RELS 375 Religions of Scandinavia
Instructor: Prof. Cormack

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Office Hours: MTWF 12:00 – 1:00 or by appointment

This course takes a chronological perspective on religion in Northern Europe, primarily Scandinavia, traversing two conversion periods: from pre-Christian religions to Christianity, from pre-Reformation Christianity to Lutheranism. It will be based for the most part on careful reading and analysis of primary sources, and evaluation of such sources as evidence for religious belief and practice. We will consider the meanings of 'religion' 'magic' and 'paganism' as well as the different types of supernatural beings (gods, elves, trolls, ghosts, saints, angels etc.) and the roles of different kinds of practitioners (priests, ministers, witches, magicians) at different times and places. The course will be based on primary texts and archaeological reports. We will look backward (and forward) from medieval Christian accounts of the pagan past to modern-day folklore.

Books for required reading (copies are also on reserve)
R. I. Page, *Runes* (We will use this for one assignment, at the beginning of class. But it's a cool thing to own . . . and for this topic, there is *nothing better* out there.)
The Poetic Edda, tr. Carolyne Larrington, Oxford University Press 2014 edition (grey cover)
Snorri Sturluson, *Edda* tr. Anthony Faulkes, Everyman
Gisli Sursson's Saga and the Saga of the People of Eyri by Martin Regal and Judy Quinn. This may also be in a larger collection of sagas, just be sure that these are they translators.

OAKS Readings:

Tacitus, *Germania*
Early Christian Contacts
Lidén, 'From Pagan Sanctuary to Christian Church'
and many other readings that will be announced as we go.

Grading Scale:

A 93 points	C 73 points
A- 90 points	C- 70 points
B+ 87 points	D+ 67 points
B 83 points	D 63 points
B- 80 points	D- 60 points
C+ 77 points	F below 60

Grading is **cumulative** - you can calculate the grade you have earned to date by **adding up the points** you have received so far and comparing the total to the grading scale. For privacy and security reasons, I do not convey information about student grades by email.

Your grade will be based on:

- **2 Hour Exams**, 24 points each. **Exams are essay exams. I will bring blue books.**
I will provide you with a review handout a week before the exam. You are responsible for everything on the review handout.

- **Final Exam** (not cumulative: this is the third hour exam), 24 points. For date, see Exam Schedule.

- Group Project on an Eddic Poem. 8 points. Each group of 3-5 students will research one poem from the Poetic Edda and present the results to the class. Your presentation will include an annotated bibliography on the poem and a written analysis of its sources. How you do the presentation – dramatic, power point, one or more presenters of different types of information – is up to you. (But note that the poems have been chosen to be suitable for dramatic performance if you should choose to do one!) You will be evaluated by each other, in two ways.
1) each member of the group will hand in a page-long statement of what they contributed and what others contributed (this is to ensure against one person doing all the work or slacking off).
2) each member of the class will evaluate each presentation for content and "presentation style" (whether your presentation is standard or more traditional, there are certain basics to be observed, such as clarity of speech, eye contact (as appropriate). avoidance of gum-chewing, hair-twirling and the like).

- 6-page research paper on focused topic. 10 Points. I strongly recommend types of supernatural beings such as elves, valkyries, giants, etc. but if you are interested in burial mounds, or a particular church, saint, or archaeological site, or manuscript, that could work as well. IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT YOU DISCUSS THE TOPIC WITH ME, and hand in a bibliography with five approved sources no later than 2 weeks after spring break. The requirements will be explained as the date approaches. The papers will be due on Reading Day. If you hand them in April 4, and they are very bad, you will have the option of a rewrite.
NOTE: It is possible that your research paper may contribute to your group project. That's OK, that is then YOUR contribution to the group project.

All of the above assignments are required in order to pass the course. If you are missing one, you will receive an F for the course, no matter what your grades on other assignments and no matter how many points you have accumulated. If you are convicted of plagiarism, you receive FX.

