HIST 300 B5: Britain and Ireland from Prehistory to the Plague.

Instructor: Bruce O'Brien, Professor of History; Monroe 215; 654-1477; bobrien@umw.edu;
Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 1:00-2:00 PM; Tuesday only 9:00-11:00 AM and 5:00-6:00 PM; or by appointment; Class meets in Monroe 210, 2:00-3:15 PM

***Course***

This course surveys the histories of Ireland and Britain (and other islands nearby) from the Neolithic Age to the end of the Middle Ages (c. 1350-1400), and aims to introduce students to some of the major events, persons, and movements. The course will also focus student learning on the interpretation of sources and organization of results for oral delivery (also known as a presentation). Group projects, including the final group presentations, will be particularly important for student learning.

Britain and Ireland from prehistory to the Plague counts in the History major. With respect to the goals of the History major, students will gain an:

- ability to read critically primary sources and modern authorities
- ability to write with clarity about the past
- ability to speak with clarity about the past
- ability to utilize technological resources in research

***Readings***

Hugh Kearney, *The British Isles: A History of Four Nations*, 2nd edn (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2012)

Additional readings are or will soon be on this website via links on the syllabus.

***Work***

*Assignments related to Group Project*

1. Bibliography for group project (due in class, February 1)
2. Executive summary (due in class, March 1)
3. Group Presentation (delivered near the end of the term, April 12-24) Group and Self Assessment Form is here.

*Individual work*

4. Analysis of Primary Source (4 pages, uploaded to Canvas February 22)
5. Participation
6. Final exam (May 3) The IDs can be found here.

***The Group Presentation***

The Group project, which ends with a class presentation and discussion, is the chief work of the semester. Students will form 4 groups early in the term, and will then procced to organize themselves to gather sources, analyze evidence and modern theories, and then present their findings to the class. This project will have three graded elements: the bibliography, the executive summary, and the final presentation. Significant class time has been set aside solely for groups to work individually with me before the executive summary is due and again before the final presentation. The questions each group will investigate arise from four key periods of development in the history of the Isles: the Neolithic revolution, which produced henges, tombs, 'cities', and other monuments and material evidence; the spread of Christianity throughout the Isles, and its consequences for converts and for Christianity; the impact of two periods of invasion by vikings and Normans on native cultures; and last, the creation or invention of four nations or nation-states in the waning centuries of the Middle Ages. Students will be required to submit self- and group-evaluations at three points (after the bibliography, the executive summary, and final presentation), and these will be used to help shade the group grades.

Membership in the four groups can be found here.

***The Significance of Participation***

Participation, which counts for 10% of the grade, will be based on on attendance, preparedness for, and contributions to, the discussions. You will be called on to engage with issues raised by the readings throughout the term. Expect to be called on now and then.

***Grading Principles***

In this class, an A (93–100) or A- (90–92) mean that the work done is of excellent quality. B+ (88–89), B (83–87) and B- (80–82) mean that the work was well done, competent, even excellent in some ways, but that there is room for improvement. C+ (78–79), C (73–77), and C- (70–72) signify that the work was satisfactory in most respects, even good in some ways, but that there was much room for improvement. D+ (68–69) and D (60–67) are passing grades, but mean that much more could be done in most if not all areas of the work, but that it was not missing *in toto* any key aspect of the assignment. I assign grades based on a number of variables which, if they can be named (e.g., style, argument, research, etc.), cannot in reality be separated from each other. Each variable affects the others. Deficient style will vitiate argument; poor research will undermine argument, and so on. Students earning less than a C by mid semester will receive a notice of unsatisfactory performance.

As with all courses at UMW, this class will abide by the honor code. In particular, students must not commit plagiarism. Any questions concerning the boundary between legitimate and illegitimate appropriation and citation of sources should be brought to the professor before assignments are turned in.

***Grade***

Group project bibliography (10%); Group project executive summary (15%); Group presentation (35%); Analysis of primary source (15%); Participation (10%); Final Exam (15%)

***Students with Disabilities***

The Office of Disability Services has been designated by the University of Mary Washington as the primary office to guide, counsel, and assist students with disabilities. If you receive services through that office and require accommodations for this class, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss your approved accommodations. I will hold any information you share with me in strictest confidence unless you give me permission to do otherwise.

If you have not made contact with the Office of Disability Services and have reasonable accommodation needs, I will be happy to help you contact them. The office will require appropriate documentation of a disability.

