

Syllabus Germanic Mythology
470:383
German House 102
Fall 2013 (11:30-12:50)

Required texts, available at the Rutgers Book Store:

1. Poems of the Vikings. Trans. Patricia Terry. Bobbs-Merrill Co.
2. Snorri Sturluson, The Prose Edda. Tales from Norse Mythology. Trans. Jean I. Young. U of California Press
3. Njal's Saga. Penguin Classics
4. Davidsson, H. R. Ellis, Gods and Myths of Northern Europe. Pelican

Departmental Attendance Policy

All students must attend regularly and arrive prepared. Those who miss more than two class sessions without a compelling excuse (a doctor's or college dean's note, for instance) should expect a one-step reduction in the course grade (i.e. an A becomes a B+, a B+ becomes a B). Three late arrivals count as one absence. Note: It is the responsibility of students who have been absent (for any reason) to find out what they have missed and obtain materials that may have been handed out.

There will be numerous handouts for which the department charges \$0.05 per page as well as online course materials.

Please note that our course will have its own website on <https://sakai.rutgers.edu/portal>. You can log on using your Net ID and password. If the course does not appear as one of your tabs, please search and add it or contact me and I will grant you access. Some of the reading will be available via Sakai and you are required to print and bring those readings to class on the scheduled days as part of your class participation grade. Please check Sakai frequently for updates, announcements, and resources. You can also communicate with your classmates via Sakai in the Chat Room or pose questions in the ForuT. Online materials may also be available through library online reserves. Please go to http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/lib_servs/course_reserves.shtml and log in using your Net ID and password. You can then search by Instructor, Course Number, or Course Name.

- Sept. 5 Introduction
1. Prominent Deities known as the Aesir
 Odin (Othin)
 Thor

Freyr/Freyja, Njörðr known as the Vanir -
Loki

and

2. Sources

- M. Sept. 9 Tacitus (56-120), Roman Historian on the Germanic tribes
Poetic Edda, a collection of mythological and heroic poems
Prose Edda by Snorri Sturluson (d. 1241)
Skaldic Poetry composed by court poets
Rune stones (runes – Germanic alphabet)
Sagas – prose works about the prehistoric era to the medieval era
see *Heimskringla*, various *Sagas of the Icelanders* as well
as *Sagas of Olden Times (fornaldar sögur)*
Saxo Grammaticus, *The History of the Danes*
- Th. Sept. 12 Odin (German Wotan), ruler of the pantheon, residence at Valhalla
functions: creation of the universe
god of poetry and magic
of death
of war
- M. Sept. 16 Ragnarök, “The Fate of the Gods,” The Destruction of the Universe and
Its Rebirth
The Signs of Doom
“Baldr’s Dreams” (Poem and account in the *Prose Edda*)
- Th. Sept. 19 Human Sacrifice
“Bog Bodies Rediscovered,” *Archeology* May/June 2010, 22-29.
See also the Grauballe Man and the Lindow Man.
Tacitus, *De Germania*
- M. Sept. 23 Ship Burials
three ships found in Nydam Bog, Denmark, formerly a sacred lake
items preserved from 200-450 A.D.
Nydam Ship, the only ship intact, weighed 3 tons and had 15 pair
of oars
- Th. Sept. 26 The Danger of the *Living Dead*.
The Defense of the Tomb
Revenge for Injustice Suffered or Imagined
See relevant chapters in the *Saga of Grettir the Strong*
- M. Sept. 30 Review
- Th. Oct. 3 Hourly

- M. Oct. 7 Berserks
Duels, a legal means to obtain justice
- Th. Oct. 10 Valcyries/Walküren
Function
Love Affairs
- M. Oct. 14 Siegfried/Sigurd
Odinic Heroes
See Saxo Grammaticus
Poetic Edda and brief descriptions in the *Prose Edda*
The Saga of the Völsungs
- Th. Oct. 17 Brünhilde/Brynhild
M. Oct. 21 in the Eddas
Th. Oct. 24 *Nibelungenlied*
- M. Oct. 28 The Theme of Treachery
Historical Background
Migration Period, German Völkerwanderung
- Th. Oct. 31 Attila the Hun (also known as Atli in Scandinavia and Etzel in Germany)
- M. Nov. 4 Thor, the Defender of Mankind
Th. 7 Myths
The Battle against the Midgardssnake
Poems in the Edda
- M. Nov. 11 The Cult of Thor
- Th. 14 Cult Competition with Odin
The Eddic poem, the Song of Harbard)
- M. 18 Cult of the Freyr, Freyja, Baldr, known as the Vanir
Fertility deities
Adam of Bremen's Description of the Temple in Uppsala,
Sweden
- Th. 21 Freyr in the Sagas
- M. 25 Freyr in love, alas with a giantess
Eddic Poem, Skirnismal, "The Sayings of Skirnir," a servant or
companion of Freyr
- Tuesday 26 Freyr and gold
- Vacation Nov. 28-30

- Dec. 2 Loki
 Bloodbrotherhood with Odin
 Loki's Offspring
 Poem, "Lokasenna," a poem of insults and invective
- 5 Loki's leadership at Ragnarök, the collapse of the world
- 9 Review
- Dec. 23 Final Examination: Monday, Dec/ 23, 8:00-11:00