

**ANT 3930 / MEM 3931 / EUH 3931**  
***The World of the Vikings and the Norse***  
**Fall semester 2024**  
**Élie Pinta**

Contact: epinta@ufl.edu

M/W/F - Period 8, 3-3.50 pm

Location: TUR 2322

Office hours: M 4-5 pm and 5-6 pm by appointment

**Course objectives**

This course explores multiple aspects of the Viking/Norse culture and settlements across Europe and the North Atlantic, from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century. Issues relating to migrations, socio-economical organization, material culture, beliefs, etc., will be explored through archaeological and paleoenvironmental evidence, and historical references. The course considers the everyday life experiences of the medieval Norse diaspora from Arctic Scandinavia to the Mediterranean shores and from Eastern Europe to North America.

Beginning with an overview of Vikings and the Viking Age, we will concentrate on the movements of people and the shared heritage and culture that connected them. Specific examples of Norse everyday activities and interactions with their environments will take us from modern-day Russia to the North American shores. We will also explore several craft activities and techniques relying on wood use or textiles. Different aspects of the Norse economy will be tackled, including agropastoralism and hunting practices. A final element of the class will cover the interactions between Vikings/Norse and other populations living at the edge of their world.

Students will become familiar with the following themes:

- Diversity of the Norse lands (Scandinavia, the British Isles, Continental Europe, the North Atlantic)
- Norse economy (agriculture/agropastoralism, hunting/fishing, food and beverages)
- Materiality of the Norse (building techniques, material culture)
- The Norse and their neighbors (Pagans, Christians, and the Others)

**Textbooks (only selected chapters are expected to be read, not the entire book!)**

- Fitzhugh, W.H. and E.I. Ward, 2000, *Vikings, the North Atlantic Saga*, Smithsonian Institution Press, 532 p. (available at UF Library West General Collection)
- Brink S. and N.S. Price, 2008, *The Viking World*, Routledge, 717 p. (available at UF Library West - Circ Desk/ available online)

**Class Policies**

- [Students are expected to attend class and to be on time.](#) Participation is expected, that is by actively contributing to the discussions.
- Computers and tablets are accepted for taking notes on, but not smartphones. Recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited.

- Tests or papers will not be accepted late without proper medical documentation.

### Course requirements

- Discussion Participation (10%)
- 3 summary papers/oral presentations (30% in aggregate)
- Midterm Examination (30%)
- Final Examination (30%)

During 'Lecture' days, students are expected to actively engage in the class by asking questions based on the assigned readings. During 'Case study' days, one student (or group of students) will present to the class one aspect of the assigned theme of the day while I moderate the rest of the course. Discussion participation is based on active involvement in each of the courses.

**Note: I do not expect from the students that they read all the references listed below!**

The summary papers/oral presentations are 2-3 pages long for a 5-minute presentation/1 page long for a 15-minute presentation. I ask that the students identify and summarize the main issues raised in the assigned lecture(s). Students can choose between 2 'long' summary papers + 1 'short' oral presentation, or 1 'short' summary paper + 2 'standard' oral presentations. Students can collaborate in groups of 2 or 3 on these assignments.

The midterm and final examinations are based on broad questions concerning the material covered up to that exam.

### The Numerical Grading Scale is as follows

A	93-100	A-	90-92		
B+	87-89	B	83-86	B-	80-82
C+	77-79	C	73-76	C-	70-72
D+	68-69	D	63-67	D-	60-62
E	<60				

### Grading Criteria are as follows

- A-range – 90s -- Excels – Full command and facility with material with the ability to place it within a larger historical/literary context and to make arguments based upon it.
- B-range – 80s – Good – Solid understanding of the material but without a complete facility or ability to make arguments based on it.
- C-range – 70s -- Fair – Some understanding of major themes, lack of command with detail, or some understanding of detail but lack of contextual understanding.
- D-range – 60s -- Poor – Enough factual understanding to pass, but little to no contextual clarity.
- E-range and under – Fails – Lack of university-level quality.

