

CELT 253 GAELIC SONG, MUSIC, AND DANCE – DR NEWTON

Class meets: Tu 11:15-12:05, W 1:15-2:05, F 12:15-1:05

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This is not a performance course; you will not be learning to sing, play instruments or dance (although there may be opportunities to demonstrate such skills in class). This is a course about Gaelic music and dance traditions, how it has developed through the centuries, the social and material factors that have influenced those developments, and how the idea of tradition and authenticity is expressed and assessed. The point is not to determine if a song or dance is “good” or “authentic” but to identify and critique the basis on which such claims are made.

This course will require a great deal of reading, writing, and critical thinking. You will work by yourself and together in groups outside of class to create projects. You cannot learn by sitting passively in class: you must be prepared to spend considerable time outside of class engaging in the material and coordinating with your group members. You must read this syllabus and other course materials carefully and in detail.

Course Goals

1. Learn about the genres of Scottish Gaelic song, music and dance through their historical development
2. Understand these developments in the context of formal and informal institutions inside of and external to Gaeldom
3. Understand these developments in the context of inter-cultural interaction and diffusion, innovations in material culture, and internal cultural change
4. Develop critical skills to apply to claims of tradition and authenticity
5. Create group presentations to examine specific aspects of music and song tradition

Required Texts and Resources

Warriors of the Word (Newton)

Dance to the Piper (Shears)

CELT 235 Coursepacket

There are a few online articles that you will access via moodle to print, read and bring to class.

Books and CDs have been placed on reserve; see the Reading List on moodle.

IMPORTANT: You should allot 3 hours of homework time per hour of class time in each course. Do assigned readings before class. You **must** bring the necessary texts to class.

Online readings and assignments, and further resources will be made available via moodle (moodle.stfx.ca). You must login to moodle, personalize your account, and use it regularly! I will be making announcements via moodle, which in turns sends email; you must check moodle and email daily and keep your email box clear so that it does not overflow!

When we read texts we will:

1. Compare and contrast evidence and interpretations made by different scholars
2. Identify claims of tradition and authenticity and the basis of those claims
3. Evaluate claims of tradition and authenticity in their historical and cultural contexts

These critical concepts and questions will guide our thinking:

1. Innovations tend to come from urban centres and slowly diffuse to “outer” rural areas where they displace or hybridize with older forms and linger longer as accidents of geography and history
2. Migratory forms take on characteristics of local aesthetics and norms
3. We have only been able to capture song/music/dance accurate since the early 20th century; previous descriptions are usually terse and impressionistic; styles, genres, and items can disappear and change quickly, leaving virtually no trace in the written record

4. Nineteenth-century claims of unique national identities have obscured the early origins and distributions of instruments and musical and dance traditions, which did not conform to modern nation-state boundaries
5. Modern perceptions and expectations about Gaelic song/music/dance traditions are coloured by stereotypes of Celticism
6. Gaelic society is not nor has it ever been a single, homogenous, unified mass; it has vernacular and élite classes and institutions; it has regional differences; communities, families, and individuals can have their own specific aesthetics and styles
7. Formal institutional practice (“élite tradition”) and informal community practice (“vernacular tradition”) have alternately been in dialogue and isolation; not all Gaelic music is “folk” music – it has its own “classical” élite tradition
8. Gaelic society has never been in complete isolation; Gaels have had interaction with peoples as emigrants, merchants, soldiers, students, clergy, etc; these interactions have facilitated the interchange of ideas about song/music/dance, styles, etc
9. The dominant Gaelic poetic tradition has had a pervasive influence on the aesthetics and norms of music/dance traditions and the means by which claims of tradition have been articulated in Gaelic society
10. Language, song, instrumental music, and dance forms are all interconnected with each other and with wider social and material conditions; changing one aspect of one of these has inevitable consequences for the others
11. When change does happen, ask: Who is driving that change? Who/what will benefit from that change, and who/what will suffer? What is the rationale for the change?

Attendance and Communication

StFX has a mandatory attendance policy. Attendance at all classes is required. For further information regarding the policy please see the Academic Calendar.

If you miss class you must present formal written documentation outside of class time within 2 calendar days of returning to class to be eligible for consideration of any work missed. No extension will be given after this deadline has elapsed and a grade of zero will be assigned for any work missed.

You are responsible for getting and learning the material from any classes missed. Class handouts, including homework, will be available via moodle, so you can get them even if you missed class.

Academic Integrity

St Francis Xavier University values academic integrity; all students must understand the meaning and consequences of such academic offences as plagiarism, cheating, tampering, and falsification as explained in the Academic Calendar.

Applying these principles to assignments: Copying text from any uncredited source (other students, websites, books, etc) is a form of cheating and will be reported to a Discipline officer. All parties involved will receive a mark of zero, and repeated offenses may result in serious penalties, from receiving a zero for the assignment to a zero on the course.

Assessment

Late assignments will be penalized 5% per day late (this includes corrupted files).

Participation Marks (5%) 80% of your participation mark is your attendance in class; if you do not bring your books, cannot participate in class discussion, or are distracted by gadgets, your mark for the day will be forfeit. The other 20% will be determined by your ability to respond when called upon. Unless given other specific reading strategies, be prepared to summarize the main points of the article and how it differs from other readings and relates to the course critical concepts and questions.

Album Review (10%) Write a short essay which critiques a “Celtic” music album in terms of claims of tradition and authenticity, and analyzes the music itself. Details in coursepack. Due 11 Nov.

Individual blogs (5%x2): Your individual blogs will be given marks on 9 Oct and 6 Nov for your notes about readings up to those dates (summaries of key ideas and critical questions and concepts, comparisons between sources and scholarly interpretations, especially as related to group project themes).

Group Project (35%) You will belong to a group which must create a podcast about one of the assigned subjects below. Complete details about podcast projects are in the coursepack. The project consists of several parts which receive separate marks:

Presentation (5%)

Group script (25%)

Final recording (5%)

Your completed recording on CD and final script is due 4 December: marks will be based on 4 Dec submissions.

Mid-term Exam (15%)

Final Exam (25%)

Language:

The course will be taught through the medium of English, but *Gaelic* tradition is the subject. Just as a course about "Classical Music" would require you to learn Italian terms, there are some Gaelic terms you will need to be able to recognize and pronounce correctly (especially for your podcasts). Seek out help to pronounce these terms and song/tune titles if you need it.

Taboos:

If you use laptops, cell phones, iPods, or other devices during class time, you may be asked to leave.

Do not use the word "traditional" by itself without qualifying it with specifics of time, place, lineage (line of transmission), or other contextualizing information.

Group presentation subjects are:

(All presentations **must** be focused on Highland/Gaelic tradition, **not** Anglophone/Lowland tradition!)

1. Gaelic Songs of the Professional Poets (*dàn, laoidh, iorram*)
2. Gaelic *Clàrsach* Tradition
3. Vernacular Gaelic Song Tradition (*luinneag, òran, òran luaidh*)
4. Gaelic Song Tradition in Nova Scotia
5. Gaelic Bagpipe Tradition
6. Gaelic Fiddle and *Puirt-à-Beul* Tradition
7. Gaelic Instrumental Tradition in Nova Scotia
8. Gaelic Solo Dance Traditions
9. Gaelic Group and Social Dance Traditions
10. "Celtic" in the Modern Global Marketplace

Computer Tools Workshop

I will offer an after-class-hours session in the middle of the term for students who need help understanding how to use GarageBand.