

Assigned texts:

The following texts, or a substantial portion of them, are required reading for the course:

- *primary sources*
 - Egil's Saga*, tr. Christine Fell & John Lucas (1975) [coursepacket]
 - The Vinland Sagas*, tr. Keneva Kunz (1997)
 - Angus A Somerville & R Andrew McDonald, *The Viking Age: A Reader* (2010)
- *secondary literature*
 - Else Roesdahl, *The Vikings*, rev. edn. (1998)
 - Thomas A. DuBois, *Nordic Religions in the Viking Age* (1999)
 - Jesse L. Byock, *Viking Age Iceland* (2001)
- *writing aid*
 - Gordon Harvey, *Writing with Sources: A Guide for Students*, 2nd edn (2008)

These books are available (with one exception, noted below) through a local, independent, not-for-profit bookseller: **Buffalo Street Books** (607 273-5055 ext. 4, <BuffaloStreetBooks@hotmail.com>, in the Dewitt Mall at 215 N Cayuga Street). They are not available at the Cornell Store. **Books bought through Buffalo Street Books are tax-free** and, if ordered in advance, will be **delivered free to class** on 26 January 2012. This set-up helps support the only independent bookstore in the greater Ithaca area (a good thing for a community of readers and thinkers and for small presses and local authors), combats the homogenising effect of corporate big box stores, and channels a significant portion of the money you spend on books into the local economy.

The only book not sold through Buffalo Street Books is *Egil's Saga*, which is out of print & available as a custom-printed **coursepacket** from **the Cornell Store**.

Regardless of how you choose to acquire the books, please ensure you have access to the readings by the dates required.

Recommended texts:

- *general background on medieval history*
 - Barbara Rosenwein, *A Short History of the Middle Ages*, 3rd edn (2009)
- *writing & style guides*
 - William Strunk, Jr., & E.B. White, *The Elements of Style*, 4th edn (2000)
 - Gordon Harvey, *Writing with Sources*, 2nd edn. (2008)
 - Diana Hacker, *A Pocket Style Manual*, 5th edn (2009)
- *aspects of Scandinavian history*
 - P. Foote & D. Wilson, *The Viking Achievement*, rev. edn (1980; out of print)
 - Gwyn Jones, *History of the Vikings*, rev. edn. (1984)
 - K. Hastrup, *Culture and History in Medieval Iceland* (1985; out of print)
 - William Ian Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking* (1990) [also e-book]
 - Judith Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age* (1991)
 - John Haywood (ed.), *Penguin Historical Atlas of the Vikings* (1995)
 - Jenny Jochens, *Women in Old Norse Society* (1995) [also e-book]
 - P.H. Sawyer (ed.), *Oxford Illustrated History of the Vikings* (1997)
 - W.W. Fitzhugh & E.I. Ward (ed.), *Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga* (2000)
 - A. Orchard, *Cassell's Dictionary of Norse Myth and Legend* (2003; out of print)
 - Dawn Hadley, *The Vikings in England: Settlement, Society and Culture* (2006)
 - Stefan Brink & Neil Price (ed.), *The Viking World* (2008)

Items that are in print may be ordered, tax free, via Buffalo Street Books. You may also consult them in the library (all are available at Uris reserve; a couple are available online). You may be able to pick up a copy of out-of-print items at a second-hand bookstore.

Evaluation:

You will be graded in this class on three main aspects of performance: (1) attendance and participation; (2) written exams; and (3) an essay assignment. **A passing grade in each component is needed for getting a passing grade in the course.**

Attendance & Participation (20%): You are expected to **attend** all classes, both lectures & sections. Three absences (or more) will affect your final mark. If you cannot attend a class, it is your responsibility to find out the substance of what you've missed. You will need to prepare for classes & **participate** in them. Active participation involves asking good questions, as well as proposing some good answers, and is not limited to section discussions: you will also be expected to **practise active listening** in lectures, and can earn participation credit if you **come to office hours**. Some study questions are provided in the syllabus for guidance; you should consider these questions in light of each week's assigned readings. Allow yourself time to read through assigned materials, to think about them and to research any questions you may have.

Exams (30%): There will be two 2½-hour exams in this course, **a midterm (worth 10%)** date TBA, covering materials from the 1st half of the course, and **a cumulative final (worth 20%)**, date TBA. Exams typically include map questions, term identifications, short 1ary-source passage identification & interpretation exercises, and synthetic essay-type questions. Do not fear! Exams serve as goads to go over the material, but you should typically have enough options to select from that you should do fine even if you can't remember every detail. Exams are designed to get you to reflect on what you've learned (which, hopefully, is an interesting experience) rather than to encourage memorization.