- **Short Essays** 10 points. I will announce the topic of these essays during the class before which they are due, and on "News" on OAKS. The essays focus on the OAKS readings, and are not meant to be literary masterpieces. Don't spend time on an elaborate introduction; get to the point of the question asked. They should be 1-2 pages long unless I tell you otherwise. They must be typed (double spaced) and stapled (better yet, print them double sided to save paper). Do not use a special header: just your name, RELS 375 and my name in a single line at the top of the page. These are due AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS, whether I collect them at that time or not. If you have a genuine computer or printer problem and deposit the essay in OAKS OR AS AN ATTACHMENT BEFORE CLASS STARTS I will accept this as evidence that you have written the essay, but I STILL WANT HARD COPY WITHIN 48 HOURS. Note that there is a

computer and printer in the Religious Studies lounge just outside my office and you can print out your essay there, BEFORE class please! The assignments are intended to be the basis of class discussion: they CANNOT BE MADE UP. However, since there are about ten opportunities, if you miss one you can do the next one. They are worth 2 points per assignment, so if you get a full 2 points on the first five assignments you are done (or can do more for extra credit). The grades are cumulative: if you get 1.5 points on 4 assignments, that is the equivalent of getting 2 points on three assignments. You will not receive detailed comments on these assignments: it is up to you to attend class and make notes on the discussion that takes place in the classroom, correcting any errors or misunderstandings in your notes (you can make notes on the paper itself if you want to, just so I can see what you originally wrote.) Note that there will be fewer opportunities than in my other classes, so it is good to get them out of the way early in the course. **YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR READING AND DISCUSSING THESE READINGS EVEN IF YOU DO NOT WRITE AN ESSAY.**

- Extra Credit: You may earn up to two extra points by doing more than the required number of short essays. **The total number of points acquired through short essays plus extra credit cannot exceed 12.**

Disabilities: If you have a disability that qualifies you for special accommodation, please present a letter to me from the Center for Disability Services (SNAP) at the beginning of the semester. Although you are under no obligation to do so, if you have any special needs that may affect your work in my class (for example if your native language is not English, or if you regularly run out of time on essay exams) please let me know.

If you need special accommodation through the SNAP program or for ANY other reason, please discuss the matter with me AT LEAST A WEEK before an exam is scheduled or the assignment is due. In particular, SNAP students are responsible for getting the necessary paperwork to me a week in advance of scheduled exams.

Computers. Computers may be used for note taking ONLY. Use of your computer for any other purpose will result in it being forbidden from the class in future. I may periodically call on computer users and ask to see their notes, either during or after class. If I am not satisfied with the quality of the notes, you may be prohibited from using a computer in future. If the notes are really excellent, I may ask you to share with those who have legitimate absences.

Cell phones must be turned off and put away (in pocket, purse, bookbag, etc.) before I start to lecture.
Wearing headphones or equivalent in class is forbidden.
Use of all other electronic devices in class is forbidden.

Missed classes / exams:
I assume all class members are adults and able to manage their time in such a way as to be in their seats when class starts.

IMPORTANT DATES
For regular hour exams, if you anticipate a conflict for any reason, it is far better to deal with the

problem **BEFORE** it arises than afterwards. I am always willing to work with a student who plans ahead to arrange make up (or make–before) exams. If you miss an exam you receive an automatic F (zero points) until a make-up exam has been arranged. It is your responsibility to arrange to make up the material within two weeks of the original due date. An F for not completing an exam means an F for the course.

College of Charleston Honor Code and Academic Integrity

Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when identified, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved.

Incidents where the instructor determines the student's actions are related more to a misunderstanding will handled by the instructor. A written intervention designed to help prevent the student from repeating the error will be given to the student. The intervention, submitted by form and signed both by the instructor and the student, will be forwarded to the Dean of Students and placed in the student's file.

Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly by the instructor and/or others having knowledge of the incident to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive a XF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This grade will appear on the student's transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the X to be expunged. The F is permanent. The student may also be placed on disciplinary probation, suspended (temporary removal) or expelled (permanent removal) from the College by the Honor Board.

Students should be aware that unauthorized collaboration--working together without permission-- is a form of cheating. Unless the instructor specifies that students can work together on an assignment, quiz and/or test, no collaboration during the completion of the assignment is permitted. Other forms of cheating include possessing or using an unauthorized study aid (which could include accessing information via a cell phone or computer), copying from others' exams, fabricating data, and giving unauthorized assistance.

Research conducted and/or papers written for other classes cannot be used in whole or in part for any assignment in this class without obtaining prior permission from the instructor.

