

## Everyday Life in Viking Age Scandinavia

ASK500134, Z (credit): 3 credit points  
ASK500133, Zk (exam): 5 credit points

Tue 15:50 - 17:25  
P319 (nám. Jana Palacha 2)  
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The main topic of this course is the transformations that Scandinavia underwent from the Viking Age to the Reformation. The students will be introduced to its demographic characteristics, key religious concepts, and legal norms.

Theoretical knowledge will be combined with an introduction to the material culture: the aim is to give an overview of everyday problems of the respective periods and to show to what extent they are depicted in the Old Norse literature. In this course selected methods of experimental archaeology and anthropology will be presented in the appropriate context.

The necessary condition for obtaining the credit/passing the exam is active participation, at least 70% attendance, completed practical homework (work with textile), and a short presentation of a chosen topic. The credit will be awarded for a successful oral examination, while the exam will be based on seminar work.

- 1 The **definition** of “Old Norse” in time and space; contacts with other regions; **sources**;  
**Demography I** – age structure, size of population and its changes, 1349. Distribution and concentration of the population; childhood, old age and death
- 2 **Social structure; Demography II** – gender perspective, the valkyries
- 3 **Households** and their changes (time, social class, place), objects of daily use;  
houses, settlements, growing cities
- 4 What held the **society** together – laws, kinship, religion; þings, feasts, sports and games
- 5 **Economy** – what people lived on, what was grown, bred and crafted; trade; food and drink
- 6 **Warfare** – when, how and with what kind of weapons they fought; military units; military campaigns, civil wars;  
**means of transport**
- 7 **Christianisation** and its short- and long-term impact on society; church equipment; Uppsala, Nidaros and the changing landscape
- 8 **Kings’ courts** – development, function, king’s household; administration – what did centralization mean
- 9 **Written x oral tradition**. Texts in space – rune stones and their meanings; *kefli*, runic “graffiti”  
Parchment, manuscripts – manufacturing and copying, abbreviations, literacy.
- 10 **Courtly** discourse and **material** culture of the 13<sup>th</sup> century: was Scandinavia “in” after the Viking Age?
- 11 Scandinavia **after the great plague** – an overview
- 12 The **specific situation of Iceland**
- 13 Re-evaluation of the **written sources** – discussion on the value and limits of Old Norse texts

### **Selected bibliography:**

Jesse L. Byock: *Viking Age Iceland*. London, 2001.

Jón Viðar Sigurðsson: *Det norrøne samfunnet. Vikingen, kongen, erkebiskopen og bonden*. Oslo, 2008.

Sverre Bagge: *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom. State Formation in Norway, c. 900-1350*. København, 2003.

Ole J. Benedictow: „Demography“. In: Phillip Pulsiano (ed.): *Medieval Scandinavia. An Encyclopedia*. New York, 1993.

R. Ewart Oakeshott: *The Archaeology of Weapons, Arms and Armour from Prehistory to the Age of Chivalry*. Woodbridge, 1999.

Ingvild Øye (ed.): *Middelalderkvinner – liv og virke*. Bergen, 1989.

Carol J. Clover: „„Cold Are the Counsels of Women“. The Tradition Behind the Tradition.“ In: *Proceedings of the Sixth Saga Conference*. København, 1985.

Anne-Christine Larsen (ed.): *The Vikings in Ireland*. Roskilde, 2001.

Eric Christiansen: *The Norsmen in the Viking Age*. Oxford, 2006.

Greta Arwidsson, Gösta Berg: *The Mästermyr Find. A Viking Age Tool Chest from Gotland*. Lompoc, 1999.

Stefan Brink (ed.): *The Viking World*. London, New York, 2008.

William R. Short: *Icelanders in the Viking Age. The People of the Sagas*. Jefferson, London, 2010.

Helena Kadečková: *Dějiny Islandu*. Praha, 2009.

Jiří Starý: *Zákonem nechť je budována zem. Staroseverské zákony a zákoníky*. Praha, 2013.

Odd Einar Haugen (ed.): *Altnordische Philologie. Norwegen und Island*. Berlin, Nex York, 2007.

Herman Bengtsson: *Den höviska kulturen i Norden. En konsthistorisk undersökning*. Stockholm, 1999.