Essay sequence (50%): A 1500-2500 word **essay (worth 25%)**, excluding bibliography, is due in class 24 April. You will produce this essay in a graduated process, going through several preparatory steps: a **bibliographic exercise (worth 5%)** is due 23 February, a **primary source analysis (worth 10%)** is due 15 March, a **draft** is due 10 April, and **peer reviews (worth 10%)** of some of your classmates' drafts are due 17 April.

All assignments should be written in 12-pt font and double-spaced. Always keep a paper trail of your work; you may be asked to submit research notes, drafts, etc. When handing in your work, please submit both a paper printout and an electronic copy, which I will keep on file. A late-penalty policy will be strictly enforced: a third of a letter grade deducted per day overdue (so, e.g., an A- paper that is two days late will receive a B grade). We will discuss the assignments further in class.

I aim to encourage your independent thinking about the topics we study and provide guidance as needed; **lectures, readings and sections are designed to complement each other, not overlap**. You're encouraged to come to our office hours anytime, to consult about your work or just to chat about course materials. It's a good idea to schedule meetings in advance so I know to expect you. You can also expect me to be available for consultation on course-related matters via e-mail anytime. I will do my best to respond to all e-mail queries within 24 hours.

Academic integrity:

A university is a community of learning. The glue that holds this community together and enables all of us to do our work – teaching, learning, research – is the academic integrity of all members of this community. If we can't assume that we all respect each other's intellectual property, communications shut down and the generation of knowledge dies.

It has become clear to me that the current generation of students may often have genuine difficulty telling what is and isn't legitimate practice in academia. Some highschools apparently tolerate, maybe even encourage, 'learning' by downloading materials off the Web and presenting them as one's own work. **Such practice is plagiarism.** Tweaking of downloaded materials (e.g., changing the wording slightly to your own style) doesn't change the fact that they are somebody else's intellectual property, and may in fact make the offence worse by making detection of plagiarism more difficult.

When you consult online resources, be extremely wary of simply copying & pasting from them. Do so sparingly, and always treat such copied passages as you would treat a quotation from a printed source (i.e., put it in inverted commas, provide a full reference, etc.). If you consult online resources without quoting from them directly, you should still acknowledge them in your references (as you should do with printed sources you read).

Remember that plagiarism is the most serious infraction of academic integrity, but not the only one: cheating on exams, providing false information, etc., are all forbidden. If it feels like cheating, it probably is.

Every student in this course is expected to abide by the Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity. You are responsible for knowing this Code; see
<<http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/Academic/AIC.html>>.

A practical guide to the Code is available at
<<http://www.theuniversityfaculty.cornell.edu/AcadInteg>>.

Please review this brief online tutorial on Recognizing and Avoiding Plagiarism:
<<http://plagiarism.arts.cornell.edu/tutorial/index.cfm>>.

You may also find this online quiz (from the University of East Anglia) helpful:
<<http://www.uea.ac.uk/menu/admin/dos/quiz/>>.

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to **Turnitin.com** for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site.

All work submitted for academic credit will be your own.

I have zero tolerance for violations of academic integrity.

Grading principles:

A-range marks indicate work whose excellence stands out. The work demonstrates thorough preparation, nuanced comprehension and synthetic ability, analytic insight and even originality. It is beautifully written and presented. This grade signifies exceptionally fine achievement within the already high standards expected of Cornell students.

B-range marks indicate skilful, thorough work at the high level of academic competence expected of Cornell students. The work demonstrates a good grasp of specific subject matter and knowledgeable reliance on the course materials, as well as the writer's analytical engagement with the assignment. It is clearly written and sensibly structured.

C-range marks indicate work that evinces some preparation, general comprehension of the subject matter and assignment parameters, a degree of analytic effort and expressive skill. Such work measures up to the standards expected of Cornell students, but partially or inconsistently. It still requires significant improvement in one or several respects.

D-range marks indicate work that only barely qualifies for academic credit. The work is seriously flawed in terms of argument, structure, writing or presentation, pointing to problems in reading, comprehension, knowledge processing or preparation of the assignment. It does suggest that the writer has learned something and could, with proper investment of time and effort, meet the standards expected of Cornell students. Students should not, however, allow themselves to perform at this level over time.

