

'Saint Patrick: From Slave to Patron Saint'

IRISH-UA 991 001: Interdisciplinary Seminar

Instructor: Dr. Sarah Waidler

Spring 2021

Mondays and Wednesdays, 2.00–3.15

Glucksman Ireland House Rm 101

Office hours: After class and by appointment



Image from 'St Patrick's Purgatory': England, 1451, Royal MS 17 B XLIII, f. 132v

Course description: This course will focus on the figure of Saint Patrick, patron saint of Ireland, whose feastday is celebrated around the world on March 17th. Starting with his own writings from the early Middle Ages in which he tells how he was captured and brought to Ireland as a slave at the age of sixteen, we will explore what can be known of the man behind the saint and trace the many interpretations of his legend across medieval and early modern history, ending with an examination of how he is seen in the modern period and throughout the world today. Students will explore how Patrick came to be seen as the chief saint of Ireland and the seventh-century political machinations behind the promotion of his cult, how he came to be associated with Jewish roots and viewed as a Moses of the Irish, how medieval writers depicted him as saving epic heroes from hell and recording the stories of centuries-old legendary warriors and how he eventually became an enduring symbol of Ireland itself. This class will give students a grounding in critical thinking and how to approach historical and literary texts of a variety of genres and will also explore what defined a saint at different periods and how the role of one man from the early Middle Ages could be remolded again and again according to changing religious, political and literary needs for over a millennium and a half.

Assignments and Grading Scheme:

Assessment will be based on the following:

Weekly responses to readings/primary sources on the NYU Classes Forum: 10% - **each week** you are required to respond to the prompts on the Forum twice.

Gobbets: 2 short primary source critiques: 25% - 1 page, one to be done before Spring Break (end of week 5, **26th February**) and one after (due end of week 12, **24th April**) on a source of your choice

Midterm essay: 20% - due at the end of Spring Break **on 21st March**, 4–6 pages long

Final research paper/project: 25% - **due on the 12th May**, paper should be 8–10 pages long

Oral presentation of your project: 10% - presentations should be around 7–10 minutes in length

Participation in class: 10%

You are expected to write a **response to readings/primary sources on the NYU Classes Forum** at least twice during each week. For every class, I will provide prompts (in the form of 'topics') on the NYU Classes Forum for you to respond to plus an open topic for you to record any further thoughts, ideas, etc. relating to the sources. Your responses need be only one or two sentences (though more is welcome). Responses can take the form of commenting on the topics, asking questions about them or responding to a thread started by another student. You do not need to respond to each topic but can choose which one you want to address (though you can respond to multiple topics if you want). These must be submitted two hours before the start of class.

Gobbets are short critiques of primary sources. I will discuss them in class, but you should make sure that you analyze the source in terms of perspective, bias, source type, genre, context and purpose so far as these are possible to ascertain.

A **midterm essay** on any topic from the first 6 weeks will be due at the end of Spring Break and specific essay questions will be handed out in the third week of the course. You will also need to complete a **final research paper**, which can be on any topic discussed throughout the course provided it is not the same one that you wrote about in your midterm essay. You are encouraged to choose your own topics for this, which must be approved by me by week 10 at the latest. I am also happy for you to do a creative project, such as a creative writing or film piece, provided you discuss it with me by week 10. I am happy to read drafts of both your midterm and final papers but these must be submitted to me one full week before the final deadline. I am also happy to look at a bibliography of the sources you intend to use before you turn in the final and to recommend sources to you if needed.

The **final oral presentation** will be on your final paper/project and should include how you formulated your idea for the project, what challenges you faced in researching the project and a short discussion of your overall argument and research findings. Students will share their presentations in the last two days of class as a 'mini-conference'.

All complete assignments must be emailed to me (sw157@nyu.edu) or submitted online through NYU Classes by the due date as a Word Document and must include your full name, the date and the assignment title. **Please also include your surname in the filename of your work.** Late submission can have a negative impact on your grade for that assignment, so please do submit material on time. If for any reason an extension is required, you must make a request to me via email in advance of the due date for the assignment and this will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Class participation is based on your ability to make meaningful contributions based on your reading throughout each class. This should be supported by both your written responses on the Forum and how you use the reading to engage with other students' presentations and comments.

