

The Viking World
Christian Raffensperger
History 301-2W
Spring Semester – 2010
MWF 1:50–2:50 P.M.
Hollenbeck 313

The Vikings occupy an important place in European, and indeed, Eurasian history. From their first recorded attack on Lindisfarne in 793, the Vikings roamed the Baltic and North Seas, continental Europe, the Mediterranean, the eastern European river systems, and even the Caspian and Black Seas. In their travels they met peoples of various faiths and origins, and traded with and raided them all equally. This course will explore the initial outburst of Viking expansion beginning in the late eighth century, look at the way Vikings lived at home and abroad, and will also examine the effect Vikings had on the various places they visited. We will also address the place of women in Viking society and study the Icelandic sagas that have survived to this day as a view to what they can tell us about Viking life and practices. The course will conclude with the creation of Scandinavian kingdoms and empires, such as those of King Cnut and Harald Hardrada.

Writing Intensive

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Assignments and Deadlines

The format for this class is lecture and discussion both, and thus attendance and participation are crucial requirements. The main focus of the course will be a 20 page research paper, as well as the additional assignments associated with the paper, such as an annotated bibliography, outline, and first draft. The paper will be on a topic of your own choosing, and must be approved by the instructor. There will also be a series of six assignments (in a variety of formats ranging from pop quizzes to short papers) assigned over the course of the semester as well as two exams to demonstrate a synthesis of the knowledge learned in the course.

The grades will be weighted as follows:

- Attendance: 5%
- Participation: 5%
- Assignments: 30%
- Exam 1: 10%
- Exam 2: 10%
- Paper: 40%
- Topic Paragraph – 2%
- Annotated Bibliography (20 items) – 5%
- Outline – 3%

First Draft – 10%
Final Paper – 20%

Required Books

John Haywood. *The Penguin Historical Atlas of the Vikings*. (hereafter Haywood)

Else Roesdahl. *The Vikings*. (hereafter Roesdahl)

The Sagas of the Icelanders.

Schedule of Meetings and Assignments

Week 1 (January 11, 13, 15): Life in pre-Viking Scandinavia

(Roesdahl, 3–51, 64–77; Haywood, 22–25, 36)

Introduction to the course; Scandinavian geography and climate; Social structure and political consolidation

*Week 2 (January 20, 22, **No class January 18**): Pagan Scandinavia*

(Hollander: Rigsthula, Grimnismal [Moodle]; Haywood, 26–27; Roesdahl, 52–63, 147–58)

The gods of the Northmen and their impact on daily life; Creation of social order

Week 3 (January 25, 27, 29): The First Attacks

(Roesdahl, 64–146, 187–269; Haywood, 46–55, 58–59)

Lindisfarne; Tactics and technology; Impact of Viking raids on the settled population of Europe; Scope of Viking Attacks

Discussion: Were the Viking attacks inevitable? Why did the Vikings attack?

Week 4 (February 1, 3, 5): Viking England

(Haywood, 62–63, 66–71, 78–79; Roesdahl 233–50)

Target of raids; Target of Settlement; Creation of the Danelaw; A British Navy

Discussion: What was the actual impact on day-to-day life in Europe of the Viking attacks?

Week 5 (February 8, 10, 12): Viking Ireland, Scotland, and the Isles

(Roesdahl, 210–32, 270–71; Haywood, 72–77)

The wealth of Ireland; The creation of Dublin; Creating kingdoms in the North Sea

Discussion: Vikings as creators of the modern U.K.

*Week 6 (February 15, 17, 19): Vikings on the Continent (**Paper Topic Due by Friday, 10/5**)*

(Roesdahl, 195–209; Haywood, 60–61, 64–65, 80–83; Einhard and Notker on Charlemagne 68, 71–71, 153, 157–59, 167–69 [Moodle])

Vikings vs. Charlemagne; Rollo of Normandy; The development of a continental army

Discussion: How did Vikings change the progress of European history?