A grade of **F** marks work that is unacceptable for academic credit by the standards expected of Cornell students. This grade does not necessarily mean that no work was done; it does mean that a student's work fails to demonstrate even a minimum of effort, comprehension or engagement with the course materials. An F (or worse!) is also routinely assigned in cases of breach of the Code of Academic Integrity.

Readings:

For the week of

1. January 24 & 26: Early medieval Europe: the wheres & whens

please read

B. Rosenwein, *Short History of the Middle Ages*, pp. 21-218 [only ca. ½ is text]

Jesse Byock, *Viking Age Iceland*, cap. 1

no section this week

further recommended reading:

Gwyn Jones, *A History of the Vikings*, rev. edn, introduction (1984: 1-13)

What kinds of historical arguments can we make about early medieval Europe? How can we put them to the test?

2. January 31 & February 2: Scandinavian prehistory

please read

Birgit & Peter Sawyer, *Medieval Scandinavia* (1993), pp. 27-38

Else Roesdahl, *The Vikings*, pp. 25-29

Thomas DuBois, *Nordic Religions*, introduction & cap. 1

for section, please prepare:

Morten Axboe, "Danish Kings and Dendrochronology: Archaeological Insights into the Early History of the Danish State," in *After Empire: Towards an Ethnology of Europe's Barbarians*, ed. G. Ausenda (1995: 217-51; esp. 217-38)

further recommended reading:

Egil's Saga, translators' introductions to the Everyman edn (pp. vii-xxxii)

Gwyn Jones, *A History of the Vikings*, capp. 1-2 (1984: 17-54)
Knud J. Krogh, "The Royal Viking-Age Monuments at Jelling in the Light of Recent Archaeological Excavations: A Preliminary Report," *Acta Archaeologica* 53 (1982): 182-216

What types of sources give us most insight into early medieval Scandinavia? Does it make sense to speak of 'early medieval Scandinavia' as a unified entity?

3. February 7 & 9: Sources & resources of Norse history

please read

Somerville & McDonald, *The Viking Age*, § 7
Sawyers, *Medieval Scandinavia*, pp. 1-26
Else Roesdahl, *The Vikings*, pp. 1-22, 168-84

for section, please prepare:

Baruch Fischhoff, "For those Condemned to Study the Past," in *Judgment under Uncertainty*, ed. D. Kahneman, P. Slovic & A. Tversky (1982: 335-51)
John L. Gaddis, *The Landscape of History*, cap. 3 (2002: 35-52)

further recommended reading:

Somerville & McDonald, *Viking Age*, introduction (pp. xiii-xvii)
Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, tr. Peter Putnam (1953)

What are some strengths and weaknesses of various types of sources for early medieval Scandinavia? How do the medieval sources shape what we can know about the past?

4. February 14 & 16: Scandinavian society i: traditions & constraints

please read

Somerville & McDonald, *Viking Age*, §§ 1-3, 5-6, 28-29
Roesdahl, *Vikings*, pp. 30-63
Byock, *Iceland*, capp. 2-3
DuBois, *Religions*, cap. 5

for section, please prepare:

Consider *Rígsþula* (Somerville & McDonald, *Viking Age*, § 3, pp. 18-28) as social history: what is its message? does it historicise social structure?

further recommended reading:

Henri Pirenne, extracts (from *Medieval Cities & Mohammed and Charlemagne*), rpt. in *The Pirenne Thesis*, ed. A.F. Havighurst (1958: 11-27)

To what extent was traditional Scandinavian society insular & inwards-looking? What broader contexts was it integrated into?

5. February 21 & 23: Scandinavian society ii: change & innovations

Bibliographic exercise due Thursday.

please read

Somerville & McDonald, *Viking Age*, §§ 21-22, 33-37
R I Page, *Chronicles of the Vikings* (1995), cap. 6 (pp. 139-49)
Egil's Saga, capp. 1-22 (pp. 1-31 in the Everyman edn)
Roesdahl, *Vikings*, pp. 64-107
Byock, *Iceland*, capp. 4-5

for section, please prepare:

Judith Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age*, cap. 2 (1991: 42-74)

Consider the roles of women in the changing Scandinavian society of the early Viking Age. How did they contribute to such changes? How were they affected?

further recommended reading:

Sawyers, *Medieval Scandinavia*, cap. 9

Richard Abels, *Alfred the Great*, extract on kingship (1998: 246-84)

What constituted power in Scandinavia? Who wielded it? How did the emergence of new technologies (material & political) in the Viking Age affect its structures?

