Part One - Course Description and Goals

This course explores a broad selection of texts from the three cultures inhabiting the British Isles in the early Middle Ages: the Irish, the Anglo-Saxons, and the Danes. The central text in each unit is an epic, the Táin bo Culainge, the Saga of the Volsungs, and Beowulf, but we will also read founding myths, religious texts, and shorter poetry (lyric or elegy) from each of these cultures.

Medieval literature can be forbidding – the narrative conventions are often different than in modern literature, the culture and language unfamiliar (although everything we are reading is translated). But the literature is also highly rewarding and can train students to notice and understand ways of thinking alien to that of modern society. This class will focus on gaining familiarity with the conventions of a variety of medieval genres and on accessing the concerns of the literature in its context, while allowing students room to explore their own thematic interests within medieval literature.

An added bonus: this course should give you many wonderful ideas for great tattoos.

Grading Breakdown

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<th>Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Notebook</td>
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<td>Annotated Bibliography</td>
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<td>Discussion Questions</td>
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<td>Participation</td>
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<td>Response Essay</td>
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<td>Personal Essay</td>
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<td>Long Essay with Proposal</td>
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<td>Short Exam</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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Required Texts

Course readings on the course website (you are required to print the readings out, annotate them, and bring them to class).


Part Two - Syllabus

Readings and assignments are listed on the day they are due. Readings on the course website are noted as “Online.” You are expected to print these out and bring them to class. It will, in fact, be held against you if you do not.

Please avail yourself of the helpful apparatus in the assigned readings: introductions (skim these; read the introductions carefully of any texts you end up writing your long essay on), pronunciation guides, textual notes, lists of characters, genealogies, etc.

Week 1
M Sept. 26: Introduction
F Sept. 30
No Reading Notebook due.
SHORT EXAM on dates and geography.

Unit 1: The Irish

Week 2
Bonus (and highly recommended): “Early Ireland,” and “The Age of the Vikings,” Medieval Ireland: The Enduring Tradition, Michael Richter (Dublin, 1988), pp. 1-42 and 105-17. Online (if you don’t want to print this one out, don’t).
DUE: Reading Notebooks on the poetry.
DUE: Reading Notebook
DUE: Reading Notebook

Week 3

DUE: Reading Notebook


F Oct. 14 *The Táin*, cont., chs. I-VII.

**Week 4**

W Oct. 19 *The Táin*, cont., chs. XII-XIV.
DUE THURSDAY, Oct. 20: Essay Proposal
F Oct. 21 *The Táin*, cont.
DUE: Reading Notebook

**Unit 2: The Vikings**

**Week 5**

DUE: Reading Notebook
DUE: Reading Notebook

**Week 6**

W Nov. 2 *Laxdalasaga*, cont., chs. 31-49.
F Nov. 4 *Laxdalasaga*, cont., chs. 50-78.
DUE: Reading Notebook

**Week 7**

M Nov. 7 *The Saga of the Volsungs*, pp. 35-72 (through ch. 22).
W Nov. 9 *Volsungasaga*, cont., pp. 72-109 (ch. 22-end).
DUE: Reading Notebook

**Unit 3: The Anglo-Saxons**

DUE: Reading Notebook on Bede (not the Chronicle).

**Week 8**

DUE: Reading Notebook

DUE TUESDAY, November 15: Annotated Bibliography

DUE: Reading Notebook

DUE: Reading Notebook

**Week 9**


DUE TUESDAY, November 22: Long Essay

W Nov. 23:  Elegy, cont.
DUE: Reading Notebook on one poem in its various translations.

F Nov. 25:  NO CLASS, Thanksgiving Holiday

**Week 10**

M Nov. 28  *Beowulf*, pp. 53-103 (through fitt XXIII)

W Nov. 30  *Beowulf*, cont., pp. 103-150.

F Dec. 2   *Beowulf*, cont.
DUE: Complete Reading Notebooks, including entry on *Beowulf*.
Two more annotations (for weeks 9 and 10)

Personal Essay due at time of final.

**Final:** Monday, Dec. 5 at 10.15am.