Week 7 (February 22, 24, 26): The Settlement of Iceland (Annotated Bibliography 1 [5 items] due by Friday)

(Byock, 63–98, 170–84; Haywood, 94–95; Roesdahl, 262–69)

Consolidation of power in Norway; A land without a king; The Literati of the Viking world

Discussion: Impact of the settlement of Iceland on the Viking Age

Week 8 (March 1, 3, 5): Vikings in the New World (Exam 1 – March 5) (Annotated Bibliography 2 [5 items] due by Friday)

(Haywood, 86–89, 96–99; The Vinland Sagas, 626–76; Roesdahl, 262–64, 271–76 [optional])

The discovery and settlement of Greenland; The discovery of Vinland; The controversy over Vinland; The end of Scandinavians in the New World

Discussion: Impact of the discovery of Vinland and Greenland by the Vikings

Week 9 (March 15, 17, 19): Viking Sagas (Annotated Bibliography 3 [5 items] due by Friday)

(Haywood, 94–95; Egil’s Saga; Introduction [optional])

Sources of the Sagas; Egil’s travels, and relationship with authority and with family; Role of Christianity in the saga

Discussion: The morality of Egil

Week 10 (March 22, 24, 26): The Viking Move East (Annotated Bibliography 4 [5 items] due by Friday)

(Roesdahl, 277–94; Gwyn Jones, *A History of the Vikings* 241–68 [Moodle]; Haywood, 100–109)

Traditional raiding in the Eastern Baltic; The routes to Constantinople and Baghdad; The importance of Gotland

Discussion: Consequences of the move east

Week 11 (March 29, 31, No Class April 2): Problems and Problem-Solving in the Viking World (Paper Outline Due by Wednesday, 3/31)

(R. I. Page. *Chronicles of the Vikings* 173–81 [Moodle]; Jesse Byock *Viking Age Iceland*, 99–117, 233–51 [Moodle])

Violence, blood feud, and their consequences; Outlawry; Wergeld; Slavery

Discussion: The Scandinavian justice system

Week 12 (April 5, 7, 9): Christianization and Conversion

(Birgit and Peter Sawyer. *Medieval Scandinavia*, 100–28 [Moodle]; Roesdahl, 158–67; Haywood, 134–35)

The first Christian missionaries; The Christianization of Norway; The Christianization of Iceland

Discussion: Impact of the Christianization of Scandinavia

Week 13 (April 12, 14, 16): Viking Women (Paper First Draft Due by Monday, 11/12)

(Roesdahl, 59–61; *Medieval Scandinavia* 188–202 [Moodle])

The role of women in Viking society; Women as displayed in the sagas, particularly Egil's saga

Discussion: Were women accurately depicted?

Week 14 (April 19, 21, 23): The End of the Viking Age I: The Empire of Cnut (Haywood, 120–23; Magnus Magnusson. *Vikings!* 248–80 [Moodle])

The Consolidation of Kingdoms; The Empire of Cnut

Discussion: 1066 as the end of the Viking Age

Week 15 (April 26, 28, 30): The End of the Viking Age II: 1066

(Haywood, 124–27; Magnus Magnusson. *Vikings!* 281–313 [Moodle])

Harald Hardrada and the events of 1066 in the Viking World

Second Exam – Monday May 3 in class.

Final Paper due – Friday, May 7 by 5:00 P.M. in my box in the History and Philosophy Office in Hollenbeck Hall (by email is acceptable)

For More Information:

This list below is a variety of books that can give you more information on our topics. However, not all of them are in the library. If you are particularly interested in a book, you can use OhioLink or Interlibrary loan to get it, but be sure to request it at least one month before you need it if you are using ILL. You should also use the JSTOR database for relevant articles on the Viking world, of which there are many.

A. W. Brøgger and Haakon Shetelig, *The Viking Ships: Their Ancestry and Evolution* (London: 1971).

Jesse L. Byock, *Medieval Iceland: Society, Sagas and Power*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988)

Eric Christiansen, *The Norsemen in the Viking Age*. (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2001)

Kelly DeVries, *The Norwegian Invasion of England in 1066*. (Rochester, N.Y.: Boydell Press, 1999)

Thomas A DuBois, *Nordic Religions in the Viking Age*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999)

William W. Fitzhugh and Elisabeth I. Ward (eds.), *Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga*. (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000)

