



COURSE (MODULE) DESCRIPTION

Course (module) title	Code
Mythology and contemporary culture	

Lecturer(s)	Department, Faculty
Co-ordinator: Assoc. Prof. Dr Virginija Masiulionytė Other(s): Assist. Dr Rasa Baranauskienė, Assoc. Prof. Dr Aleksej Burov, Assist. Dr Tomas Čenys	Vilnius University Faculty of Philology Institute for the Languages and Cultures of the Baltic Universiteto 5, LT-01513 Vilnius

Study cycle	Type of the course unit
MA	optional

Mode of delivery	Semester or period when it is delivered	Language(s) of instruction
classroom	2 nd semester	English

Requisites	
Prerequisites:	Co-requisites (if relevant): -

Number of ECTS credits allocated	Student's workload (total)	Contact hours	Individual work
5	130	32	98

Purpose of the course unit: programme competences to be developed		
<p>This MA course introduces students to Germanic myths and epics and examines their enduring presence in contemporary literature. Students will gain a deeper understanding of pre-Christian Germanic worldviews and the cultural traditions of Northern Europe, exploring how these narratives continue to influence modern literary works.</p> <p>Through this course, students will develop key competencies, including intercultural awareness and an appreciation of the Northern European cultural tradition. They will enhance their ability to independently analyze and investigate literary and cultural discourse, engaging critically with both literary and scholarly texts. Additionally, students will strengthen their skills in conducting independent research, comparing cultural phenomena, and presenting their findings with scholarly rigor.</p>		
Learning outcomes of the course unit	Teaching and learning methods	Assessment methods
Students will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - acquire a comprehensive understanding of the pre-Christian world of ancient Germanic gods and heroes, as well as the enduring influence of its motifs in contemporary literature; - will deepen their knowledge of medieval worldviews and examine their reinterpretation and representation in modern literary works; 	Analysis of subject-specific literature, reading of fictional works, individual and group assignments, participation in seminar discussions.	Seminar participation and presentation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - develop the ability to interpret Northern European cultural phenomena within a broader context; - gain skills in comparing literary works from selected perspectives; - will be able to analyze, organize, and interpret information from diverse sources through the use of modern technologies, recognizing connections and differences among disparate, conflicting, or incomplete information; - enhance their capacity to understand and interpret texts across various genres, including scientific writing; 	Analysis of subject-specific literature; reading of fictional works; individual and group assignments; participation in seminar discussions; peer feedback (evaluation of interpretations presented by peers); analysis of sample assignments and performances, and the production of original texts.	Seminar participation and presentation.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cultivate effective communication skills for both written and oral contexts, engaging confidently in debate and constructing well-reasoned arguments; - to identify research problems, select appropriate materials and methodologies for investigation, and draw and present reasoned conclusions; - be equipped to present and defend their research findings articulately; 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cultivate independent thinking that transcends stereotypes and traditional boundaries, fostering openness to innovation, refinement of existing ideas, and the generation of new, original concepts; - commit to principles of integrity and fairness in their work, remaining mindful of the potential consequences of their actions. 	Individual and group assignments; participation in seminar discussions; analysis of sample tasks; development of original texts.	Seminar participation.

