

# ARTH 102: Symbols and Stories in Western Art

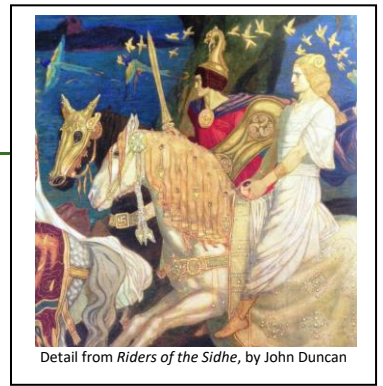
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**Instructor:** Laura McCloskey

**Term:** Spring 2024, online course

**Email:** lmcclosk@gmu.edu

**Office Hours:** Blackboard Collaborate on Tuesdays from 12pm-1pm,  
or by appointment



## Description and Goals

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### Symbols and Stories in Irish Myth

This course explores the relationship between visual, historical, and literary themes from the Celtic period through the early twentieth century in Ireland. Throughout the course, we will explore the relationship between art objects and the written word to discover the links between visual and textual narratives.

We will begin the course with an overview of the Celtic period in the Iron and Bronze ages in continental Europe, Britain, and Ireland, analyzing the artistic motifs and spiritual practices of the Celts. Through reading translations of mythological tales from France, England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, we will develop a visual and linguistic repertoire that will serve as a foundation for interpreting the rich artistic traditions of Ireland after the coming of Christianity. Most modern translations of Irish myth were compiled in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as Ireland struggled for independence from Britain. We will compare early and late translations of Irish mythology to uncover the development of critical symbols of Ireland such as the shamrock, harp, and tricolor.

This course fulfills the Fine Arts requirement.

## Texts and Readings

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There are three required texts for this course as well as numerous articles and book chapters available on Blackboard and JStor. The GMU Bookstore regularly reports significant difficulty finding my requested books, so I recommend that you also look at online vendors such as Amazon or Barnes and Noble for these texts. Lady Gregory's text is also available for free online if you do some searching. All texts can also be easily obtained or reserved from the library consortium.

### REQUIRED:

1. *Lady Gregory's Complete Irish Mythology, with Preface by W.B. Yeats*. Lady Augusta Gregory, 2015. Bounty Books (division of Octopus Publishing Group, a Hachette UK Company). ISBN 978-0-753729-20-5 (\$33.61 on Amazon)
2. *Celtic Myths and Legends*. Peter Berresford Ellis, 2002. Running Press. ISBN 978-0786711079 (\$15.90 on Amazon, or \$5.99 for a Kindle version)
3. *Early Irish Myths and Sagas*. Jeffrey Gantz, 1982. Penguin. ISBN 978-0140443974 (\$15.99 on Amazon, or \$10.99 for an eTextbook version)

### RECOMMENDED:

- *Irish Art: A Concise History*. By: Bruce Arnold, 2002. Thames and Hudson. ISBN 978-0500201480
- McCaffrey, Carmel, and Leo Eaton. 2003. *In Search of Ancient Ireland: The Origins of the Irish, from Neolithic Times to the Coming of the English*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Kinsella, Thomas, and Louis Le Brocq. 2002. *The Táin: From the Irish Epic Táin Bó Cúailnge*. Oxford University Press. (Paperback or Kindle, but it's also available in the CELT library if you don't want to buy it)
- Rampolla, Mary Lynn. 2015. *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History: A PDF-Style E-Book*. Bedford/St. Martin's. Any edition of this text is fine. This text is useful for understanding how to write in the humanities, including developing a thesis, supporting your claims, and analyzing sources.

In addition to the assignments below, I offer optional unit quizzes and study skills surveys to help you track your progress.

**Here is how your grade will be calculated:**

Midterm Essay- 20%

Final exam- 20%

Online reflections- 25% (5 posts x 5% each)

Online discussions- 25% (5 discussions x 5% each)

Introduction post and Reply- 10% (5% each)

Optional extra credit assignment- 5%

**Introductory Post and Reply to a Classmate**

For your introductory post, post a paragraph about yourself in the appropriate forum on our discussion board. You may want to include information such as your year at Mason (freshman, sophomore, etc.), major, future goals, and why you are interested in our course. (worth 5 points) Reply to at least one classmate. (worth 5 points)

**Midterm Essay**

The midterm essay is due halfway through our course and is designed to test your knowledge and understanding of the role of mythology in Irish art. Choose a myth from either Ellis' compilation or Gantz and pick one art object that we have studied that embodies some aspect of the myth. Analyze why both the myth and the object are important to art history and discuss how the two share related themes (more information is available on our Blackboard page). The essay is open note and open book. It should be about a page in length (double-spaced, 12pt font).