- James Graham-Campbell and Colleen E. Batey, *Vikings in Scotland: An Archeological Survey*. (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1998)
- James Graham-Campbell (ed), *Cultural Atlas of the Viking World* (Contributions by Colleen Batey, Helen Clarke, R.I. Page, and Neil S. Price) (New York: Facts on File, 1994)
- L. M. Hollander, trans., *Heimskringla: History of the Kings of Norway* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964)
- J. Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age* (Woodbridge: Suffolk, 1991).
- Jenny Jochens, *Women in Old Norse Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).
- Gwyn Jones, *History of the Vikings*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984)
- Ole Klindt-Jensen, *A History of Scandinavian Archaeology* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975).
- John Lindow, *Norse Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Heroes, Rituals, and Beliefs*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002)
- H.R. Loyn, *The Vikings in Britain*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997)
- Mark Redknap, *Vikings in Wales: An Archaeological Quest*. (Cardiff: National Museum and Gallery of Wales, 2000)
- Julian D. Richards, *Viking Age England*. (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2000)
- Saga of the Volsungs: The Norse Epic of Sigurd the Dragonslayer*. Introduced and translated by Jesse L. Byock. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990)
- Peter Sawyer, ed., *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Vikings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
- P.H. Sawyer, *The Age of the Vikings*. (London: Edward Arnold, 1971)
- P.H. Sawyer, *Kings and Vikings*. (New York: Methuen, 1982)
- Kristen A. Seaver, *The Frozen Echo: Greenland and the Exploration of North America, ca. A.D. 1000–1500*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996)
- Rudolf Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*. (Rochester, N.Y.: D. S. Brewer, 1993)
- Jacqueline Simpson, *Everyday Life in the Viking Age*. (New York: Putnam, 1967)
- Frank Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971)
- E. O. Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North* (London, 1964)
- Ian W. Walker, *Harold, The Last Anglo-Saxon King*. (Gloucestershire, Sutton, 1997)

David M. Wilson and Ole Klindt-Jensen, *Viking Art* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980).

Missed Examinations, Papers, and Class Sessions

A good rule of thumb is do not miss anything. However, if you are ill or have a conflict and cannot make a class, notify me in advance or as soon after the class as is possible. *Do not miss examinations!* If you have a conflict, notify me a minimum of one week in advance and we can schedule an exam as close to the normal time as possible. If you miss an examination for reasons that are not discussed with me ahead of time or are not catastrophic you will receive a zero, which is much worse than an F in your overall grade. Late papers are accepted, but the grade will drop one full grade when turned in after class the day it is due. For each additional day thereafter (weekend day or weekday) that it is late, it will drop a fraction of a grade, for example—an A paper handed in after class will be a B paper, handed in the next day will be a B- paper, the next day a C+ paper. Papers will not be accepted after one week from the due date.

Attendance Policy

As part of your grade for this class, and to get the most out of the class, you are required to attend on a regular basis. Attendance in this class is worth 5% of your grade, and attendance will be taken on a regular basis. If you are going to miss class, let me know in advance. If you accumulate 5 absences over the course of the semester, you will receive a grade of F for your attendance. If you miss 10 or more classes over the course of the semester you will receive a grade of zero for your attendance, much worse than an F when calculating your final grade. You are solely responsible for signing the attendance sheet, or notifying me of your absence, as proof of your presence in class.

Special Needs

Wittenberg University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. However, students are responsible for registering with the Academic Services Office, 203 Recitation Hall. If you are eligible for course accommodation due to a disability, please provide me with your self-identification letter from the Academic Services Office and arrange to talk with me about your learning needs as soon as possible. Early identification at the start of the term is essential to ensure timely provision of services. If you have questions about services for students with disabilities, please contact Vancenja Rutherford, assistant provost for academic services, 203 Recitation Hall, extension 7924.

Weather-Related Concerns

Whenever weather becomes a problem, I shall do my best to adhere to the university guidelines. If the university cancels classes, there will be no class. If the university has not cancelled class, but I am unable or unwilling to risk traveling, I will do my best to post a notice to this effect on Moodle as early as possible. I will do my best not to cancel class if at all possible.

If there is an exam scheduled or a deadline for a written assignment on a day when class is cancelled, you may assume that the exam or assignment will be due on the following class session.

Academic Honesty

Students in this course are expected to uphold the standards of Wittenberg's Code of Academic Integrity. At its most basic level, this means that you will not turn in someone else's writing as your own, quote from a source without proper acknowledgment, or provide a classmate with inappropriate help. You will be asked to submit papers and exams with the following statement followed by your signature: "I affirm that my work upholds the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity at Wittenberg, and that I have neither given nor received any unauthorized assistance." Sanctions for violating these rules range from receiving no credit for a particular assignment to failing the course for a significant act of academic dishonesty. If you are in doubt about any of these rules, please talk to me before submitting your work.