Course content: breakdown of the topics ¹	Contact hours							Time and tasks of self-study	
	Lectures	Tutorials	Seminars	Workshops	Laboratory work	Internship/work placement	Contact hours, total	Individual work	Assignments
Introduction. The ethno-cultural genesis of the Germanic people.	2						2	2	Reading and analysis of subject-specific literature; preparation for discussions and for responding to questions.
Between truth and falsification. Ancient Germanic people through the eyes of Publius Cornelius Tacitus. <i>Germania</i> .			2				2	4	Reading and analysis of subject-specific literature and fictional works; preparation for discussions and for responding to questions.
Northern Europe in the Early Middle Ages. Interaction between paganism and Christianity.	1						1	2	Reading and analysis of subject-specific literature; preparation for discussions and for responding to questions.
The world of Germanic gods, giants, elves and dwarves in the Norse sagas. <i>The Elder and the Younger Edda</i> .			4				4	7	Reading and analysis of fictional works; preparation for discussions and for responding to questions.
Germanic myths of the beginning and end of the world and their interaction with the Christian worldview in the medieval period. <i>Muspilli</i> .			2				2	3	Reading and analysis of subject-specific literature and fictional works; preparation for discussions and for responding to questions.
Warrior ethics and ideals in Germanic society. Their transformation in the medieval period. <i>Beowulf</i> and the <i>Song of Hildebrand</i> .			2				2	4	Reading and analysis of subject-specific literature and fictional works; preparation for discussions and for responding to questions.
The interplay of the historical and the fictional in the Germanic heroic epic. <i>Das Nibelungenlied</i> . <i>Gudrun</i> .			2				2	4	Reading and analysis of fictional works; preparation for discussions and for responding to questions.
The impact of the Viking invasion of continental Europe on the development of			2				2	2	Reading and analysis of subject-specific

¹ Course topics may undergo minor modifications.

literature in the Early Middle Ages. <i>Ludwigslied</i> .									literature and fictional works; preparation for discussions and for responding to questions.
The continuity of tradition: the monomyth theory of Joseph Campbell. Appropriation and adaptation.	2		1				3	4	Reading and analysis of subject-specific literature; preparation for discussions.
Germanic mythic motifs in contemporary literature: analysis of Joanne Harris' novel <i>Runemarks</i> :								0	Reading and analysis of fictional works; preparation for discussions.
<i>Runemarks</i> as part of a tetralogy. Construction, laws and order of the world. Order versus chaos. Magic. Runes. Religious dimension of the world.	1		1				2	4	
Maddy as a heroine according to Joseph Campbell's monomyth theory. Her journey. The stages of the journey.			2				2	2	
The figures of Odin and Loki in the novel. Mimir. Other gods and mythical creatures. Their characters and functions in the novel. Similarities and differences with Germanic myths. The division into protagonists and antagonists.			2				2	4	
Representation of Ragnarök in the novel.			1				1	2	
Summary: Elements of Germanic mythology in the novel, their function and transformation in comparison with tradition.			1				1	2	
Independent research: analysis of a contemporary work of fiction with elements of Germanic myth/epic. Presentation on a topic of student's choice. Recommended works for independent study: Stephan Grundy <i>Beowulf</i> , <i>Rhinegold</i> and <i>Attila's Treasure</i> , Parke Godwin <i>The Tower of Beowulf</i> , Joanne Harris <i>The Gospel of Loki</i> , Neil Gaiman <i>American Gods</i> and <i>Norse Mythology</i> , Wolfgang Hohlbein <i>Hagen von Tronje</i> , Axel Meyer <i>Das Buch der Sünden</i> , A. S. Byatt <i>Ragnarok: The End of the Gods</i> , Svava Jakobsdottir <i>The Saga of Gunnlod</i> , Torgny Lindgren <i>Kärleksguden Frö: en levnadsteckning</i> or any other novel, film, TV series etc.		2	2				4	47	
Total	6	2	24				32	93	

Assessment strategy	Weight, %	Assessment time	Assessment criteria
Cumulative assessment			
Active participation in seminars	40 %	during the semester	Not graded activities. Points are given for active participation and timely completion of assignments: 4 points: student has completed at least 90 % of assignments and tasks 3 points: student has completed between 89 and 80 % of assignments and tasks 2 points: student has completed between 79 and 60 % of assignments and tasks 1 point: student has completed between 69 and 50 % of assignments and tasks student has completed less than 50 % of assignments and tasks
Presentation	60 %	at the end of the semester	Given points will be converted to a grade using a 10-point grading scale. Organization: 3 points: Presentation is clear, logical, and organized. Listeners can follow line of reasoning. 2 points: Presentation is generally clear and well organized. Few minor points may be confusing.

