Vikings in Britain

IEEL003 5 credit module (equivalent to 2.5 ECTS)

1. Module Leaders

Danica Ramsay-Brimberg and Clare Downham

**Biography.** Dr Clare Downham M.A. (Hons), M.Phil, Ph.D. Biography. Clare was a student at St Andrews and Cambridge. She worked as a research scholar in Dublin and as a lecturer in Celtic and History in Aberdeen before starting at Liverpool in 2010. Her publications to date have focused on Viking Age history and contact across the Irish Sea in the Middle Ages. Her new book ‘Medieval Ireland AD400-1500’ is due be published by Cambridge University Press later this year.

https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/irish-studies/staff/clare-downham/

2. Module Description

The Viking Age was a dynamic period in European history which brought new cultures into contact and which affected the formation of the modern nations of England, Wales and Scotland. Students will learn how to engage with different types of evidence from the Middle Ages including written sources, archaeological digs, sculpture and place names. They will learn about the differences between real vikings and media portrayals, and the origin of modern British identities.

3. Module Aims

This module aims to:

- Build students’ confidence in understanding, discussing and communicating complex ideas, both in written and spoken language.
- Develop skills in research, collaborative learning and in preparing and delivering a group presentation.
- To provide an overview of viking activity in Britain and its long term political and cultural impact

4. Content

The following topics will be considered on the module:

Sources for the study of vikings,

The beginning of the Viking Age

Vikings in the Northern and Western Isles

Vikings in England: Conquest and colonisation
5. **Module structure**

The module will be delivered over a three-week period in six two-hour sessions (four hours per week, total 12 hours contact time). The final 2 sessions will be for assessment.

Each session will take the form of a lecture followed by an interactive seminar or workshop. Students will have a number of opportunities to put what they are learning into practice with their classmates. Students will be expected to participate fully and actively throughout the sessions.

In addition, it is expected that students will spend 38 study hours outside of the classroom contact hours on activities including assigned reading, optional reading of areas of personal interest, homework tasks, web research and preparation for assessment. Students should be aware that in order to fully benefit from the face-to-face classroom sessions, they will need to have done the preparation work assigned beforehand.

6. **Teaching methods**

The teaching approach will include the following:
- Taught sessions
- Small group working
- Group discussions
- Presentations

7. **Assessment:**

Assessment will be by:
- Group presentation (worth 25% of the overall mark)
- Written essay/reflection of 750-850 words (worth 75% of the overall mark)

Standard University policies apply with regard to late submission of assessments. There is no re-assessment opportunity.

8. **Course structure:**

The Indicative schedule is as follows:

Each two-hour session will comprise a lecture followed by analysis of primary sources.

**Session One:**

*The beginning of the Viking Age*

The course will begin with some general information about the module, including the aims and assessment. Then it moves on to consider records of the beginning
of the Viking Age in Europe and the motives of viking raiders. The chronicle records of the first viking attacks will be analysed.

Session Two:

*Vikings in the Northern and Western Isles*

Perhaps one of the first areas in Britain to be settled by vikings were the islands around Scotland. This session will consider how the surviving evidence sheds light of relations between vikings and the native peoples in these areas and the contribution that vikings have made to the identities of the islanders nowadays. Case studies of viking burials in Scotland will be considered for the evidence they shed on viking religion and culture.

Session Three:

*Vikings in England: Conquest and colonisation*

In a short period from the 860s to the 870s vikings were able to bring most of the lands of England under their control. We will consider the reasons for their success. The evidence of viking sculpture in England will be analysed to give an insight into cultural contacts between England and Scandinavia in the Viking Age.

Session Four:

*The Making of England*

One area of England called Wessex was able to escape the viking conquest and the expansion of this kingdom under Alfred the Great and his successors ultimately led to the formation of a united kingdom of England. As well as learning about this process of state formation, we will consider the economic impact of viking activity through the evidence of viking silver hoards.

Session Five:

*The Making of Scotland and Wales*

In narratives of British identity, Scotland and Wales are often overlooked and yet these remain distinctive parts of the United Kingdom with their own languages and identities. The creation of these kingdoms influenced by the activities will be looked at through this lecture, as well as later saga narratives.

Session Six:

*The End of the Viking Age*

In this final session, the students will give short group presentations about the history of Vikings in Britain. The final class will also consider the factors that led to the end of the Viking Age in medieval Europe.

9. **Learning outcomes**

On completion of this module, students will be able to:

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<tr>
<th>Learning outcome</th>
<th>Assessment component which</th>
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3
assesses this learning outcome

| Better understand and communicate complex ideas in written and spoken language | Written essay/reflection  
| Group presentation |
| Research a topic and work collaboratively to produce a written essay/reflection and a group presentation | Written essay/reflection  
| Group presentation |
| Demonstrate familiarity with a range of sources (historical, archaeological, onomastic) relating to viking activity in Britain | Written essay/reflection  
| Group presentation |

### 10. Skills

Key skills that will be developed:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>How this skill is developed</th>
<th>Mode of assessment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Group discussions, activities and tasks in class</td>
<td>Group presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Orally in group discussions, activities and tasks in class, in writing by production of assessed assignment</td>
<td>Essay/Group presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analytical skills</td>
<td>Lectures will identify methods used to analyse different types of evidence. Group discussion will allow students to critically evaluate a range of primary sources for themselves.</td>
<td>Essay/Group presentation</td>
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### 11. Books, ebooks and websites:

The University Website at [www.liv.ac.uk/library](http://www.liv.ac.uk/library) provides access to many relevant books and electronic books, as well as academic journals and databases.

**Recommended Pre-Course Reading**

Any of the following:


M. Redknap, *Vikings in Wales: An Archaeological Quest* (Cardiff, 2000)