For the grading policies of the University of Florida in general, follow this link: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

Note: A minimum grade of C is required for General Education credit.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. Students must share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

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## **Course Schedule**

### **Week 1 (August 22-24)**

Friday, August 23: Overview of the main topics; explanation of the course requirements

### **Week 2 (August 26-31)**

Monday, August 26: Lecture - Who were the Vikings? / The Scandinavian Homelands

Readings: Fitzhugh & Ward 2000, Introduction, Chapter 1 / Brink & Price 2008, Introduction, Chapter 6 / [Barret 2008](#) [available online] / [Margaryan et al. 2020](#) [available online]

Wednesday, August 28: Guest Lecture - Library Resources for Anthropology Grad and Undergrad Courses, Dr. GiNESSA J. MAHAR, UF Anthropology Librarian

Friday, August 30: Lecture - The Vikings: Myths, Representation & Political Extremism

Readings: Fitzhugh & Ward 2000, Chapter 28 / [Hedenstierna-Jonson et al. 2017](#) / [Žiačková 2021](#)

## **Part 1 - The Norse expansion and diaspora**

### **Week 3 (September 2-7)**

**Monday, September 2: LABOR DAY**

Wednesday, September 4: Lecture - The British Isles

Readings: Fitzhugh & Ward 2000, Chapter 8 / Brink & Price, Chapters 27(1), 30, 31 / Pettersen 2019, *The Earliest Wave of Viking Activity? The Norwegian Evidence Revisited*

Additional content: [National Museum of Ireland](#) 'The Viking Age in Ireland' videos; [Jorvik Viking Center](#)

Friday, September 6: Case study - Scandinavian place names in the British Isles

Readings: Brink & Price 2008, Chapters 6 & 28; [Jorvik Viking Center](#) ; [Online Etymology Dictionary](#) ; [English Words of Old Norse Origin](#)

#### **Week 4 (September 9-14)**

Monday, September 9: Case study - Moving across the Northern Isles

Readings: Knudson *et al.* 2012, *Migration and Viking Dublin: paleomobility and paleodiet through isotopic analyses* / Montgomery *et al.* 2014, *Finding Vikings with Isotope Analysis: The View from Wet and Windy Islands* / Price *et al.* 2014, *Introduction: New Approaches to the Study of the Viking Age Settlement across the North Atlantic* / Margaryan *et al.* 2020, *Population genomics of the Viking world*

Wednesday, September 11: Lecture - Continental Europe and the Mediterranean

Readings: Price 1989, Chapter 2 (21-36) / Fitzhugh & Ward 2000, Chapter 7 / Brink & Price, Chapter 34 / Pons-Sanz 2001, *The Basque Country and the Vikings during the Ninth Century* / Pires 2013, *Viking Attacks in Western Iberia: An Overview* / Turner 2014, *A modern Review of the Siege of Paris* / García Losquiño 2022, *Viking mercenary activity in Galicia*; 2023, *The Viking camps of medieval Iberia* / [The Viking Sieges of Paris](#)

Friday, September 13: Case study - The Duchy of Normandy, from Rollo to William

Readings: Brink & Price, Chapter 33(1) / [Viking Archaeology](#) / [The Normans, a European people](#)

#### **Week 5 (September 16-21)**

Monday, September 16: Lecture - Eastward to the Baltic and Beyond

Readings: Brink & Price 2008, Chapters 36, 37, 38 / Mägi 2015, *Bound for the Eastern Baltic: Trade and Centres AD 800-1200* ; 2016, *The origin of Rus' and the question of Balto-Finnic role in this process* / Price *et al.* 2019, *Vikings in Russia: origins of the medieval inhabitants of Staraya Ladoga*

Wednesday, September 18: Case study - The wooden city of Novgorod

Readings: Brisbane & Hather 2007

Friday, September 20: Lecture - The North Atlantic Saga

Readings: Fitzhugh & Ward 2000, Chapter 9 / Brink & Price 2008, Chapter 41

#### **Week 6 (September 23-28)**

Monday, September 23: Case study - The Faroe Islands

Readings: Fitzhugh & Ward 2000, Chapter 10 / Brink & Price 2008, Chapters 42(1)

Wednesday, September 25: Case study - Iceland

Readings: Fitzhugh & Ward 2000, Chapter 11 & 12 / Brink & Price 2008, Chapters 42

Friday, September 27: Lecture - The Norse Greenlandic settlements

Readings: Fitzhugh & Ward 2000, Chapters 22, 23, 25 / Brink & Price 2008, Chapters 43

### **Week 7 (September 30-October 5)**

Monday, September 30: Case study - L'Anse aux Meadows

Readings: Fitzhugh & Ward 2000, Chapters 14, 15 / Brink & Price 2008, Chapter 44 / Wallace 2003, *LAM an abandoned experiment* / Ledger et al. 2019, *New horizons at L'Anse aux Meadows* / Kuitens et al. 2021, *Evidence for European presence in the Americas in AD 1021*

