

M.J. Toswell

OLD ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

This course introduces the language and literature of England as they were approximately 1000 years ago. In the Fall Term the language will be taught step by step through a reading of major literary texts in prose and poetry, before beginning consideration of *Beowulf*. In the second term students will continue to concentrate on *Beowulf*. Our focus this year will be on the material culture of Anglo-Saxon England, and how understanding the physical context in which this material was produced aids our understanding of Old English texts. We will focus particularly on the notion of treasure, including the hoard and the dragon. In the final months of the course we will turn back to some shorter lyrics to consider the wider context of Anglo-Saxon material culture and its effects on literacy.

Required Texts:

Baker, Peter. *Introduction to Old English*. 3rd ed (Oxford: Blackwell, 2012).

Higham, Nicholas J. And Martin J. Ryan, *The Anglo-Saxon World* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2013).

Liuzza, R.M.. *Beowulf: A New Verse Translation*. (Peterborough: Broadview, 1999).

Mitchell, Bruce and Fred C. Robinson, ed. *Beowulf*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).

Course Organisation:

In September and October the class will study the language and culture of England in the years 700-1100, including some examples of the prose and short poems written at that time. Along the way we will look chronologically at the surroundings, at the material context within which these texts were produced, in an effort to understand the way the Anglo-Saxons thought about their world. In the latter part of the first term and into January, we will turn to *Beowulf*, reading closely about a third of the poem. Students will be responsible for knowing relevant passages of the whole text and understanding its structure and content. At the end of the course, we will turn back to some shorter poems and lyrics.

The final grade will be calculated as follows:

Quizzes, 5 @ 1%	5%
January Test	5%
Final Exam	35%
Short Essays or commentaries online - 4 @ 5%	20%
Sight Translations (and Commentary) - 2 @ 5%	
- 2 @ 7.5%	25%
Class Presentations 2 @ 5%	10%
Bonus Grades for Participation (up to 5%)	

Neither late assignments nor make-up tests will normally be possible; this is a course of study in which it is vital to keep up to date with the work. My policy is not to give individual extensions.

My office is U.C. 53, and my office hours for the year are Wednesdays 10:30-11:30 and 2:30-3:30 p.m. My email is mjtoswel@uwo.ca; unfortunately, I am not on email at weekends or late evenings.

Learning Hopes

By the end of the course students will have:

- ◆ an understanding of the elements of language and of the importance of understanding language in order to address literary texts;
- ◆ a basic understanding of Old English grammar;
- ◆ an understanding of what the issues are in the field of translation studies and some practical understanding of how to translate Old English;
- ◆ a recognition that accuracy and attention to detail is important in engaging with texts, especially Old English texts;
- ◆ the ability to discuss Old English texts critically;
- ◆ an understanding of the material culture which surrounds *Beowulf* and other Old English texts
- ◆ an awareness of the ideas and structures of surviving Anglo-Saxon texts, including the ability to engage with details of prosodic and stylistic analysis
- ◆ a detailed understanding of about a third of *Beowulf* and some shorter lyrics and prose passages in Old English

Brief Course Outline

September: Learning Old English and Introduction to Material Culture

October: Old English Grammar, Old English Prose

November: Introduction to Old English History and Literature, Old English Poetry

December: Introduction to the Dragon

January: *Beowulf* back to front; the funerals and the dragon

February: The Dragon fight in *Beowulf*

March: Monsters in *Beowulf*; Material Culture in Old English Poetry

April Conclusions: Material Culture, Treasure, Dragons and Old English