

Mythology of the VIKING AGE
01-470:383
Index #:
cross listed with
Comparative Literature 01-195-395-01
Fall 2010

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732-932-7201

Office Hours: Monday 10:15-11:15 and by appointment

Our class, 01:470:383 meets TTh5 (2:50-4:10) Scott Hall 105

Required texts, available at the Rutgers Book Store:

1. Poems of the Vikings.* Trans. Patricia Terry. Bobbs-Merrill Co.
SBN: 0024198102 | ISBN-13: 9780024198105
also available: trans. Larrington, Carolyn, Oxford University Press
ISBN: 0192823833 | ISBN-13: 9780192823830

2. Snorri Sturluson, The Prose Edda. Tales from Norse Mythology. Trans. Jean I. Young. U of California Press

e-book download - pdfcatch.net/ebook/the+prose+edda/

ISBN: 0140136274 | ISBN-13: 9780140136272

also as free e-book

3. Njal's Saga. Penguin Classics
ISBN: 0140447695 | ISBN-13: 9780140447699

4. Davidsson, H. R. Ellis, Gods and Myths of Northern Europe. Pelican
ISBN: 0140136274 | ISBN-13: 9780140136272

There will be numerous handouts for which the department charges \$0.05 per page

Course Description: Myths and religious practices of the migration period and the age of the Vikings. Sources: the Eddas, Christian and pre-Christian documents and texts, archaeological finds, place names, modern folkloristic beliefs.

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.

. 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 Forum. 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.

. Plagiarism

Plagiarism is an extremely serious matter, and can lead to a student's failing the course and being referred to his or her dean for disciplinary action. When referring to ideas other than your own, always acknowledge your sources clearly and completely, whether you are quoting or paraphrasing. Please see the University's policies on academic integrity at <http://teachx.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html>, and discuss with your instructor any questions you may have about this and related issues.

. Final Exam date, time & location: December 23, 12:00-3:00, Scott Hall 105

Your final grade will be a composite of the grades in the hourly (20%), paper (30%), final examination (20%) and your participation in class discussions (30%).

A=90-100%; B+=85-89; B=80-84; C+=75-79; C=70-74; D=65-69; F=64 and below

Learning Goals:

- a. Communicate complex ideas effectively, in standard written English, to a general audience.
- b. Communicate effectively in modes appropriate to a discipline or area of inquiry.
- c. Evaluate and critically assess sources and use the conventions of attribution and citation correctly.
- d. Analyze and synthesize information and ideas from multiple sources to generate new insights.
- e. Examine critically philosophical and other theoretical issues concerning the nature of reality, human experience, knowledge, value, and/or cultural production.

- f. Analyze arts and/or literatures in themselves and in relation to specific histories, values, languages, cultures, and technologies.
- g. Understand the nature of human languages and their speakers.
- h. Engage critically in the process of creative expression

Disability Support Services

Students who may be requesting accommodations due to disabilities are encouraged to familiarize themselves with procedures and policies regarding disability support services at the following website: <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/>. It is recommended that students seeking accommodations begin filing paperwork as soon as possible as the documentation review process may take up to 30 business days. Students are encouraged to speak with teachers about these issues at the beginning of the term. All such conversations will be kept strictly confidential.

Class discussions and assignments for the semester

Please note that the dates might shift. You might be particularly interested in a topic, which we then might expand into the next session.

Th. Sept. 2. Introduction to pagan beliefs and principal deities

T. 7. The testimony of written sources and of archeology
Reading: Davidson: "Introduction: The Myth-Makers, The Sources of our Knowledge"

Th. 9.) Divinities as reflection of society:

T. 14.) Reading: Davidson: "Introduction: New Light on the Myths"
chapter 2: "The Gods of Battle"

a. Gods of War: Odin, Thor, Freyja

b. Gods of Peace: Baldr, Freyr and Freyja

c. Deities of both Peace and War

Th.. 16. The act and nature of creation

Reading: The Prose Edda: "Prologue"

a. Odin

b. Loki, the god of mischief

T. 21. The origin of life

Prose Edda: pp. 31-47

the creation of the earth, the world of the gods and giants, related by blood, yet hostile

Th. 23. the struggle of the gods against death and the destruction of the universe, known as the *Doom of the Gods* or *Ragnarök*

Prose Edda: p. 51 (Paragraph on Baldr),

pp. 86-92 – Baldr’s death and Ragnarök

- T. 28.) the acceptance of death and destruction
- Th. 30.) Handouts
Prose Edda: pp. 55-57 (Loki’s children), pp. 63-65
“Baldr’s Dreams”
- a. the Realm(s) of Death: Valhalla, Hel
 - b. boat burials and cremations
- T. Oct. 5. The worship of gods
Davidson: “The Worship of the War God,” pp.69-72
“The Temples of Thor,” “The Hammer of Thor,” pp. 75-84
“The Lay of Thrym”
Excerpts from sagas
Adam of Bremen, “*History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*,”
Bk. 4, chs. 26-27, on Temple at Uppsala, Sweden
- Which god do I worship on land and which on sea?
- Th. 7. “The Lay of Hymir”: Thor acquires a giant kettle to brew mead for the gods
- Sacrifice
- T. 12. Odin, in disguise, as a Wanderer (or how not to treat a deity on earth)
“The Lay of Grimnir,”
Excerpts from *Saga of the Volsungs*
Davidson: “Odin as a Shaman,” “The Realm of Odin,” pp. 141-153
- shamanism in the creation of culture:
Odin’s acquisition of
- a. poetry
 - b. a son to avenge his death
- Th. 14.) Learning and knowledge in the world of the gods and giants.
- T. 19.) Reading and discussion of Poems of Cultic Knowledge or Wisdom Poems:
The Sybil’s Prophecy,” “The Lay of Vafthrudnir”
- Th. 21.) The significance and acquisition of learning among men
- T. 26.) Magic: Runes
Spells
“Sayings of the High one,” pp. 34-38
Handouts
- Th. 28. Review

- T. Nov. 2. **Hourly**
- Th. 4. Benevolent (tutelary) spirits of the land
Handouts
- T. 9. Magic in battle and love
Fetters: The psychology of fear
Magic swords
Sorceress: Queen of Norway, Gunnhild
Njals saga: chs. 6-8
Harald's Saga the Fairhaired, ch. 32
- Th. 11. Valcyries, goddesses of battle, and Werewolves
Excerpts from the Saga of the Volsungs
The reworking of the myth in Thomas Mann (excerpts)
- T. 16. Giants as abductors of beautiful women
Prose Edda: Freyja and the Building of Valhalla, pp. 66-68
The abduction of the goddess Idunn, pp. 97, last parag., - 99
Handouts
- Th. 18. Giantesses as lovers of Heroes
"Skirnir's Journey"
Handouts
- T. 23. Heroes as descendants of love affairs with giantesses
Odin and the giantess Rindr (handout)
- T. 30. Giants as educators
Papers due
- Th. Dec. 2. Conversion to Christianity
Discussion of *Njal's Saga*
Handouts
- T. 7. See above
- Th. 9. Review

Final Examination: December 23, 2010, 12:00-3:00 at Scott Hall 105