

HIS298Y0 Introduction to the History of Scotland

University of Toronto, Summer Abroad Edinburgh 2025

Professor: Dr Mairi Cowan

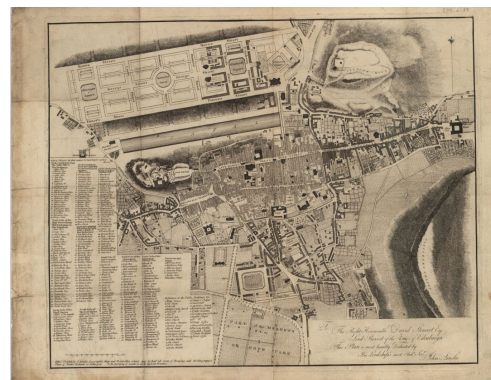
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Urquhart Castle



Pictish stone,
Museum of Scotland



Map of Edinburgh

Course Description

The history of Scotland is the history of a place shaped by the natural forces of wind and sea, by a location at the edge of Europe, and by people who have created enduring myths and ideals. This course presents an introductory survey of Scottish history from the first humans in northern Britain to the modern age. Topics include early Celts, the Roman Empire, Picts and Scots, Viking incursions, Anglo-Norman influences, the medieval creation of a nation, Renaissance and Reformation, witchcraft, the Enlightenment, industrialisation, and twentieth-century modernisation. Students will study primary source evidence in a variety of forms (including material culture, chronicles, literature, recipes, music, and art), with special attention to the historic sites that we will be visiting.

Instructor Biography

Mairi Cowan is a historian of the medieval and early modern world. She has published research on medieval saints, religious upheavals, and the history of childhood. Her most recent book, *The Possession of Barbe Hallay: Diabolical Arts and Daily Life in Early Canada*, is a microhistory of bewitchment in New France. Her current research examines adolescence in the medieval royal Scottish court. Professor Cowan focusses on guiding students through authentic historical problems while helping them to develop the skills they need to discover, understand, and engage with the past in a historically responsible way. She is the recipient of several teaching awards, including the E.A. Robinson Teaching Excellence Award at UTM; the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations Teaching Award, which is given to Ontario's most outstanding university teachers; and the Canadian Historical Association's Excellence in Teaching with Primary Sources Award.

Course Goals

1. Understand the basic outlines of Scottish history from earliest times through the modern age.
2. Make use of primary and secondary sources to interpret the past.
3. Engage with current debates and uncertainties in the field of Scottish history, including how that history is understood and used today.
4. Connect course materials to sites of historical interest.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. describe and analyze the significance of people and events that shaped the history of Scotland from its earliest human inhabitants until the present day;
2. interpret primary sources from multiple perspectives;
3. evaluate both academic and popular presentations of history with a sympathetic yet critical eye;
4. make meaningful connections between visits to sites of historical interest and materials studied in class.

Required Texts

An assortment of texts will be available on Quercus or through the University of Toronto Library system. These will include primary sources from the Scottish past, as well as research by historians and archaeologists. Students will be strongly encouraged to complete some of their readings before departure, and will be given guidance on what to focus on in the readings so that they are well prepared for class meetings and assignments.

Evaluation

Short Research Essay (due before departure)	10%
Introduction to a Site Presentation (variously throughout the course)	5%
Study of One Object in the Museum of Scotland	10%
Primary Source Study (or a second Short Research Essay)	15%
Final Test	35%
Participation throughout the course	25%

Tentative Course Schedule (subject to change as bookings are confirmed)

1. What, Where, and When is Scotland?
2. Celts and Romans
3. Picts and Scots
4. On location at National Museum of Scotland and Gladstone's Land
5. Vikings
6. Anglo-Norman Influences
7. Medieval Nation
8. On location at Trimontium Museum and Melrose Abbey
9. Renaissance
10. Reformation
11. On site overnight at Stirling and in the Highlands
12. Witchcraft and Scotland Abroad
13. Science and Enlightenment
14. Industrial Revolution
15. On site at New Lanark
16. Modernism, Memory, Nostalgia