Students can find the complete Honor Code and all related processes in the *Student Handbook* at http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/index.php

USING A CELL PHONE DURING AN EXAM IS A VIOLATION OF THE HONOR CODE AND CAN RESULT IN A GRADE OF F FOR THE EXAM AND FX FOR THE COURSE. For this course, you are required to turn off cell phones, put them in your bookbag, and leave it at the front of the room before you start your exam.

****** IMPORTANT MESSAGES! ******

Always identify your course name in email messages to me.
DO NOT write your SS number or student ID on any assignment for this course.

When you have a question, or if I talk too fast, RAISE YOUR HAND AND LET ME KNOW! Other class members will undoubtedly be glad that you did so. There is no point in being in the class if you don't understand what is going on.

LAST BUT NOT LEAST: YOUR HEALTH MATTERS! Exercise regularly, **and get plenty of sleep** . . . Get a thermometer and learn how to use it! If you are sick, go to the health services; they will send a note to all your professors. DON'T come to class and infect your classmates! Remember to cough or sneeze into a tissue (or your elbow), don´t get so close to anyone that they can breathe on your face (and vice versa), WASH AND DRY your hands frequently and keep them away from your face.

SCHEDULE

The following list of readings is **provisional**. We may go a bit faster or slower, depending on student interest in different topics.

Week of Jan. 11 Introduction to Course. For Wednesday, read Tacitus, *Germania.*

Short essay and discussion (3 pages): What does Tacitus tell us about government, warfare (warrior ethos), religion, and women among the Germans? How might he be using these topics to criticize Rome of his own time (c. 56-117 CE)? Are Tacitus's Germans 'noble savages'? Why or why not?

Week of Jan. 18 **Martin Luther King Day. Holiday. Wednesday Jan. 13 is the drop/add deadline.**

For Wednesday, Read R.I. Page, *Runes*

Short Essay and Discussion (2 pages): What is the evidence for, and against, the idea that runes were originally a 'magical' alphabet, i.e. a set of symbols that were generally believed to have inherent power? (For the purpose of this assignment you may assume that the author gives a fair overview of the evidence, even though he has a very pronounced opinion!)

Also consider, though this is not part of the written essay: We don't have adequate knowledge of the early Germanic worldview to know to what extent they may have distinguished between something they thought of as 'religion' and something they thought of as 'magic'. Why do you suppose modern scholars tend to use the term 'magical' rather than 'religious' when discussing runes?

Week of Jan. 25 Monday: ER Early Christian Contacts

Short Essay 2 pages: What do these extracts from the lives of missionary saints tell us about Germanic culture and religion? Christian culture and religion at this time?

Wed. ER Lidén, 'From Pagan Sanctuary to Christian Church'; Lead Mortuary Crosses

Week of Feb 1 Monday: Law Code (to be chosen**)**

Short Essay 2-3 pages: Based on this selection of laws, what are the main concerns of the legislators regarding religious belief, practice, and institutions? How would people be aware of them? To what extent is/are 'paganism' and 'magic' (or related terms – witches, withcraft, etc.) an issue?

Elucidarius
Short Essay 2 pages describe (or draw) the universe according to Elucidarius. Who is where?

Week of Feb. 8 Monday Exam

Wed *Jons saga*

Week of Feb. 15 Snorri Sturluson: *Edda* (pages to be announced)

Short Essay: 2-3 pages Based on Snorri´s Edda so far, describe or draw what the universe looks like, and who lives where. Compare this to the universe in *Elucidarius*

Week of Feb 22 Poetic Edda: Voluspa, Havamal

Week of Feb . 29 *Eyrbyggja saga*

March 7 SPRING BREAK ***I strongly urge you to work on the bibliography for your paper over spring break.***

Week of March 14 *Hervarar saga og Heidreks* Exam 2

Week of March 21 TOPICS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE
Hervarar saga og Heidreks presentation 1: Skírnir's Journey

Week of March 28 Reformation witchcraft reading Presentation 2:Thrym's Poem

Week of April 4 Reformation folklore readings Presentation 3: Poem of Volund

Paper due if you want the option of a rewrite

Week of April 11: Snorri's *Edda*: Volsung stories Presentation 4: Lay of Fafnir

Presentation 5: a Helgi or Volsung poem

Week of April 18 *Saga of Gisli* WE MEET ON **THURSDAY** Last Day of Classes.

FRIDAY IS READING DAY