**Final Exam**

The exam will be a combination of multiple choice questions and short answer responses. Lockdown Browser is not required and the exam is timed for three hours. You **may** consult notes and course texts, but you **may not** consult the Internet.

**Blackboard Individual Reflection Journal**

Prompts for individual comments related to the previous or current week's lecture, readings, or course progress will be loaded to the Blackboard blog tab. You must complete all 5 reflections to receive full grade points for this category. Reflections should be at least one paragraph in length (5-7 well-planned, cohesive sentences) and clearly demonstrate to me that you are actively engaging with course lectures, themes, and readings.

**Blackboard Discussion Forum Participation**

Prompts for discussions will be loaded to the Blackboard discussion board tab. While the course can largely be self-paced, the topics build on each other; taking content week-by-week helps you break it into manageable chunks. There is a good deal of complicated vocabulary in the course – engaging with others while practicing the terms is a great way to build fluency. (It also ensures that you're on target for what will be tested in the midterm essay and final.)

Your initial post is due the Wednesday of the requisite week and your response to at least one other student is due by that Sunday. Both your own post and your response to someone else need to be well-planned and comprehensive. Include 5-7 sentences (a full paragraph). In your post, address the prompt; in your reply to someone else, reference their post and thoughtfully discuss their content: do you have any questions, did they make a particularly good argument, etc. DO NOT just say something like "what a good post, I agree!" - you will not earn points unless there is substance in your reply. In the prompt for each discussion, I give suggested sentence breakdowns and topics that you may want to address in your response to someone else.

You must complete all 5 discussions to receive full grade points for this category; you will not get any points for that week if you do not complete both your post as well as a response to someone else.

**Late Work**

Individual Reflection Journals can be completed for full points any time until May 6th. After that date, you will not receive credit for any late reflection posts. Discussion Forum posts and replies must be completed by the end of the week in which they are assigned in the class schedule. You will not receive points for late posts or replies because this distracts from the point of the assignment (similar to how you cannot receive participation points in a face-to-face class when you are absent). The midterm essay is due any time until the end of the sixth week of the course. The final exam will be unavailable at the end of the week in which it is assigned. Extensions will only be granted if you have a legitimate and documentable excuse (doctor

note, note from an employer, etc.). For the midterm essay, I will deduct 10% off your grade for that assignment for every day it is late (weeks end on Sunday and begin on Monday - e.g. submitting your midterm essay on the Monday after it was due will result in a 10% deduction).

## **Grading**

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I use a 100 total point system for the entire semester.

*Gentle warning:* It is easy to let things slip in an online class. I strongly urge you to make a solid plan for each week and follow it to the best of your ability.

### **Grading Scale**

A+ = 101 and above

A = 95-100

A- = 91-94

B+ = 87-90

B = 84-86

B- = 81-83

C+ = 77-80

C = 73-76

C- = 69-72

D = 65-68

F = 64 and below

IN = incomplete (You must request an IN no later than two weeks before the end of the semester and be passing the course at the time of your request; deadlines for IN work follow the Registrar's calendar.)

### **Extra Credit**

The Washington D.C area is host to numerous Irish festivals and events throughout the year. If you attend one of these events during the semester, please write a review of the event and discuss any cultural or historical links you noted that are relevant to the themes of the course. Please include your ticket or a program as proof of your attendance. Additional on-campus self-enrichment opportunities are also provided on our Blackboard page. You are welcome to find other Ireland-related events on your own; please email me for approval.

This review is due by the last day of class and should be 1-2 pages in length.

What I need in your synopsis:

- What did you do/see and when was it?

- How was it related to images, ideas, or themes we have discussed? OR, if you attended a campus event, what was your impression of the event?

- What are your "take-aways" from the event - how has it impacted you?

Some good local options for Irish events:

- Mason Center for the Arts: <http://cfa.gmu.edu/>
- Solas Nua: <http://www.solasnua.org/>
- The Keegan Theatre: <http://www.keeganthatre.com/index.html>
- Irish Embassy: <http://www.irelandemb.org>

## **Class Policies**

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**Participation/Attendance-** Given the unique nature of online instruction, participation is more important than ever – it shows me that you are following the course themes and truly comprehending material. The Mason online catalog states: “Students are expected to attend class periods of the courses for which they register. In-class participation is important not only to the individual student, but also the class as a whole. Because class participation may be a factor in grading, instructors may use absence, tardiness, or early departure as de facto evidence of nonparticipation.” Patterns of non-participation in individual reflections or discussions will be noted and points deducted accordingly. If you are ill for two weeks or more (consecutively) or you have other personal matters that will require you to frequently miss participation deadlines, you should let me know immediately and provide a doctor note or other acceptable documentation.

