

The Celtic World

ENGL 393B

TuTh 11:30-12:45

Professor Farina

The ancient Celts have fascinated many people who came after them—not only their own descendants but writers, artists, and historians from the 11th 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. To understand whether “Celticness” is an ancient or modern phenomenon, we will also discuss how these early peoples have been represented in later periods. Topics to be discussed include: geography, landscape and identity; conflict and its legacies; constructions of the mythic Otherworld; Bardic poetry; and Celtic Christianity. Readings will be in translation. Coursework will include exams and a research paper on a pre-1600 text. Class participation is required.

Readings may include:

The Táin Bó Cúailnge, *Acallam na Senorach*, and other early Irish works; *The Mabinogi*, *The Life of Columba*; *The Voyage of St. Brendan*; works by Geoffrey of Monmouth, Gerald of Wales, and Marie de France; John Barbour’s *Bruce*; and Thomas Mallory’s *Le Morte d’Arthur*.

We will also look at some modern cinematic representations of the “Celtic” such as *The Wicker Man*, *The Book of Kells*, and *Gawain and the Green Knight*.

