follow all required procedures. Show that you care about our community!

[History Department](#): Have you considered majoring or minoring in history? It's easier than you think! Browse our [Website](#) and [Facebook page](#) and feel free to reach out to any professor to discuss how history might fit into your study plans.

[Office of Accessibility Resources and Services](#) (OARS): The first stop for students who need accommodations for a documented disability. Make sure to send the required paperwork to your professor the first week of classes. No accommodations can be made without this completed paperwork.

[Jackson Library](#): all historians (and students in general!) should get to know the library. You should be aware of the [main catalog](#), the [databases](#), and the [inter-library loan office](#).

[Information Technology Services](#) (ITS): Your source for all tech issues, including computer malfunctions, issues with Canvas, Internet connectivity, etc. They know far more about all this than we do!

[Student Health Services](#): Provides free, confidential support for a variety of mental and physical health issues. Take good care of your body and your mind! Both are vital in these stressful times.

[Students First Office](#): This is your one-stop resource for a variety of support services to help ensure your academic success.

[Dean of Students](#): Provides information, guidelines, and practical information to support students in a wide range of situations, including crises and emergencies.

[Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#): This office has information about expectations for student conduct, academic integrity, appeal procedures, due process, and more.

[The Writing Center](#): Provides useful resources for all types of writing assignments, no matter how large or small. You can schedule a meeting to discuss a specific assignment and also access a wide variety of information and tips to strengthen your writing.