***Other Resources***

If you are depressed or stressed out and finding it hard to cope with school, the people around you, or life in general, I recommend visiting the UMW Counseling and Psychological Services Center: the Center can be reached at (540) 654-1053 (M-F 8-5), or you can stop by Lee 106.

For events and announcements from the History Department, as well as useful pages on research and writing, see the Department's News and Resources website: http://cas.umw.edu/historyamericanstudies/

***Warning on Electronic Devices***

You cannot use a laptop in class unless you have a specific accommodation for this. Unfortunately, too often laptops become a distraction, principally for the user. Phones must be placed in a box provided at the start of each class.

*Note: This syllabus and calendar are subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.*

## *Calendar*

*January* 16 Introduction to the history of the Isles and this course

18 Preview of substance and questions of Group Projects

23 Litter on the landscape: prehistoric monuments in the Isles

Reading: Kearney, Introduction and chapter 1

25 Phases, waves, practices: the interpretations

30 Discussion: Reports on the Ness of Brodgar on Mainland, Orkney

In preparing for this discussion, read the following short articles and chapters:

Caroline Wickham-Jones, *Orkney: A Historical Guide* (2015)

[Nick Card], *The Ness of Brodgar* (2015)

NIck Card, "Ness of Brodgar" (2013)

Alex Bayliss, et al., "Islands of History: The Late Neolithic Timescape of Orkney" (2017)

*Images illustrating Wickham-Jones' guide.*

*February* 1 The Celtic Iron Age

Reading: The Story of Mac Datho's Pig, from the Ulster Cycle

***Group Bibliographies due in class (paper copies)***

6 The Roman conquest

Reading: Kearney, chapter 2; selections from Tacitus, *Agricola*

(Read pp. 169-73 [Tacitus' introduction to the work] and pp. 199-207 [An account of Agricoa's first campaigns and his policies in Britain])

8 Revolutions and Catastrophes: 4th to 7th centuries

Reading: Kearney, chapter 3; Selections from contemporary chronicles (Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* E version)

13 The Christians in Britain and the Christian missions

***Revised Group Bibliographies due in class (paper copies)***

15 The course and consequences of Patrick's mission to the Irish

Reading: Texts relating to the missions to the Irish (5th-6th centuries)--

*The Penitential of Cummean* and the *Confession of St. Patrick*

20 Consultations: Group 1 (2:00-2:30) and Group 2 (2:45-3:15)

22 Consultations: Group 3 (2:00-2:30) and Group 4 (2:45-3:15)

27 The viking age in the Isles

Reading: Kearney, chapter 4; The Treaty of Alfred and Guthrum (and an introduction to the text, with images of the MSS if you are interested); The Annals of Ulster; *Orkneyinga Saga,* cc. 1-12.

***Analysis of primary source due by 11:59 PM on Canvas***

***(uploaded as doc, docx, pdf)***

March 1 The last vikings: The Norman conquests

Reading: Kearney, chapter 5; selections from Gerald of Wales, *Song of Dermot and the Earl,* trans. G. Orpen, pp. 3-39 only (it is 19 pages of text); The Bull *Laudabiliter*; Gerald of Wales on the Irish.

***2–11 Spring Break***

13 Discussion: Cataclysm or no cataclysm in post-conquest England

Reading: William I's laws; Domesday Book: commissioners' questions and extract for Norfolk; Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's assessment of William's reign.

15 The rise of England in the 13th and 14th centuries

Reading: Kearney, chapter 6

***Group Executive Summaries due in class (paper copies)***

20 Conquest and cultures

22 Discussion: The rebellious Welsh

Reading: Texts relating to the rebellion of Owain Glyndwr: Adam of Usk on Glyndwr's foreign policy and John Stanley's account of Owain's Harlech Parliament.

27 Ireland and Britain at the end of the Middle Ages

29 Preparation for presentation meeting with Group 1

April 3 Preparation for presentation meeting with Group 2

5 Preparation for presentation meeting with Group 3

10 Preparation for presentation meeting with Group 4

12 ***Presentation of Group 1***:

Were there common prehistoric cultures in the Isles?

17 ***Presentation of Group 2***:

Christianizing the Isles: comparing methods and consequences.

19 ***Presentation of Group 3***:

Vikings and Normans and the shaping of the Isles

24 ***Presentation of Group 4***:

When were the four nations of the Isles invented?

26 Final thoughts on what we've seen; review for final exam

May 3 3:30-6:00 PM ***Final Exam***