

Syllabus / Kennsluáætlun

ISMFU03 - Icelandic Society, History and Culture

Course coordinator/instructor:

Ingibjörg Sigurðardóttir (is@unak.is). Adjunct Professor in literature. Office: the third floor in Þingvallastræti. Telephone: 460 8566.

Instructor:

Páll Björnsson (pallb@unak.is). Associate Professor in history. Office: Sólborg (building E). Telephone: 460 8653.

Course description

The aim of this course is to give students insight into Icelandic society, culture and history, from the settlement of Iceland to present times with special emphasis on the Commonwealth era, the struggle for independence, and the making of modern Iceland. During the course visits will be paid to some of the cultural institutions of Akureyri and surroundings.

The course is divided into two parts:

- I. **Icelandic history and society:** Students will read the book *History of Iceland: From the settlement to the present day* by, Jón R. Hjálmarsson and *Iceland in figures* (2008–2009). They will also visit the Akureyri Museum (Minjasafn Akureyrar). Lectures and discussions.
- II. **Icelandic literature and culture:** Students will read and discuss one of the Icelandic Sagas, *The Story of Gisli the Outlaw*, and go on a fieldtrip to the old farm at Laufás and the waterfall of the gods, Goðafoss. They will also read two Icelandic novels, *Independent People* by Halldór Laxness, and *The Lodger and Other Stories* by Svava Jakobsdóttir, and some folk tales. Finally, students will do an in-class presentation of an Icelandic film.

Grading and assignments:

Students are required to hand in assignments on Blackboard and in paper to the coordinator's mailbox in Þingvallastræti. The assignments will be published on Blackboard.

Part I:

Examination in class (40% of the final grade).

Part II:

- a. Take-home examination based on *The Story of Gisli the Outlaw* (15% of the final grade).
- b. Essay on a person or an aspect of the *Independent People* by Halldór Laxness (25% of the final grade).
- c. In-class team assignment based on *The Lodger and Other Stories* by Svava Jakobsdóttir (10% of the final grade).
- d. A team of two students chooses one Icelandic film and gives a presentation on it in class (10% of the final grade).

The minimum passing grade in the course is 4,75. Late assignments will be marked down by 0.5 per day. Good attendance (70%) is a requirement to pass the course. There will be no make-ups for missed examinations, nor extensions for the assignments without a doctor's note or equivalent.

Reading list

1) Jón R. Hjálmarsson. 2007. *History of Iceland: From the settlement to the present day*. Reykjavík: Almenna bókafélagið. (This book is available in the bookstore downtown).

2) *Iceland in figures* (2008–2009). This is a booklet containing basic statistics on the Icelandic society and economy. It is based on the *Statistical Yearbook of Iceland*, which is a statistical reference work concerning most aspects of society, including the climate, the environment, the population, the labour market and the industries, external trade, transport, tourism, prices, wage, private income, national accounts, health, social services, education, culture, elections, etc. Available on <http://www.statice.is/lisalib/getfile.aspx?itemid=9002>

3) *The Story of Gisli the Outlaw*. 1866. Translated by George Webbe Dasent and with illustrations by C. E. ST. John Mildmay. Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas. Free copy available on the web: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/ice/gto/gto00.htm>

4) Jónas Hallgrímsson. (1997, November 16th) Selected Poetry and Prose. Edited and translated with notes and commentary by Dick Ringler. Website: <http://www.library.wisc.edu/etext/jonas/> (Handout available on Blackboard)

5) Halldór Laxness. 2008. *Independent People*. Translated by J.A. Thompson. London: Vintage Books (This book is available in the bookstore downtown). Students may also use other editions.

4) Svava Jakobsdóttir. 2000. *The Lodger and Other Stories*. (This book will be available in the bookstore downtown).

5) Photocopies and handouts given in class.

5) Web-pages pointed out in the lectures and on Blackboard.

SCHEDULE OF LECTURES AND ASSIGNMENTS

PART I: Icelandic history and society **Instructor: Páll Björnsson**

Monday, January 18.

Introduction to the course.

The Icelandic experience. A documentary film by Kári Schram.

Wednesday, January 20.
History of Iceland: pp. 6-67.

Monday, January 25.
History of Iceland: pp. 68-141.

Wednesday, January 27.
History of Iceland: pp. 142-203.

Monday, February 1.
Iceland in figures (2008–2009).

Wednesday, February 3.
The Dreamland (Draumalandið). A film from 2009 by Þorfinnur Guðnason and Andri Snær Magnason; will be shown in class.

Friday, February 5 (afternoon)
~~A visit to the [Akureyri Museum](#) (Minjasafn Akureyrar): Please notice that we will meet at the entrance of the museum at 16:15.~~

Monday, February 15.

~~Monday, February 8.~~

NO CLASS

A visit to the [Akureyri Museum](#) (Minjasafn Akureyrar): Please notice that we will meet at the entrance of the museum at 16:15.

Wednesday, February 17.

~~Wednesday, February 10.~~

Examination in class

PART II: Icelandic literature and culture

Instructor: Ingibjörg Sigurðardóttir

Monday, February 22.
The Story of Gisli the Outlaw.

Wednesday, February 24.
The Outlaw. A film by Ágúst Guðmundsson. Students must have completed the reading of the story before this class.
Discussion.

Take-home exam assigned. Due Monday, March 1.

Monday, March 1.
Jónas Hallgrímsson – the poet.
Folk tales.

Wednesday, March 3.
Independent People by Halldór Laxness.

Monday, March 8.
Independent People by Halldór Laxness. Students must have completed the reading of the story before this class.

Wednesday, March 10.
NO CLASS – Students turn in their essay on *Independent People*

Monday, March 15.
The Lodger by Svava Jakobsdóttir. Students must have completed the reading of the story before this class.
In-class team assignment.

Wednesday, March 17
Student presentations: Icelandic films.

Friday, March 19 (afternoon).
Fieldtrip to Goðafoss and [Laufás](#): Please notice that the date is subject to change due to weather conditions.

Monday, March 22.
Student presentations: Icelandic films.