

ISS9CR- Tosaíonn an scéal: Celtic Religion, Folklore and Mythology

Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Course Outline:

Develop a critical understanding of the Celtic world in this interdisciplinary programme drawing on archaeological, historical, literary and mythological sources. A unique course that will enable you to develop critical thinking skills in relation to the concept of religion whilst exploring more recent trends within the study of religion such as material religion and implicit religion to develop an in-depth knowledge, understanding and appreciation of Celtic religion, folklore and mythology from Ireland, Scotland and Wales (the Celtic fringe). This course is taught exclusively by a scholar from Ireland who speaks the indigenous language and has training in older forms of the Irish language, although no prior knowledge of the Celtic languages is required or necessary to take and succeed in this course.

From the Classical age to the 21st century, Celts have fascinated and frightened people. This course explores the evolving way Celtic people lived and died, what they believed and why, different ways in which Celtic peoples have been perceived by outsiders, the ways in which Celts have presented themselves to the world and considers why there has been a revival in 21st century of Celtic faiths. In answering these questions you be introduced to the pre-Christian beliefs of the Celtic and Indo-European worlds, to the historical narratives in which such beliefs are embedded, and to the methodology of investigating ancient and medieval belief systems. You will also explore the impact of Christianity in different eras upon the Celtic religions, folklore and mythology through the recurring themes of freedom and independence, especially in relation to the warrior and druid types, signs and symbols and the materiality of the land.

Following an educational field trip to the Scottish Crannog Centre and an ancient stone circle in Aberfeldy you will have the opportunity to consider and respond creatively to the notion of a “sacred landscape” and develop a more in-depth understanding of how legends and mythology become attached to and rooted within sacred sites.

Learning outcomes

1. You will develop an appropriate level of knowledge and understanding of the lives and legacy of the Celtic peoples alongside a deeper exploration of the origin, function, and meaning of religion as a concept and lived practice. You will be able to demonstrate this in your essay and your group presentation.
2. You will have an understanding of how to read Celtic texts in their historical and literary

contexts rather than as 'stories' and thus enable you to appreciate the possible purposes for which these texts were composed and how they were used at the time compared with now. You will be able to demonstrate this in your essay, group presentation and seminar discussions.

3. You will be able to confidently articulate different methodological approaches to the study of pre-modern and Medieval Celtic religions, folklore and mythology, to assess their pros and cons within a range of disciplines. You will be able to demonstrate this in your essay, group presentations, in seminar discussions and on the field trip.
4. You will be able to demonstrate and reflect upon your individual ability to critically evaluate evidence and its interpretation and to be tolerant of differing interpretations; to sustain a logical argument and reach a conclusion that can be defended. You will be able to demonstrate this in your essay and group presentation.
5. You will develop the skills to communicate orally in an appropriate creative medium by making a presentation as part of a small group. Students most adept at language acquisition will have the opportunity to undertake a small portion of this in one of the Celtic languages should they wish to do so. You will be able to do demonstrate this in your group presentation, but will also need to attend the field trip to achieve full success.