**Disability Assistance-** Mason has a wonderful Office of Disability Services on the main floor of SUB I; if you have a documentable learning disability, I urge you to pay the ODS a visit early in the semester. I am happy to work with you to accommodate your needs, but I will need written documentation from the ODS. <http://ods.gmu.edu/>

**Writing Center-** If you need some assistance in preparing your midterm essay or would like to attend study skills workshops, please do not hesitate to take advantage of the resources on campus. <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>

**Academic Workshops** - Academic Workshop schedules can be found in Learning Services on the 3rd floor of SUB I. <http://caps.gmu.edu/>

**Office Hours** - I will be online and available via Blackboard Collaborate from noon until 1pm on Tuesdays. If that time does not work for you, I am usually flexible – just let me know a day ahead of time when you would like to chat via back-and-forth email. If you have a request for an incomplete or an assignment extension, I will only address those matters via Mason email.

**Email and Course Communication** - Because this is an online course, it is critical that you have a reliable way to obtain course information. Please be sure that you check your GMU email account regularly or have your GMU email messages forwarded to your preferred email account. Every week I will send out an email to the entire class to remind you of items that are due, answer any common questions that have come up in the past week, or include other pertinent announcements. If I need to send a message to you individually, I will send it to your GMU email account. Please note that if you have trouble with your GMU email, you can also use the messaging feature in Blackboard if necessary.

### Honor Code

Abiding by the Mason Honor Code is essential if you plan on passing this course.

The Honor Code, as stated in the catalog:

***"Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work."***

Academic Integrity: <http://oai.gmu.edu/>

FAQ regarding the Honor Code: <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code-2/>

## **General Semester Dates to Note:**

### Summary of Course Requirement Deadlines:

1/28	Introduction Post
2/4	Individual Reflection 1
2/11	Discussion 1
2/18	Individual Reflection 2
2/25	Individual Reflection 3
3/3	Discussion 2
3/17	Discussion 3
3/24	Individual Reflection 4
3/31	<b>Midterm Essay Due</b>
4/7	Discussion 4
4/14	Discussion 5
4/21	Individual Reflection 5
4/28	Extra Credit Due
5-1 - 5/8	<b>Final Exam</b>

\* In Blackboard, each week has a suggested agenda for you to follow. I strongly recommend that you make note of the deadlines above and follow the weekly agendas so that you complete all course requirements on time.

Registrar's Calendar:

[https://registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/spring\\_2024/](https://registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/spring_2024/)

- ☑ Last day to drop classes:  
February 20, 2024.  
*Check PatriotWeb to be sure that you are registered for this class.*
- ☑ Selective withdrawal period (undergraduates):  
February 21 – March 25, 2024
- ☑ Spring Break:  
March 4 - March 10, 2024.
- ☑ Last day of classes:  
*Monday, April 29, 2024.*

## Class Schedule and Readings

(Each week has an accompanying folder including items such as course readings that are not in our required texts, video links, and lecture notes or powerpoints to help expand on our readings and activities.)

### UNIT 1: The Celts

#### Weeks 1 and 2 – Introduction, Acquiring Textbooks, Getting to Know the Course

**Tuesday, January 16 - Sunday, January 28**

**Readings:**

1. Syllabus (Blackboard)
2. Arnold: "Reading Art" (Blackboard)
- ✓ Familiarize yourself with our course texts (or buy them if you haven't already)
- ✓ Familiarize yourself with the layout of our Blackboard page

Assignments DUE by 11:59pm on Jan. 28:

1. **Introduction Post**

#### Week 2 - Overview: Getting to Know the Ancient Celts

**Monday, January 29 - Sunday, February 4**

**Readings:**

1. Green: "Introduction to the Celts" (Blackboard)
2. Shiner: "Introduction" & "The Greeks had no Word for It" (Blackboard)

Assignments DUE by 11:59pm on Feb. 4:

1. **Individual Reflection 1**

#### Week 3 - The Celts: Spirituality

**Monday, February 5 - Sunday, February 11**

**Readings:**

1. Ellis: "Introduction" and "The Ever-Living Ones" (pg. 1-34)

Assignments DUE by 11:59pm on Feb. 11:

1. **Discussion 1**

#### Week 4 - The Celts: Artistic Legacies

**Monday, February 12 - Sunday, February 18**

**Readings:**

1. Joy: "Approaching Celtic Art" (Blackboard)
2. Harding: "An Art with No Genesis" (Blackboard)

Assignments DUE by 11:59pm on Feb. 18:

1. **Individual Reflection 2**

### UNIT 2: The Celtic Transition to Christianity

#### Week 5: Celtic Mythology and the Art of France, Scotland, and Wales, Pt. 1

**Monday, February 19 - Sunday, February 25**

**Readings:**

1. Green: "Nature in Art: Abstraction, Realism, and Fantasy" (Blackboard)
2. Campbell: "The Historical Development of Mythology" (Blackboard)

Assignments DUE by 11:59pm on Feb. 25:

1. **Individual Reflection 3**

#### Week 6: Celtic Mythology and the Art of France, Scotland, and Wales, Pt. 2

**Monday, February 26 - Sunday, March 3**

**Readings:**

1. Ellis: Preface & "Princess of the Fomorii," "The Kelpie" (Scotland), Preface & "Bran and Branwen" (Wales), and Preface & "Koadalan" (Brittany).