## **Part 2 - The Norse lived spaces**

Wednesday, October 2: Lecture - Norse Farmsteads and their Surroundings

Readings: Fitzhugh & Ward 2000, Chapter 2 / Brink & Price 2008, Chapters 7, 43(1) / Batey 2011, *Hofstaðir: Does the Artefact Assemblage Reflect its Special Status?* / Madsen 2019, *Marine Shielings in Medieval Norse Greenland* / Catlin & Bolender 2022, *Beyond the Farmstead: the role of dispersed dwellings in the settlement of Iceland*

Friday, October 4: Case study - The Farm Beneath the Sand, Greenland

Readings: Arneborg & Gulløv 1998, *Man, Culture and Environment in Ancient Greenland: Report on a Research Programme* / Ólafsson & Albrethsen 2016, *Building Phases at GUS and the Myth about the Greenlandic Centralised Farm*

### **Week 8 (October 7-12)**

**Monday, October 7: MIDTERM EXAM**

Wednesday, October 9: Lecture - Norse towns/The Norse in towns

Readings: Brink & Price 2008, Chapters 8, 8(1-9)

Friday, October 11: Case study - Crafts (in town and beyond)

Readings: Brink & Price 2008, Chapter 13 / Hansen 2005, Chapter 11 / Sindbæk 2011, *Urban Crafts and Social Networks in Viking Age towns* / Andersson Strand 2011, *Tools and Textiles: Production and Organisation in Birka and Hedeby*

### **Week 9 (October 14-19)**

Monday, October 14: Lecture - Norse Hunting and Fishing

Readings: Keller 2010, *Furs, Fish, and Ivory: Medieval Norsemen at the Arctic Fringe* / Barrett 2016, *Studying Medieval Sea Fishing and Fish Trade: How and Why*

Additional Material: [Gusfuskálar: an Eroding Fishing Station](#)

Wednesday, October 16: Case study - Iceland's Dry Fish Products

Readings: Perdikaris & McGovern 2007, *Viking Age Economics and the Origins of Commercial Fisheries in the North Atlantic* / Smiarowski et al., 2017, *Zooarchaeology of the Scandinavian settlements in Iceland and Greenland* / Amundsen 2005, *Fishing Booths and Fishing Strategies in Medieval Iceland: An Archaeofauna from the [Site] of Akurvík, North-West Iceland*

**Friday, October 18: HOMECOMING**

### **Week 10 (October 21-26)**

Monday, October 21: Case study - Walrus ivory and the Norse

Readings: Frei et al., 2015, *Was it for walrus? Viking Age settlement and medieval walrus ivory trade in Iceland and Greenland* / Roesdahl et al. 2015, *Fine Belt-Buckles of Walrus Ivory – also Made in Greenland* / Star et al., 2018, *Ancient DNA reveals the chronology of walrus ivory trade from Norse Greenland* / Barrett et al., 2022, *Walruses on the Dnieper: new evidence for the intercontinental trade of Greenlandic ivory in the Middle Ages*

Wednesday, October 23: Lecture - Norse agropastoralism economy

Readings: Albrethsen & Keller 1986, *The Use of the Saeter in Medieval Norse Farming in Greenland* / Henriksen 2016, *Norse agriculture in Greenland? Farming in a remote medieval landscape*

Friday, October 25: Case study - Dairy products

Readings: Gísladóttir 1994, *The use of whey in Icelandic households* / Myrdal 2008, *Women and Cows - Ownership and Work in Medieval Sweden* / Critch et al. 2018, *Tracing the Late Viking Age and Medieval Butter Economy: The View from Quoygrew, Orkney* / Narvhus & Abrahamsen 2023, *Traditional and modern Nordic fermented milk products: A review*

### **Week 11 (October 28-November 2)**

Monday, October 28: Case study - Brewing in the Norse lands (yesterday and today)

Readings: Laitinen 2019 / Garshol 2020 / Zori et al. 2013, *Feasting in Viking Age Iceland: sustaining a chiefly political economy in a marginal environment* / Mooney & Guðmundsdóttir 2020, *Barley cultivation in Viking Age Iceland in light of evidence from Lækjargata 10–12, Reykjavík*

