Regarding the research paper for Nordic Mythology.

The most important aspect of this 8-9-page paper is to provide you with an opportunity to do independent research on a topic which you have chosen and therefore presumably enjoy.

This means at least 8 pages of 300 words each, without citations and bibliography. Anything less will drag your grade down somewhat, anything more is fine, but will not be rewarded on the merit of length alone.

The main purpose of the paper is to analyze and discuss a central problem or aspect of viking culture. The more analysis and discussion, the better. Description should be limited to what is necessary to present your problem.

Please upload the paper on Canvas by the date indicated in the syllabus.

**Research.**

The independent research aspect is important, because it means that such research must be demonstrated in the paper. You have to include a bibliography of studied material and you have to give references.

The quality of your research will influence your grade. I require a minimum of **at least 3-4 different secondary sources** such as ”Introduction to Mythology”. Anything less than this will result in 0 points for research. A high number of secondary sources will improve your grade. **To get full credit for research, 8 or more secondary sources is usually necessary.**  The exception is certain topics where very few secondary sources are available, e.g. Nordic Mythology in Japanese Manga comics.

You must refer to these sources with citations in the paper, otherwise they do not count.

You should also read the grading rubric which will be used for this paper, which is available on Canvas.

When referring to the myths, one should always refer to the primary sources, typically the Eddas, not to secondary sources or retellings.

Primary source = a text which is from the period you are studying, e.g. the Prose Edda.

Secondary source = a later, scholarly work, which discusses the period you are studying, e.g. “Gods and myths of Northern Europe”.

If you are still in doubt what these terms mean, look them up on Wikipedia, where they are explained very well.

You are free to use the sources in the course binder.

**References/citations.**

Any system of citations is accepted as long as it is understandable and consistent.

However, when referring to printed material, **the citations must contain page references, e.g. ”Davidson, p. 43”.**

Without page references the citation is impossible to check and therefore useless.

**Please notice:** **I do *not* accept references to information obtained in class lectures and during field study in the citations.**

This is because the purpose of citations is to enable the reader to check the information you give, not to tell us how you know what you know.

Here are some basic rules for referencing information:

1: information that is readily available to anyone, e.g. "the viking age began in 793", does not need a reference.

2: more complex things do, so if using things we say in class, the right thing to do is really to find a place where it is written, that you can quote.

3: *opinions* should be your own or be found in written form. If your own, just give argument. If its something you read, provide a reference to a place where opinion and argument is found in written check-able form. If you can provide neither, its probably better to leave it out.

**Internet sources**.

I wish to expressly warn you against trusting information you find on the internet in general and on New Age, Neopagan and spiritual webpages in particular. Webpages of the kind must NEVER be trusted for factual information on historical facts as they are an absolute minefield of nonsense.

While I do not forbid references to Wikipedia, I do warn you to use it with care, as it has proven untrustworthy in the past, especially regarding mythological subjects. Also, Wikipedia should never be used as a main source.

The general rule is: any source, in print or online, should give the name of the author, so that you can check the name and ascertain that this person is in fact a specialist in the field. You should only use sources where the author is a specialist, historian or other accredited academic.

The exeption to this rule is recognised research institutions such as the British Museum, the Danish National Museum, etc. The webpages of such institutions can be quoted even if no author´s name is provided.

Many mythology webpages are made by amateurs who do not know what they are talking about and peddle outdated scholarship or purely invented nonsense.

So avoid anonymous sources such as timelessmyths.com, which is a typical example of a page which can appear trustworthy, but which actually contains a lot of erroneous information.

And when the name of an author is given, you should check the credentials of this author, to make sure he/she is not just a journalist or other amateur, but a specialist in the field.

Therefore: For basic information, what does the story say, you should refer to the primary sources, and the majority of your secondary sources should consist of peer-reviewed scholarship, such as it is found in published books and scholarly journals.

If using articles found on the internet, it is best to use scholarly article databases such as Blackwell, Ebsco, J-stor and Electra.

**If your sources do not live up this standard, it will affect your grade.**

**Topic**.

The topic which you choose is thus actually of secondary importance, as long as you enjoy it, but there are some conditions which must be observed:

1. Your topic must be **relevant** for Nordic Mythology. Obviously. In the unlikely case of doubt, I decide on the relevance, but I will observe a wide margin (as I see it).

2. Your topic must be **possible** to study. Meaning that there must be source-material and secondary literature available. (‘Sacrifice to Thor’ is a topic which we would disrecommend on the basis of lack of information (there is none) - to Odin would have been an entirely different matter)

3. your topic must be **wide** enough to fill the pages **and narrow** enough as to not overwhelm you with information. For this consideration it is difficult to give general guidelines.

4. Your topic must be **enjoyable** for you. You should note, that any topic becomes sickening at some point when you have to write about it, so don’t be surprised if this condition seems irrelevant when you have begun your work.

*Some topics to illustrate the span of possibilities - not to hem you in:*

Runes in Old Norse religion and mythology

Viking art and Viking mythology

The enigmatic figure of Odin

Different aspects of the Vanir

Influences on Snorri

Viking burial customs

Viking religious ceremonies

The place of women in Viking religion

Viking weapons technology

Possible causes of the end of the Viking age

Nordic mythology in modern fantasy literature.

The Viking discovery of Vinland

But you can write about anything you like. It does not have to have anything to do with mythology or religion, but can be a purely historical or literary topic, as long as it is viking related.

Have fun,

Morten and Bettina