



ARCADIA UNIVERSITY
THE COLLEGE OF GLOBAL STUDIES

Course Title: Celtic Christianity and Scotland: Recovering the Early Medieval in the Modern

Term: Summer/ 5 weeks

Credit: 4

Course Code: SCOT CISC 301

Instructor: Dr Sarah C. Erskine

Course description

What is 'Celtic Christianity'? Where do its roots lie? Can this concept help or hinder our pursuit of historical knowledge into the distant past? During this exciting and challenging course we will unpack the popular concept of 'Celtic Christianity' by analysing how it is defined, and often defended, by modern writers and whether it is a valid means for us to comprehend the identity of the Celtic-speaking peoples of the British Isles to *circa* 1100, with a particular focus on the regions we now recognize as Scotland. In each of the first four weeks we will independently weigh the validity of academic and non-academic perceptions of 'Celtic Christianity' against the exploration of a variety of key early medieval textual and archaeological sources pertaining to Scotland to *circa* 1100. The fifth and final week sees the course transfer location to Ireland, where we will get the opportunity to assess a select array of textual and archaeological sources from Ireland to *circa* 1100 to ascertain whether we can use a comparative approach to better inform our views of the validity of 'Celtic Christianity' as a concept more broadly applicable to regions other than Scotland.

Learning Outcomes

Work critically with a variety of primary textual and non-textual sources students will:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the early medieval period in Scotland to *circa* 1100.
2. Articulate the modern concept of 'Celtic Christianity' in Scotland and independently.
3. Critically evaluate the arguments of modern scholars against your own developed knowledge of this formative period in Scotland's past.
4. Synthesize evidence from primary and secondary sources to form balanced arguments in select themes of Scotland's early medieval past to *circa* 1100.
4. Hone communication skills for class participation, written / oral assessments, and exam preparation.

Course Requirements

1. Required readings (with bibliographic data)

BOURKE, CORMAC (ed.), *Studies in the Cult of St Columba*, (Dublin, 1997); ISBN: 0337112010 (cost to be determined).

IAN BRADLEY *Celtic Christianity: Making Myths and Chasing Dreams*, (Edinburgh, 1999); ISBN: 0748610472 (paperback) / 0748610480 (cost to be determined).

CLANCY, THOMAS OWEN,

- "'Celtic" or "Catholic"? Writing the history of Scottish Christianity, AD 664-1093', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, Vol. 32, (2002), pp. 5-39; article supplied by tutor.
- and Broun, Dauvit (eds.), *Spes Scotorum: Hope of Scots: Saint Columba, Iona and Scotland*, (Edinburgh, 1999); ISBN: 0567086828 (cost to be determined).

HERREN, MICHAEL W. and BROWN, SHIRLEY ANN (eds.), *Christ in Celtic Christianity: Britain and Ireland from the Fifth to the Tenth Century*, (Woodbridge, 2012); ISBN: 9781843837138 (cost to be determined).

MÁRKUS, GILBERT,

- 'The end of Celtic Christianity', *Epworth Review*, Vol. 24, (1997), pp. 45-55; article supplied by tutor.
- 'What is Celtic Spirituality?', *Priests and People*, (1997), pp. 117-20; article supplied by tutor.

MEEK, DONALD E.,

- 'Modern Celtic Christianity: The contemporary revival and its roots', *The Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology*, Vol. 10, (1992), pp. 6-31; article supplied by tutor.
- 'Surveying the saints: reflections on recent writings on "Celtic Christianity"', *The Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology*, Vol. 15, (1991), pp. 50-60; article supplied by tutor.
- *The Quest for Celtic Christianity*, (Edinburgh, 2000); ISBN: 1871828511 (cost to be determined).

Additional primary sources and secondary readings for essay questions will be distributed in class to supplement these.

2. Assessment

Primary Text or Object Analysis (500 words) (20 %): Brief commentary looking at context, content and significance of either an excerpt from a choice of early medieval texts or objects in the National Museums Scotland collections (a list of suitable options will be provided). This assesses students' skills for interrogating primary sources in order to obtain evidence for historical research.

Essay (1500 words) (40 %): Several questions will be presented in class concerning the concept of 'Celtic Christianity' and how this, in the student's opinion, either helps or hinders scholarly enquiry into Scotland's early medieval past. An analytical response to one question will be required, drawing on a respectable range of primary and secondary sources. Guidance and reading lists will be provided.

End of Class Exam (40 %): Students will be required to answer one essay question out of a choice of six questions for Section A (20%) and one set question for Section B, for which the student will make special reference to primary excerpts from texts and/or artefacts from a choice of six to formulate two short gobbet-style answers to the main question for each primary source chosen (20%).

3. Level: (300)

Course Outline

Block 1 (Week 1): *The Modern Interpretations of ‘Celtic Christianity’?*

For week 1, students will spend 2 hours each morning on Monday to Thursday assessing the modern origin and various interpretations of ‘Celtic Christianity’ as a concept. The focus is on the analysis of the secondary sources, which equips students for the challenges to come in subsequent weeks (8 hours). The week breaks down as follows:

Monday: Course introduction and overview: what is ‘Celtic Christianity’ and why does it matter?