6. February 28 & March 1: 'From the fury of the Norsemen, deliver us, o Lord'

please read

Somerville & McDonald, *Viking Age*, §§ 30-31a, 31d-32, 38-47, 50

Roesdahl, *Vikings*, pp. 187-203, 221-26, 233-39

Egil, capp. 23-35 (pp. 31-50)

for section, please prepare:

this week's readings from Somerville & McDonald, *Viking Age*, esp. § 41

Ermentarius, "The Wandering Relics of St. Philibert," in David Herlihy's *The History of Feudalism* (1970: 8-13)

further recommended reading:

Roger Collins, *Early Medieval Europe, 300-1000*, cap. 19 (1999: 364-89)

Peter Sawyer, *Kings and Vikings*, cap. 6 (1982: 78-97)

F. Donald Logan, *The Vikings in History*, 3rd edn (2005), cap. 2

The First Viking Age in the West (9th century): an unprecedented calamity or a case of mass hysteria?

7. March 6 & 8: Honourable men: a viking social order

please read

Somerville & McDonald, *Viking Age*, §§ 25-27, 79, 83

Byock, *Iceland*, capp. 6-7, 9-10, 17

for section, please prepare:

"The [Norse] possessed a well-developed vocabulary for describing soc[iety] and politic[s]" (Byock, *Iceland*, p. 118). What were its key terms & concepts? Use the readings to think about how these terms & concepts might have played out in social action.

further recommended reading:

Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*, part 4, capp. 9-17 (1961: 1.123-238)

Was viking society violent? cruel? just? courteous? sentimental? Were its structures rigid or loose? What mechanisms allowed people to get along & kept the social fabric intact?

8. March 13 & 15: Varangians: Scandinavians in the East

Primary source analysis due Thursday.

please read

Somerville & McDonald, *Viking Age*, §§ 19a, 58-65

Roesdahl, *Vikings*, pp. 277-92

DuBois, *Religions*, cap. 6

Martina Stein-Wilkeshuis, "A Viking-Age Treaty between Constantinople and Northern Merchants," *Scando-Slavica* 37 (1991): 35-47

for section, please prepare:

this week's readings from Somerville & McDonald, *Viking Age*, esp. Ibn Faḍlān's account (§§ 19a & 62; also available in H.M. Smyser's older translation, in *Franciplegius*, ed. J.B. Bessinger, Jr. & R.P. Creed [1965: 92-119])

further recommended reading:

T. Noonan, "The Vikings & Russia: Some New Directions & Approaches to an Old Problem," in *Social Approaches to Viking Studies*, ed. R. Samson (1991: 201-6)

What are the major distinctions between the Viking Age (in the West) and the 'Varangian Age' (in the East)? How did topography, technology and the peoples encountered differ?

9. March 27 & 29: Scandinavian religion i: pagans & Christians

Midterm exam this week (TBA).

please read

Somerville & McDonald, *Viking Age*, §§ 8-9, 11-19

Eirik the Red's Saga, capp. 1-6 (in *The Vinland Sagas*, pp. 25-38)

Roesdahl, *Vikings*, pp. 147-67

DuBois, *Religions*, capp. 2-3

for section, please prepare:

Review the range of sources available to us for learning about Norse religions.
Consider what we can get out of such sources & what their limitations are.

further recommended reading:

J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, "The Vikings in Francia," Stenton Lecture 1975 (in his *Early Medieval History*, 1976: 3-19)

Roberta Frank, "Viking Atrocity and Skaldic Verse: The Rite of the Blood-Eagle," *English Historical Review* 99:391 (1984): 332-43 [JSTOR]

What aspects (beliefs, values, rituals, etc.) of viking pre-Christian religion do our sources reveal? Which of these aspects are they most likely to depict reliably?

10. April 3 & 5: Scandinavian religion ii: Red Þórr & White Christ

please read

Somerville & McDonald, *Viking Age*, §§ 84-88, 90-93

Eirik the Red, capp. 7-14 (in *Vinland*, pp. 38-50)

Byock, *Iceland*, capp. 16, 18

for section, please prepare:

Julian D. Richards, "Pagans and Christians at a Frontier: Viking Burial in the Danelaw," in *The Cross Goes North*, ed. Martin Carver (2003: 383-95)

further recommended reading:

Martin Biddle and Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle, "Repton and the 'Great Heathen Army,' 873-4," in *Vikings and the Danelaw*, ed. James Graham-Campbell et al. (2001: 45-96)

Why did Norsemen convert to Christianity? Was the advance of Christianity inevitable? Was Christianisation a sharp discontinuity or a smooth transition from paganism?

