

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 some texts in prose and poetry, before beginning consideration of *Beowulf*. In the second term students will continue to concentrate on *Beowulf*. In particular, we will read *Beowulf* in conjunction with J.R.R. Tolkien's translation, commentary, and response to the poem. In the final month of the course we will turn back to some shorter lyrics to consider the wider context of Anglo-Saxon culture. Our focus for the year will be on the differing perceptions and approaches taken by translators of the poetry we are considering.

Required Texts:

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

Tolkien, J.R.R. *Beowulf: A Translation and Commentary*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. (London: HarperCollins, 2014).

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, and 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:

Final Exam		35%
Short Online Papers	1 @ 5%	5%
	5 @ 6%	30%
In-class Translations and Commentary	4 @ 5%	20%
Small Group Presentations in two parts (groups of 2-3)		10%
Bonus Grades for Participation - up to 3%		
Bonus Grade for online quiz		1%

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 Old Ivey 1G40, and my office hours for the year are Mondays 10:30-12 and Wednesdays 2:30-3:30 p.m. My email is mjtoswel@uwo.ca; I will usually reply within twenty-four hours.

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;
- ◆ a real understanding of the interlacing mental and emotional structures, as exemplified in the lexicon, which surround *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

NOT the Official Course Outline

This is not the official course outline. The official course outline is posted to the Class OWL site, and includes all of the required additional material from the department, the faculty, and the university senate.

Course Syllabus

September:

Sept. 12	Introduction Old English sounds and sentences
14	Baker ch. 1, 2, Pronunciation, Appendix C
19	Baker, ch. 3, 4
21	Introductory sentences, Adam & Eve Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England: History, Culture
26	Lord's Prayer, Parts of Speech
28	Grammar, case, pronouns and nouns

October:

Oct. 3	Baker, ch. 5, Grammar, Minitext A
5	Baker, ch. 6, Minitext B
10	Thanksgiving NO CLASS
12	Baker, ch. 6, 8, Minitext D
17	Baker, Text 7, <i>The Voyage of Ohthere</i>
19	Review of grammar, Introduction to verbs Baker, ch. 7, Minitext C
24	Short Online Paper 1 due Baker, ch. 9, 10
26	Grammar review, Minitext E p. 97, Minitext F p. 103
31	Translation (and Commentary) 1

November:

Nov. 2	Text 3, Cynewulf and Cyneheard
7	Baker, ch. 12, Minitext H
9	Text 4, The Martyrdom of Ælfheah

14	Text 8, Bede on Caedmon Short Online Paper 2 due
16	Introduction to Poetry Baker, ch 13-16
21	Class Presentations
23	Class Presentations
28	Class Presentations
Nov. 30	Introduction to <i>Beowulf</i>
December	
Dec. 5	<i>Beowulf</i> : the prologue lines 1-52 Short Online Paper 3 due
7	<i>Beowulf</i> : lines 53-143
January:	
Jan. 9	Translation (and Commentary) 2
11	<i>Beowulf</i> lines 144-285
16	<i>Beowulf</i> lines 320-370
18	<i>Beowulf</i> scholarship, a brief history lines 702b-836
23	<i>Beowulf</i> lines 837-924
25	<i>Beowulf</i> lines 1063-1159a
30	<i>Beowulf</i> lines 1251-1398 Short Online Paper 4 due
February	
Feb. 1	<i>Beowulf</i> lines 1399-1491
6	Translation and Commentary 3
8	<i>Beowulf</i> lines 1492-1590
10	<i>Beowulf</i> lines 2200-2290
12	<i>Beowulf</i> lines 2291-2390
17	<i>Beowulf</i> lines 2425-2478 Short Online Paper 5 due
19	<i>Beowulf</i> lines 2550-2601, 2773-2820
BREAK WEEK	
27	Translation and Commentary 4
March	
Mar. 1	<i>Beowulf</i> lines 3137-82, Final discussion
6	Class Presentations
8	Class Presentations
13	Baker, Text 12, “The Wanderer”
15	Baker, “The Wanderer” and Text 17 “The Wife’s Lament”
20	Short Online Paper 6 due
22	Baker, Text 13 “The Dream of the Rood”
27	Translation and Commentary 5
29	Text 10 and additional riddles, Text 16 “Wulf and Eadwacer”
April	
Apr. 3	Baker, Text 11, <i>The Battle of Maldon</i> Short Online Paper 7 due
5	<i>The Battle of Maldon</i> Review

Assignments

Short Online Papers: Submitted on Sakai, these will be 500-word engagements with one of the texts treated in the previous three weeks. You may consider style, the material or social culture of the text, its theme or ideas, or an idea cleared with me. The first of these will be worth 5% of your grade. You must complete five of the remaining six assignments, each of which will be worth 6% of your grade. If you complete all seven, I will count the best six in your final grade. 1 @ 5% = 5%, 5 @ 6% = 30%

Translations (and Commentary): At five points in the year you will come to class with your textbooks and any reference texts (within reason) that you find useful, as well as your own notes. I will provide you with a text to translate (and for the last four of these also the opportunity to write commentary or analysis) in class. You will be working on paper, and will not have access to the internet. The best four results will count in your grade. 4 @ 5% = 20%

Group Presentations: Groups of three students will take on an element of Tolkien's study of *Beowulf* and present their basic analysis in the fall, with a shorter follow-up presentation in the spring to indicate either how their thinking has advanced or how their approach works for the other texts studied in the course. Topics will include: Tolkien's scholarly career, Tolkien's subcreation, Tolkien's translation of *Beowulf*, Tolkien's attitude to religion in *Beowulf*, Tolkien's textual criticism and *Beowulf*, Tolkien's linguistic knowledge and *Beowulf*, Tolkien and Grendel (and perhaps others). My basic principles for marking in-class presentations are: content as appropriate for the rest of the class, clarity of delivery, time-keeping, quality of ancillary materials. In short, these presentations are opportunities to teach your colleagues, and that will be the focus in the grading. For group presentations, unless there is a compelling reason otherwise, I assign the group a base number and vary the marks upwards or downwards, depending on the individual's contribution to the group, by 5%. The fall presentation will constitute two-thirds of this grade, and the spring update one-third. 10%

Final Examination: More details will be available during the course, but the final examination for English 3012 typically includes several passages from *Beowulf* and other texts for translation, sometimes a sight translation, some short-answer questions, and two essays (one specifically on *Beowulf*, the other a more general question that will allow you to apply knowledge gained throughout the course). All the translation passages are chosen from among those for which the student is responsible. Please bear in mind that you will not be able to use your textbooks and notes during the final examination. 35%

Bonus Grades for Participation: These grades will be awarded for attendance (to the entire class meeting), and for good and helpful contributions to class and online discussions. Bear in mind these are bonus grades, and you may not receive any. Up to 3%

Bonus Grade for Online Quiz: After the first class, there will be an online quiz available for twenty-four hours with ten questions. Up to 1% bonus marks available.