



## Celtic Christianity: Fact and Fiction

Hilary (Winter) 2025

**Term Dates:** January 13 - March 21  
**Department:** History  
**Difficulty:** Introductory  
**Instructor:** Matthew Hoskin (hoskin@davenantinstitute.org)  
**Meeting Time:** Fridays 7:00 - 9:00 PM (Eastern Time)  
**Zoom Link:** [Populi](#) > click My Courses tab > click course > click Conferences (left menu).

### Course Description

Far off on the edge of the world and the shores of civilization, the Irish came to faith in Jesus later than their neighbors in Roman Britain and the Mediterranean world. Yet when they caught fire for the Christian faith, they would not only launch the evangelisation of the Picts in what is now Scotland, but also the re-evangelisation of post-Roman Britain in the Early Middle Ages. As a result, their stature has been legendary even since the time of the Venerable Bede in the eighth century, and today “Celtic spirituality” finds itself appropriated by hippies and New Agers, by charismatics, by high churchmen, and more. Where does the truth lie?

This course will explore Christianity in Ireland and Britain from around 450-700 through the writings of the Christians who lived through it, seeking the truth amidst the legend and romance that continue to draw us there.

### Objectives

1. Students will learn how to define and examine what “Celtic” Christianity is and is not.
2. They will come away with a grasp of church history in Ireland and Britain from 450 to the 700s.
3. Students will encounter the major emphases of “Celtic” spirituality and consider what place they may have today.
4. Students will encounter many of the major primary sources of Celtic Christianity.

### Course Texts - Required

- Oliver Davies, ed. and trans. *Celtic Spirituality*. New York: Paulist, 1999.
- Adomnan of Iona. *Life of St Columba*. Trans. Richard Sharpe. Harmondworth: Penguin, 1995.

### Course Format

Class sessions will involve a combination of lecture and seminar-style discussion on readings. Students are expected to read required texts before class and come ready for discussion. Readings will be 50–100 pages per week.

## Course Delivery

### Classroom Resources

- **Populi** online classrooms are used for all course content, including assignments, grades, announcements, course records, and more.
- **Zoom** links & recordings are provided on the Populi course page Conferences tab. Class sessions are two hours weekly (2.5 in summer) for ten weeks (8 weeks in summer) and recorded for absent students (not for dissemination outside of class).
- **Discord** may be used for additional student and instructor interaction as well as Davenant community discussions.

**Attendance:** Required for all students taking courses for credit. If the scheduled time does not work for a particular student, they may drop the course according to the Drop Policy in the Academic Catalog.

**Auditors:** No requirements, but may participate in all class activities.

**Late work:** Grade reduction of -5% per calendar day upon instructor discretion. No assignments will be accepted after the last due date without an approved extension.

## Requirements

### 1. Attendance (10%)

Students are expected to read required texts beforehand and come with texts, notes, and questions in hand. Please include your first and last name when attending Zoom. **One unexcused absence is permitted.**

### 2. Weekly Reflections (20%)

Students will submit weekly 100-word summaries of responses with 3 thoughtful questions for class discussion based on the texts. Summaries are due on Monday night of each week. Students will choose 9 of 10 weeks to submit this assignment.

### 3. Book Review (30%) - Due Friday of Week 7 - Length: 500 words

Students will be required to write a review of one modern book about “Celtic” Spirituality. What is the author’s main argument? How well is it argued? What are the sources? How well is it rooted in the source?

### 4. Research Paper (40%) [Due December 2]

- **Length:** 3,000 – 4,000 words (12 – 15pp).
- **Sources:** 2 primary sources & 8 academic secondary sources.
- **Instructions:** Write an argumentative research paper on one of the topics, authors, or texts covered in class. Your paper must interact with sources, including counter-arguments.
- **Grading:** Papers should display academic style, clear and creative thesis, substantial source interaction, evidence in support of a cumulative argument (not overly descriptive), accurate understanding of important concepts and viewpoints, honest interaction with counter-arguments.
- **Formatting:** Times New Roman, double-spaced, 12-pt font, footnotes, Title page, Bibliography.

# Course Calendar

Subject to change. [Click here](#) for the most current syllabus.