Assignments DUE by 11:59pm on Mar. 3:

1. **Discussion 2**

### WEEK 7: Monday, March 4 - Sunday, March 10 NO CLASS - SPRING BREAK

#### Week 8: Celtic Mythology and the Art of Ireland and England, Pt. 1

**Monday, March 11 - Sunday, March 17**

**Readings:**

1. Green: "Symbolism and Spirituality: From Paganism to Christianity" (Blackboard)
2. Ellis: Preface & "The Children of Lir" and "The Poet's Curse."

Assignments DUE by 11:59pm on Mar. 17:

1. **Discussion 3**

#### Week 9: Celtic Mythology and the Art of Ireland and England, Pt. 2

**Monday, March 18 - Sunday, March 24**

**Readings:**

1. Gantz: Introduction through page 20 & "The Wooing of Etain" and "The Dream of Oengus."
2. Bulfinch: "The History of England" (Blackboard)

Assignments DUE by 11:59pm on Mar. 24:

1. **Individual Reflection 4**

UNIT 3: The Late Medieval Period through the Early 20th C.	
<b>Week 10: Innovation or Invention? The Influence of the Bible</b> <b>Monday, March 25 - Sunday, March 31</b>	
Readings: 1. Bruce: "The Celtic Era" (Blackboard)	<i>Assignments DUE by 11:59pm on Mar. 31:</i> <b>1. Midterm Essay Due</b>
<b>Week 11: Early Modern Translations of Irish Myth</b> <b>Monday, April 1 - Sunday, April 7</b>	
Readings: 1. Gantz: "The Birth of Cú Chulaind" and "The Boyhood Deeds of Cú Chulaind" 2. Bulfinch: "Cúchulain" (Blackboard)	<i>Assignments DUE by 11:59pm on Apr. 7:</i> <b>1. Discussion 4</b>
<b>Week 12: The Intersections of Mythology, History, and Irish Identity, Pt. 1</b> <b>Monday, April 8 - Sunday, April 14</b>	
Readings: 1. Lady Gregory: Preface by W.B. Yeats & "The coming of the Tuatha de Danaan," "The Coming of Lugh," "The Dagda," and "Oisín and Patrick."	<i>Assignments DUE by 11:59pm on Apr. 14:</i> <b>1. Discussion 5</b>
<b>Week 13: The Intersections of Mythology, History, and Irish Identity, Pt. 2</b> <b>Monday, April 15 - Saturday, April 21</b>	
Readings: 1. Fowle: "The Celtic Revival in Britain & Ireland: Reconstructing the Past, c. AD 1600-1920" (Blackboard)	<i>Assignments DUE by 11:59pm on Apr. 21:</i> <b>1. Individual Reflection 5</b>
<b>Week 14: Catch-Up Week</b> <b>Monday, April 22 - Sunday April 28</b>	
Use this week to complete any missing Individual Reflections, complete the extra credit assignment, and catch-up on any lectures or readings that you may have missed.	<i>Assignments DUE by 11:59pm on Apr. 28:</i> <b>1. Extra Credit Due</b>
READING DAYS AND EXAM PREPARATION Monday, April 29 – Tuesday, April 30	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>FINAL EXAM:</u></b></p> <p><b><u>COMPLETE THE FINAL STARTING WEDNESDAY, MAY 1 (12AM), BUT NO LATER THAN WEDNESDAY, MAY 8 (11:59PM).</u></b></p> <p>*Because you have a week to plan for and take the exam, no extensions will be allowed unless you have a legitimate, documentable emergency that precludes you from taking the exam during that entire period of time. Plan ahead and take it sooner rather than later.</p>	

This course meets the following Mason Core Learning Outcomes. You may want to keep these in mind as you address our course assignments and exams:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship among artistic process, a work's underlying concept, and, where appropriate, contexts associated with the work.
- Identify and analyze the formal elements of a particular art form using vocabulary and critique appropriate to that form.
- Analyze cultural productions using standards appropriate to the form, as well as the work's cultural significance and context.
- Analyze and interpret the content of material or performance culture through its social, historical, and personal contexts.
- Engage in generative artistic processes, including conception, creation, and ongoing critical analysis.