Tuesday: The modern origins of ‘Celtic Christianity’ in Scotland I: 1800-1900.

Wednesday: The modern origins of ‘Celtic Christianity’ in Scotland II: 1900-present.

Thursday: Discussing interdisciplinary approaches to the early medieval past in Scotland.

Friday: Joint (with Archaeology and Geology) field trip: (TBC).

Block 2 (Week 2): *The Christianisation of Scotland to circa 700*

Students will spend 2 hours each morning Monday to Thursday learning of how Christianity in Scotland established itself in wider society by discussing a variety of primary sources, both textual and physical (8 hours). The week breaks down as follows:

Monday: The Christianisation of the Celtic-speaking regions of the British Isles.

Tuesday: The Christianisation of Scotland to *circa* 700: history verses archaeology.

Wednesday: Joint (with Geology) mini field trip: (TBC).

Thursday: Scotland’s earliest missionary saints: Columba and Ninian.

Friday: Joint (with Archaeology and Geology) field trip: (TBC).

Block 3 (Week 3): *The Establishment of Christianity in Scotland, circa 700-1100*

For week 3, students will spend 2 hours each morning Monday to Thursday thinking about how ‘orthodox’ Christian practices, ecclesiastical structures and administration were in early medieval

Scotland compared to elsewhere in the Christian West; as in the previous week, a variety of primary sources will form the focus of analysis (8 hours). The week breaks down as follows:

Monday: The expansion and composition of the Church in Scotland, *circa* 700-1100.

Tuesday: Expressions of Christianity in Scotland through texts and artefacts: are these unique?

Wednesday: Joint (with Geology) mini field trip: (TBC).

Thursday: Can we speak of a 'Celtic Church' in Scotland?

Friday: Joint (with Archaeology and Geology) field trip: (TBC).

Block 4 (Week 4): 'Celtic Christianity': A Viable Concept?

For week 4, students will spend 2 hours each morning Monday and Tuesday to return full-circle to the modern debates on 'Celtic Christianity' they learned about in week 1. By thinking about how 'orthodox' Christian practices, ecclesiastical structures and administration actually were in early medieval Scotland, and indeed in the other Celtic-speaking regions, students will be in an excellent position to formulate their own opinions to debate with each other on whether they think 'Celtic Christianity' is a viable concept (4 hours). The rest of the week will include revision and guidance on completing the various assessments for the course (4 hours). The week breaks down as follows:

Monday: Mini field trip: (TBC).

Tuesday: Whole class debate: How valid is the concept of 'Celtic Christianity' to our understanding of Scotland's early medieval past to *circa* 1100?

Wednesday: Guidance: Document Analysis skills/content/citations.

Thursday: Guidance: Essay writing skills/content/citations/presentation.

Friday: Guidance: Exam skills.

Block 5 (Week 5): Comparing 'Celtic Christianity' in Ireland and Scotland

In week 5 the course moves location to Ireland but continues the theme of 'Celtic Christianity' by introducing a close-comparative element between early medieval Scotland and Ireland. This comparative element allows students the opportunity to further assess their views of 'Celtic Christianity' in Scotland and how this concept might be applied, or not, to another major region of the Celtic-speaking peoples of the British Isles: Ireland to *circa* 1100.

All relevant reading will be supplied by the lecturer in week four!

Monday: Mini field trip (TBC).

Tuesday: Class discussion of selected textual evidence from Ireland to *circa* 1100.

Wednesday: Mini field trip (TBC).

Thursday: Class discussion of selected archaeological evidence from Ireland to *circa* 1100.

Friday: Whole class debate: Can we apply the concept of 'Celtic Christianity' to early medieval Ireland, and does this in any way alter your view of applying this concept to Scotland?

3 Required day field trips on the Fridays, with smaller excursions periodically during the week:

Each field trip is about 5 hours excluding travel time (total = 20 hours):

(Total 60 contact hours with direction from lecturer)

Additional reading lists for Blocks 1 – 5:

Suggested reading lists will be distributed with the essay questions.

Pre-requisites:

None:

Rationale and Impact of the Course:

This course is being offered jointly as part of a Scottish studies program and in collaboration with a follow-on course in the Republic of Ireland in Dublin focusing on early Ireland. Students on the Scottish studies program will also have the option of taking Geology (200 level) from the offerings provided by the University of Edinburgh's Office of Lifelong Learning in partnership with Arcadia University. Joint field trips will demonstrate the connections between environment and historical events, showing how important place is to furthering our understanding of the past. The cultural exposure and the research skills developed in this course will also apply to the students' wider studies when they return to their home universities.

Dr Sarah Christine Erskine (Glasgow University, School of Humanities, Celtic & Gaelic)