11. April 10 & 12: He fled not at Uppsala ...

Draft of your essay due Tuesday.

please read

Somerville & McDonald, *Viking Age*, §§ 48-49, 51-54

Egil, capp. 36-65 (pp. 51-123)

Sawyers, *Medieval Scandinavia*, pp. 54-57

Roesdahl, *Vikings*, pp. 203-20, 226-29, 239-50

Byock, *Iceland*, capp. 11-13

for section, please prepare:

Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, tr. D. Whitelock et al., entries for 973-1017 (1961: 76-97)

further recommended reading:

Peter Sawyer, "Ethelred II, Olaf Tryggvason, and the Conversion of Norway,"

Scandinavian Studies 59 (1987): 299-307

How did viking activity in the West during the 10th century differ from what had characterised the early phases of the Viking Age? What caused these differences?

12. April 17 & 19: The Norse Atlantic: Iceland, Greenland and beyond

Reviews of your classmates' drafts due Tuesday.

please read

Somerville & McDonald, *Viking Age*, §§ 66-70, 72-74

Egil, capp. 66-85 (pp. 114-70)

Saga of the Greenlanders (in *Vinland*, pp. 1-21)

Roesdahl, *Vikings*, pp. 262-76

for section, please prepare:

Adolf Friðriksson & Orri Vésteinsson, "Creating a Past: A Historiography of the Settlement of Iceland," in *Contact, Continuity, and Collapse*, ed. J.H. Barrett (2003: 139-61)

further recommended reading:

D. Odess et al., "*Skraeling*: First Peoples of Helluland, Markland, & Vinland," and

T.H. McGovern, "The Demise of Norse Greenland," in *Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga* (2000: 193-207, 327-39)

What might have attracted Norsemen to explore & settle the North Atlantic? What reasons do the primary sources suggest? Why did some colonies fail?

13. April 24 & 26: Millennial vikings: the urban viking & Norse empires

Essay due Tuesday.

please read

[for Tue.:] Roesdahl, *Vikings*, pp. 108-46, 229-32; cf.

[for Tue.:] Sawyers, *Medieval Scandinavia*, cap. 7

[for Tue.:] Byock, *Iceland*, cap. 14

[for Thu.:] Somerville & McDonald, *Viking Age*, §§ 57, 97-102

[for Thu.:] Roesdahl, *Vikings*, pp. 250-61

[for Thu.:] Sawyers, *Medieval Scandinavia*, pp. 57-79

[for Thu.:] Byock, *Iceland*, cap. 19

for section, please prepare:

Snorri Sturluson, "Saga of King Harald Hardrade," in *Heimskringla*, capp. 76-101, at <<http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/OMACL/Heimskringla/hardrade2.html>> (cf. Somerville & McDonald, *Viking Age*, § 100)

1. Consider the readings for this week; is the notion of 'urban viking' a contradiction in terms? If so, why? If not, how?
2. Are the 'Norse empires' of the 11thC comparable to earlier Norse polities? Should we consider Cnut, Haraldr *harðráði* and William the Conqueror vikings?

further recommended reading:

R.S. Lopez, "Of Towns and Trade," in *Life and Thought in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. R.S. Hoyt (1967: 30-50)

Gwyn Jones, *A History of the Vikings*, part 4, capp. 2-3 (1984: 354-415)

Where did early medieval towns emerge? How did they come into being? Who lived in them? What determined if a town would flourish or die? Were there any viking towns?

14. May 1 & 3: Epilogue: viking legacies

please read

Egil, capp. 86-87 (pp. 170-71)

Sawyers, *Medieval Scandinavia*, cap. 10

Byock, *Iceland*, capp. 8, 15

DuBois, *Religions*, cap. 8 & epilogue

for section, please prepare:

Review questions for the final exam. (Please let us know ahead of time whether you have any questions; sections will only meet if there is call for them.)

further recommended reading:

Guy Halsall, "Playing by whose Rules? A Further Look at Viking Atrocity in the Ninth Century," *Medieval History* 2:2 (1992): 2-12

M.T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, introduction & cap. 1 (1993: 1-43)

What were (& are) the interests of the people who preserve[d] Viking Age history, and how do these affect our perception of the period? Why are you interested?