Week	Dates	Topics, Readings, & Assignments
1	Jan 17	<b>Topic: Patrick and Late Antiquity</b> -Confession and Letter to the Soldiers of Coroticus by St Patrick ( <i>Celtic Spirituality</i> [henceforward CS] pp. 67-89) - <i>Life of St Patrick</i> by Muirchu (CS 91-117) -St Patrick's Breastplate and other works attributed to him (CS 90, 118-120)
2	Jan 24	<b>Topic: Columba and the Miraculous</b> -Adomnan, <i>The Life of St Columba</i>
3	Jan 31	<b>Topic: Iona, Mission, Poetry</b> -Select poems from Iona, to be distributed -Select Irish verse (CS 259-265)
4	Feb 7	<b>Topic: Columbanus - Monasticism and Pilgrimage</b> -Columbanus, <i>The Rule for Monks</i> (CS 246-256) -Six letters of Columbanus (approx. 28 pp: <a href="https://research.ucc.ie/celt/document/T201054">https://research.ucc.ie/celt/document/T201054</a> ) - <i>The Life of St Columban</i> by Jonas of Bobbio: <a href="https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/columban.asp">https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/columban.asp</a>
5	Feb 14	<b>Topic: The Church in Wales 1</b> -Selections of Welsh verse (CS 266-285) - <i>The Life of St David</i> (CS 191-212)
6	Feb 21	<b>Topic: The Church in Wales 2</b> -Selections from Gildas (CS 227-229) -Welsh devotional texts (CS 301-307) -Selections from Bede, <i>Ecclesiastical History of the English People</i> , 1.16-19, 2.2
7	Feb 28	<b>Topic: Liturgy</b> -Selections from the Bangor Antiphonary, to be distributed -Selections from the Stowe Missal: <a href="https://www.liturgies.net/Liturgies/Other/stowe.htm">https://www.liturgies.net/Liturgies/Other/stowe.htm</a> -Broom of Devotion, Litany of the Virgin and All Saints, Litany of the Creation, “May this journey be easy”, “The path I walk” (CS 292-301)
8	Mar 7	<b>Topic: Preaching and Exegesis 1</b> -Selections from <i>Celtic Spirituality</i> , pp. 343-375
9	Mar 14	<b>Topic: Preaching and Exegesis 2</b> -Selections from John Scotus Eriugena (CS 411-432)
10	Mar 21	<b>Topic: Northumbria</b> -Selections from Bede, <i>Ecclesiastical History</i> , 3.1-6, 14-18, 25-27
	Apr 4	Final essays due.

# Institutional Policies

## Drop Policy

The policies below apply to changes made after the registration deadline two weeks prior to term. To change registration before the term starts, please log on to Populi. To change registration after the term starts, email the registrar at [registrar@davenantinstitute.org](mailto:registrar@davenantinstitute.org). See the Academic Calendar section for exact dates.

**Drop Date (100% Refund):** Before the term starts, students may drop with a 100% tuition refund. Registration fee is non-refundable.

**Drop Date (50% Refund):** Within the first two weeks of a term, students may drop the course with a 50% tuition refund. Registration fee is non-refundable. To drop, please email the registrar.

**Withdrawal:** Within weeks three and four of a term, students who drop a course will receive no refund and will earn a “W” on their transcript. Students cannot drop after this time will receive a letter grade. To drop, please email the registrar.

## Attendance & Class Meeting Time Scheduling

Attendance is required for all students taking courses for credit. Most classes are scheduled for evenings or weekends, especially core classes. If the scheduled time does not work for a particular student, they may drop the course according to the Drop policy.

## Extension Policy

All coursework and exams must be submitted no later than two weeks after the term end date. Before that time, homework extensions are at the discretion of the instructor. If a student requires more time, the student may submit a formal extension request by emailing the registrar at [registrar@davenantinstitute.org](mailto:registrar@davenantinstitute.org). If approved, an extension will be granted to the student for a specific period of time agreed upon by the student and instructor. Extension requests will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and will generally be granted for medical and family emergencies only.

## Minimum Grade Requirement for Degree Students

Students enrolled in one of our degrees must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 (B average). If the students' GPA falls below 3.0, Davenant will initiate conversation with the student to judge whether the student is ready for their program. If the student earns a grade lower than a “C” (2.0) on a course required for their degree, they must retake the course in order to graduate. Their new grade will replace their former grade. If a degree student earns a grade lower than a “C” (2.0) on an elective, they are not required to retake the course, but they may request to retake the course or a close equivalent as a substitute for their former grade.

## Grading Scale

**Passing:** ≥93:A • ≥90:A- • ≥87:B+ • ≥83:B • ≥80:B- • ≥77:C • ≥73:C

**Retake if Core:** 70–72:C- • ≥67:D+ • ≥63:D • ≥60:D- • <60:F.

For a complete list of policies, see the Academic Catalog at [davenanthall.com](http://davenanthall.com)