# Runology

This course introduces students to reading Runic inscriptions and provides them with an overview of the historical and geographical distribution of Runic alphabets. A particular emphasis will be on inscriptions from Orkney and Shetland. The course also gives students a basic understanding of the Old Norse language necessary to read Runic inscriptions.

The course will allow students to:

* Recognise the older and younger Scandinavian and British runic alphabets.
* Be able to give a rough dating and possible provenance of runic inscriptions.
* Be aware of and describe in some detail the runic inscriptions that exist in Orkney and Shetland.
* Be aware of a selection of runic inscriptions from other areas, i.e., Scandinavia and Britain
* Discuss alternative readings of inscriptions.
* Give a reading and interpretation of an unfamiliar, but uncomplicated inscription.
* Evaluate the evidence used in Runology studies.
* Discuss and exemplify the use of runic inscriptions as historical source material.
* Have a basic understanding of Old Norse grammar.
* Have a basic vocabulary in Old Norse.
* Be able to translate a simple text from Old Norse to English with the aid of a dictionary and grammar book.

# Course schedule

* Week 1: What are runes? The early history of runes, overview of geographical distribution of various runic alphabets. What is Old Norse? The relationship between the Old Norse language and English, Scots, and the Scandinavian languages.
* Week 2: The Older Futhark, examples of early inscriptions. What is Proto-Scandinavian language and what is the difference between it and Old Norse? Beginning to learn Old Norse nouns, the grammar of nouns. Beginning translation from Old Norse.
* Week 3: A closer look at a selection of early runic inscriptions from Scandinavia. Old Norse pronouns and how to use them.
* Week 4: Transition from Older Futhark to Younger Futhark, the earliest Viking Age inscriptions in Scandinavia. Old Norse kinship terminology.
* Week 5: Orthography and interpretation of Younger Futhark inscriptions. Approaching dating via word forms.
* Week 6: Scandinavian-type runic inscriptions in the UK and Ireland. Reading an Old Norse text from mythology, *Sigurd the Dragonslayer*. The grammar of verbs.
* Week 7: English runes: From Older Futhark to Anglo-Saxon runic alphabet. Examples of rune-inscribed objects from England and southern Scotland.
* Week 8: Runic memorials, form and function. Approaching dating via decoration. Reading Old Norse text from mythology: *The creation of the world and humankind*. Verbs in the present and past tenses.
* Weeks 9-10: Runic inscriptions from Scotland, with a close look at Orkney and Shetland. Runic cryptography. Reading an extract from a saga in Old Norse.
* Week 11: Runes in the Middle Ages, and runic inscriptions as sources to knowledge of life in the Middle Ages. How to produce and present a scholarly edition of a runic text.
* Week 12: Post-Medieval and modern interest in runes.

# Assessments

A short weekly quiz over the first ten weeks, and a final edition of a runic inscription due at the end of the course.

# How to apply

If you wish to apply for this course then please email Dr Ragnhild Ljosland – [Ragnhild.Ljosland@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:Ragnhild.Ljosland@uhi.ac.uk)