### **Part 3 - Norse materials and technology**

Wednesday, October 30: Lecture - Norse building traditions (timber, stone, turf)

Readings: Guðmundsdóttir 2013, *Wood identifications on wood remains from various buildings from the archaeological investigation at Hrísbú* / Olsen et al. 2015, *A Western Norwegian Log Building Technique. Log Constructions in Bergen in Relation to Other Medieval Towns and Still Standing Medieval Buildings in Rural Norway* / Mortensen et al. 2021, *Turfs and timbers: Resource use in the construction of a Viking Age ring fortress*

Friday, November 1: Case study - Stave churches

Readings: Jensenius [\[online\]](#) / Stave churches [\[online\]](#) / Kristjánsdóttir *et al.* 2001, *An Icelandic medieval stave church made of drift timber: the implications of the wood identification* / Egenberg *et al.* 2003, *Characterisation of naturally and artificially weathered pine tar coatings by visual assessment and gas chromatography-mass spectrometry*

### **Week 12 (November 4-9)**

Monday, November 4: Case study - Experimental Archaeology Projects

Readings: Trbojević *et al.* 2011, *A Firewood Experiment at Eiríksstaðir: A Step Towards Quantifying the Use of Firewood for Daily Household Needs in Viking Age Iceland* / Paavel *et al.* 2013, *Testing a Reconstruction: A Frosty Week in a Viking Age House* / Examples of reconstructed Viking Age and Medieval Norse buildings (L'Anse aux Meadows, Stöng, Trelleborg, etc.)

Wednesday, November 6: Lecture - Norse ships and shipbuilding

Readings: Fitzhugh & Ward 2000, Chapter 5 / Brink & Price 2008, Chapter 11 / Mooney 2016, *Examining Possible Driftwood Use in Viking Age Icelandic Boats* / Christensen 2017, *The Viking Ships*

Friday, November 8: Case study - Experimental archaeology at the Viking Ship Museum (Roskilde, Denmark)

Readings: [Viking Ship Museum](#)

### **Week 13 (November 11-16)**

**Monday, November 11: VETERANS DAY**

Wednesday, November 13: Lecture - Norse textiles

Readings: Østergård 2004, *Woven into the earth, textiles from Norse Greenland* / Brink & Price 2008, Chapter 12 / Hayeur-Smith 2020, *The Valkyries' Loom: The Archaeology of Cloth Production and Female Power in the North Atlantic*

Friday, November 15: Case study - The textiles from Norse Greenland

Readings: Østergård 2004, *Woven into the earth, textiles from Norse Greenland* / Hayeur-Smith 2016, *The 'Burgundian' hat from Herjolfsnes, Greenland: new discoveries, new dates* / Hayeur-Smith 2018, *Dorset, Norse, or Thule? Technological transfers, marine mammal contamination, and AMS dating of spun yarn and textiles from the Eastern Canadian Arctic*

### **Week 14 (November 18-23)**

Monday, November 18: Lecture - The Globalized Norse (long-distance exchange across the Norse world)

Readings: Fitzhugh & Ward 2000, Chapter 23 / Brink & Price 2008, Chapter 9

Wednesday, November 20: Case study - Imported products in the Norse lands

Readings: TBD examples of artifacts found in Norse contexts, but originating from faraway regions

#### **Part 4 - Norse Encounters with Others**

Friday, November 22: Lecture - Encounters at the margins

Readings: Brink & Price 2008, Chapters 3, 34, 40 / García Losquiño 2022, *Viking mercenary activity in Galicia*

#### **Week 15 (November 25-30)**

**THANKSGIVING BREAK**

#### **Week 16 (December 2-6)**

Monday, December 2: Case study - Norse encounters in America

Readings: Fitzhugh & Ward 2000, Chapter 24 / Brink & Price 2008, Chapter 44(1) / Nedkvitne 2019, Chapter 6(2)

Wednesday, December 4: Case study - Norse encounters with the other monotheists (Islam and Judaism)

Readings: Brink & Price 2008, Chapter 39 / Wolf 1986, *An Old Norse Record of Jewish History* / Montgomery 2000, *Ibn Fadlan and the Rusiyyah* / Adams 2023, Chapter 2 /

**Friday, December 6: NO CLASS – READING DAYS**

#### **Week 17 (December 9-13)**

**Monday, December 9: NO CLASS**

**Wednesday, December 11: NO CLASS**

**Friday, December 13: FINAL EXAM (12:30-2:30 PM)**