

# The Celtic World

ENGL 393

**Professor Farina**

**TuTh 2:30-3:45, Clark 200**

The ancient Celts have fascinated many people who came after them – not only their own descendents but writers, artists, and historians from the 11<sup>th</sup> century to the present. These distant and somewhat enigmatic people have a strong hold on our own popular imagination:

contemporary film, television, comic books, and romance fiction abound with Celtic-inspired fantasy. This course provides an introduction to the literature, art, and history of “Celtic” peoples before 1600: i.e. the Irish, Welsh, Scots, Cornish, and Bretons. “Celtic” is here in quotes because one of our main inquiries will be whether there was or is something like a truly pan-Celtic identity. In order to understand whether “Celticness” is an ancient or modern phenomenon, we will also discuss how the early Celts have been represented in later periods. Other topics to be discussed include: the Celtic hero (particularly Cú Chulainn and King Arthur); the Celtic Otherworld; Bardic poetry; and Celtic Christianity.



## **Required Texts:**

*Early Irish Myths and Sagas*, trans. Gantz (Penguin)

*The Tain*, ed. Carson. (Penguin)

*The Mabinogi*, ed. Ford (California)

Gerald of Wales, *The History and Topography of Ireland*, trans. O'Meara (Penguin)

Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain* (Penguin)

Marie de France, *The Lais of Marie de France*, trans. Burgess and Busby (Penguin)

Heldris of Cornwall, *Silence*, trans. Roche-Mahdi (Michigan State)

Note: Please be sure to get the editions that we will be using in class. You must have the required books with you when we discuss them in class.

Other required readings will be distributed as PDFs or found online.

**Required Coursework:**

- Consistent participation in class discussion (20%)
- Two in-class exams (25% each)
- One 8-page research paper, including research proposal and draft (30%)
- [Optional] Short presentation on contemporary Celticism (5%)

Note: You must complete both exams and the research paper to pass the class. Exams may be rescheduled provided there is good reason to do so. Late research proposals, essay drafts, or final research essays will not be accepted. Failure to hand in a “passing” research proposal or essay draft will result in a half grade deduction off your research essay grade. (So, for example, if your research essay is a B- but you did not turn in a research proposal, the grade for the essay would be a C+).

**Contact Information:**

My drop-in office hours are Wednesday 1:00-3:00 in my office, 335 Colson Hall (3<sup>rd</sup> floor). I am also happy to meet with you at other times by appointment. I can best be reached at: [Lara.Farina@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:Lara.Farina@mail.wvu.edu) or at my MIX email.

**Policies:**

**Attendance:** This is a discussion-based course, so attendance is required. You may have two absences without your grade being in any way affected. Six is the maximum number of absences; after six, you will fail the course. In general, I do not want to see any notes or know why you are absent. The only exception to this is if you know (in advance) that you will be missing two or more consecutive classes.

**Plagiarism:** All written work submitted for credit in this class must be produced by you for this class and must be in your own words. Any language you use from other sources, including your own previous work, must be properly cited. That means that you may not: 1) turn in something that someone else has written or partially written, 2) “copy” another piece of writing without citing it, or 3) turn in written work that you have submitted for another class. We will discuss plagiarism more thoroughly later in the semester; you may also find WVU’s plagiarism policy here: <http://studentlife.wvu.edu/studentconductcode.html>. Plagiarism on either the exams or research essay will result in an “Unforgivable F” for the course.

**Social Tolerance:** I expect everyone in the course to be respectful of others, regardless of religious views, political affiliations, social status, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, etc. Violation of this expectation may be cause for removal from the course.

Discussion etiquette: Participation in class discussion is a required part of this course. You must do the reading on time to be able to discuss the text at hand. It is usually obvious when a student who is talking in class hasn't actually read the work, so don't try to fake it just to get participation points. Please listen carefully to other students' comments in class discussion. Although I want everyone to contribute to class discussion, that is best achieved when talkative individuals hold back some so that others can chime in. If you have spoken three or four times in a class session, that is probably enough. Occasionally, we will have small group discussion; be an active discussant in your group.

### Course Schedule:

- Tu. 8/21 Introduction  
Th. 8/23 "Celtic" linguistic/material history
- Tu. 8/28 *Early Irish Myths*: 37-59, 127-133, 188-218, 256-267  
Th. 8/30 *The Tain*, 3-50
- Tu. 9/4 *The Tain*, 51-120  
Th. 9/6 *The Tain*, 121-208
- Tu. 9/11 *The Mabinogi*, 35-87  
Th. 9/13 *The Mabinogi*, 89-157
- Tu. 9/18 Taliesin (159-187 in *Mabinogi*); excerpts from *Meic Conglinne*  
Th. 9/20 No Class, but read excerpts from *Gawain and the Green Knight*
- Tu. 9/25 Excerpts from Siewers, *Stange Beauty* (PDF); exam review  
Th. 9/30 Exam #1
- Tu. 10/2 Saints: excerpts from the *Acallam na Senorach* and *Liber Breac*  
Th. 10/4 Excerpts from *Life of St. Columba*; *The Voyage of St. Brendan*
- Tu. 10/9 *History of the Kings of Britain*, 51-88, 149-185  
Th. 10/11 *History of the Kings of Britain*, 186-261
- Tu. 10/16 *History and Topography of Ireland*, 29-91  
Th. 10/18 *History*. . ., 92-125; excerpts from the *Scotichronicon*
- Tu. 10/23 Exam #2

Th. 10/25 Get ready for Halloween!  
Rogers, "Samhain and the Origins of Halloween" (online); viewing  
of *The Wicker Man*

Tu. 10/30 Lais of Marie de France: *Guigemar, Le Fresne, Lanval, Laustic*

Th. 11/1 Lais of Marie de France: *Bisclavret, Yonec, Milun, Chaitivel*

Tu. 11/6 Election Day Holiday: read from *Silence*

Th. 11/8 *Silence*, 3-17, 79-163, 243-315

Research Proposal due (via email) Sunday, 11/11

Tu. 11/13 Literary Research Clinic, Conferences

Th. 11/15 Conferences

Thanksgiving Recess

Tu. 11/27 Early Modern/Modern Celticism (PDF and online materials)

Th. 12/29 5-page Essay Draft Due: Peer Review

Tu. 12/4 Celticism presentations

Th. 12/6 Discussion of Paper Topics

Tu. 12/11 Research paper due at 4:00 pm