		<p>1 point: Listeners can follow presentation only with effort. Some arguments are not clear. Organization seems haphazard.</p> <p>Delivery:</p> <p>3 points: Level of presentation is appropriate for the audience. Presentation is a planned conversation, paced for audience understanding. It is not a reading for a paper. Body language reflects comfort interacting with audience.</p> <p>2 points: Level of presentation is generally appropriate. Pacing is sometimes too fast or too slow. Body language reflects some discomfort for interacting with audience.</p> <p>1 point: Aspects of the presentation are too elementary or too sophisticated for the audience. Much of the information is read. Body language reveals reluctance to interact with the audience.</p> <p>Use of visual aids:</p> <p>3 points: Visual aids enhance the presentation. They are prepared in a professional manner: Fonts on visuals is large enough to be seen by all; information is organized to maximize audience understanding; details are minimized so main points stand out.</p> <p>2 points: Visual aids contribute to the quality of the presentation. Font size is appropriate for reading. Some material is not supported by visual aids.</p> <p>1 points: Visual aids are poorly prepared or used inappropriately. Font is too small to be easily seen. Too much information is included. Unimportant material is highlighted. Listeners may be confused.</p> <p>Content:</p> <p>3 points: Speaker provides an accurate and complete explanation of key concepts, drawing on relevant literature. Applications to theory are included to illuminate issues. Listeners gain insights. Information (names, facts, etc.) included in the presentation is consistently accurate.</p> <p>2 points: For the most part, explanations of concepts are accurate and complete. Some helpful applications to theory are included. No significant errors are made. Listeners recognize any errors to be the result of nervousness or oversight.</p> <p>1 point: Explanations of concepts are inaccurate or incomplete. Little attempt is made to tie theory to practice. Listeners gain little from the presentation. Enough errors are made to distract knowledgeable listeners, but some information is accurate. The presentation is useful if the listener can determine what information is reliable.</p> <p>Responsiveness to the Audience:</p> <p>3 points: Consistently clarifies, restates and responds to questions. Summarizes when needed.</p> <p>2 points: Generally responsive to audience comments, questions, and needs. Misses some opportunities for interaction.</p> <p>1 point: Responds to questions inadequately.</p> <p>Criteria based on https://www.ansci.wisc.edu/jjp1/ansci_repro/misc/oral_eval_criteria.htm, adapted for the purposes of this course.</p>
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Author	Publishing year	Title	Issue of a periodical or volume of a publication; pages	Publishing house or internet site
Required reading				
		The Nibelungenlied		can be found on https://www.gutenberg.org/
		Gudrun		can be found on https://www.gutenberg.org/
		The Poetic Edda		can be found on https://www.gutenberg.org/
		The Hildebrandlied		https://origin.web.fordham.edu/halsall/source/830hildebrandslied.asp
		Muspilli		https://sourcebook.stanford.edu/sites/all/modules/custom/vm/VersioningMachine/texts/muspilli_revised.html
		Ludwigslied		https://sourcebook.stanford.edu/sites/all/modules/custom/vm/VersioningMachine/texts/Ludwigslied.html
Campbell, Joseph	1993	The hero with a thousand faces		London: Fontana Press

Gurevich, Aaron	1992	Historical Anthropology of the Middle Ages		Chicago: University of Chicago Press
Harris, Joanne	2007	Runemarks		London et al: Doubleday
Sanders, Julie	2008	Adaptation and appropriation		London, New York: Routledge
Recommended reading				
Pressfield, Steven	2016	Nobody wants to read your sh*t: why that is and what you can do about it		New York/Los Angeles: Black Irish Entertainment LLC
Simek, Rudolf	2005	Tolkien und die germanische Mythologie		München: Verlag C. H. Beck

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