Attendance:

Attendance at all class sessions is compulsory. Your mark for participation in class will be affected adversely if your absence is not excused. Any requests for excused absence should be submitted by email to me as far in advance as possible. An excuse that is submitted *after* the class takes place will only be accepted in exceptional cases. Even if your absence is excused (and indeed, if it is not), you still are expected to complete all the reading for the missed class and all other assignments required.

Reading:

It is not required to buy any books for this course as all primary sources, chapters and articles will be available on NYU Classes for you to read. However, you may find it easier to have your own copy of two of the books that we will use frequently that are not online via NYU's library. These are listed below and will also be available in the library on reserve, along with a selection of other books that will be noted in the class bibliography:

- L. de Paor, *Saint Patrick's World* (Dublin, 1996)
- A. Dooley and H. Roe, *Tales of the Elders of Ireland* (Oxford, 1999)

A class bibliography will be available in the NYU Classes Resources Folder with resources listed by subject. This will provide you with additional relevant material that will help you for your papers. If you are interested in any source on this bibliography that is not available in the library, please email me and I will try to find you the relevant article, etc.

For each class, I will give you primary sources written during the period under study as well as secondary sources that concern them. You must read these BEFORE the start of each class and use them for your responses on the Forum. Please bring all sources to class in some form (i.e. paper or electronic). For the primary medieval sources, I will in the majority of cases supply the entire text but will give you specific page numbers concerning what we will primarily focus on for that week's class. Where manageable, it is fantastic if you can read as much of the entire text as possible, particularly when it is a narrative prose tale or poem, as it gives you context and helps you to develop a better feel for the sources. And much of medieval Irish literature is highly entertaining so you don't want to miss out!

All sources will be provided in English translation. Some titles remain in the original if that has become the customary way of referring to the source, but I will always explain this title and give an English translation.

Office hours: I will be available Mondays and Wednesdays after class upstairs in Glucksman Ireland House (come to reception and ask for me on your first visit ☺) for students to come see me with questions, concerns and additional help. I am also very happy to arrange ad hoc meetings upon request. Please send me an email if you would like to arrange a meeting.

Disability Disclosure Statement: Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. The Moses Center website is www.nyu.edu/csd. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.



Week 1, Jan. 25th and 27th

The World of Patrick: Introduction to Ireland in the Age of Conversion and Patrick in His Own Words

Week 2, Feb. 1st and 3rd

Patrick or Patricks?: Patrick's Story and Other Stories

Week 3, Feb. 8th and 10th

Shapers of Saints and Politics in the Seventh Century: Muirchú and Tírechán

Week 4, Feb. 17th

The (Re-)creation of a Patron Saint: A Three-part Life in Two Languages

NO CLASS MONDAY: PRESIDENT'S DAY

Week 5, Feb. 22nd and 24th

Patrick and Moses: The Forgotten Lives of Patrick

*****GOBBET 1 DUE FEBRUARY 26TH*****

Week 6, March 1st and 3rd

So Where's the Body?: The Relics and the Cult of Patrick

Week 7, March 8th and 10th

Patrick and the Saints: Brigit, Declán and Patrick, First of the Saints of Ireland?

SPRING BREAK

*****MID-TERM ESSAY DUE MARCH 21ST*****

Week 8, March 22nd and 24th:

Patrick and the Heroes: 'The Phantom Chariot of Cú Chulainn' and 'The Colloquy of the Ancients'

Week 9, March 29th and 31st

The Anglo-Norman Appropriation of Patrick and the Banishment of the Snakes: Jocelin's Life of Patrick and a New Grave

Week 10, April 5th and 7th

St Patrick's Purgatory: A Knight and a Cave

Week 11, April 12th and 14th

The Cult of Patrick in the Late Middle Ages and the Protestant Reformation

Week 12, April 19th and 21st

Revival of the Cult from Afar: The Seventeenth-Century Hagiographers

*****GOBBET 2 DUE APRIL 24TH*****

Week 13, April 26th and 28th

The Rise of St Patrick's Day: America and the Export and Reinvention of Ireland's Patron Saint

Week 14, May 3rd, 5th and 10th

Course Conclusions: The Enduring Image of Ireland's Patron Saint

ORAL PRESENTATIONS

*****FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE MAY 12TH*****