

IDH 2930 (Un)Common Read – Roles and Statutes of Women during the Viking Age
University of Florida Honors Course - Spring semester 2026
Dr. Élie Pinta

Contact: epinta@ufl.edu

M - Period 3, 9.35-10.25 am

Location: Little Hall (LIT) 119

Office hours: TBD

Course Objectives

This course explores the dynamic roles of women in Viking Age and Medieval Norse societies across Scandinavia and the North Atlantic islands. Through an interdisciplinary approach that integrates archaeology, history, mythology, and literary analysis, students will investigate how women shaped and navigated power, wealth, and identity within contexts of seafaring, trade, and settlement. With the main theme of the course centered on Guðríður Þorbjörnsdóttir, the first European woman to have lived in America, we will also dive into the lives of other historical and legendary female characters. By engaging with material culture and Icelandic sagas, students will develop critical skills to analyze primary sources, evaluate scholarly interpretations, and synthesize evidence into nuanced arguments that challenge traditional narratives of Norse society. In addition to examining the past lives of significant Viking women, we will also explore the work of modern-day scholars whose research focuses on this topic.

Textbook

- Brown N.M., 2007, *The Far Traveler. Voyages of a Viking Woman*
- Jesch J., 1991, *Women in the Viking Age* ([available at UF Library West](#))
- Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, 2020, *Valkyrie, the Women of the Viking World* ([available online](#))
- Hayeur-Smith M., 2020, *The Valkyries' Loom: The Archaeology of Cloth Production and Female Power in the North Atlantic* ([available online](#))

Academic Policies and Resources

Class-specific Policies

- There is no attendance policy, but students are responsible for staying up to date with all lectures and reading the required texts. Class participation will be taken into consideration when determining the overall participation grade.
- Computers and tablets are accepted for taking notes on, but not smartphones. Recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials are prohibited.

- Tests, papers, and assignments will not be accepted late without proper medical documentation.

Course requirements (will be explained in detail during the class)

- Weekly Reading Reflexions (30%)
 - Provide key insights from the assigned Chapter (150-300 words)
 - Read and answer one of your classmates' posts
 - Complete/Incomplete assignment
- Participation & Discussion Leadership (25%)
 - Prepare a short summary of the chapter's main themes to present in class
 - Pick one of the chapter's main themes and discuss it further
- Creative Response Project (20%)
 - Choose one art piece, literary text, or multimedia presentation inspired by/connected to the book or to a specific chapter
 - Submit a statement explaining the connection
 - Read and answer one of your classmates' posts
- Final Analytical Essay (25%)
 - In-class written essay with an introduction, a detailed analysis, and a concluding paragraph
 - Identify and summarize one or several of the main themes evoked during the semester

The Numerical Grading Scale is as follows

A	96-100	A-	93-96		
B+	88-92	B	81-87	B-	75-80
C+	68-74	C	61-67	C-	55-60
D+	48-54	D	41-47	D-	35-40
E	<30				

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.

Note: A minimum grade of B is required to earn Academic points towards Honors Completion Requirements. Once you have earned your final grade in this course, please upload the course information and final grade from your Unofficial Transcript into your Honors Canvas Cohort: Honors Requirements module to earn Honors Milestone / Completion credit.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodation should contact the [Disability Resource Center](#). Students must share their accommodation letter and discuss their access needs as early as possible in the semester.

Honors Program contact information

- Honors Program, Honors Village Building 4 (our new location starting in late fall 2025), 352-392-1519
- Quick questions for an Honors advisor? Email advisor@honors.ufl.edu
- Need an Honors advising appointment? Schedule via [Microsoft Bookings](#)
- [Honors Program Event Calendar](#)

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Course Schedule

Monday, January 12:

- General course description
- Introduction to *The Far Traveler, Voyages of a Viking Woman* by Nancy M. Brown
- [The Far Traveler](#), a 2020 film documentary by Anna Dís Ólafsdóttir

Monday, January 19: HOLIDAY

Monday, January 26:

- Overview: The Vikings and their Scandinavian Homelands
- An evolution of the representation of Viking women – examples from movies and TV shows

Monday, February 2:

- The Far Traveler – Chapter 1
- Mythical Women of the Norse Pantheon & The Valkyries

Monday, February 9:

- The Far Traveler – Chapter 2
- *Women of the Viking Age*, [interview](#) and [podcast with Dr. Judith Jesch](#)

Monday, February 16:

- The Far Traveler – Chapter 3
- *Valkyrie, the Women of the Viking World* – [interview with Dr. Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir](#) / [Saga Thing Podcast](#)

Monday, February 23:

- The Far Traveler – Chapter 4
- Portrait of Viking Women: Shield-maidens, the female warriors of the Viking Age – Reassessing Birka chamber grave Bj 581

Monday, March 2:

- The Far Traveler – Chapter 5
- Portrait of Viking Women: [Freydís Eiríksdóttir](#)

Monday, March 9:

- The Far Traveler – Chapter 6
- Portraits of Viking Women: The Oseberg ship burial

Monday, March 16: SPRING BREAK

Monday, March 23:

- The Far Traveler – Chapter 7
- *The Valkyries' Loom* – TBD Guest Lecture with [Dr. Michèle Hayeur-Smith](#)

Monday, March 30:

- The Far Traveler – Chapter 8
- Portrait of Viking Women: Frideburg and Catla, two Christians in Birka

Monday, April 6:

- The Far Traveler – Chapter 9
- Portrait of Viking Women: Estrid the matriarch

Monday, April 13:

- The Far Traveler – Chapter 10
- Roles and Statutes of Women during the Viking Age: Final thoughts

Monday, April 20:

- Final in-class analytical essay