

## English 9171/4311E Tolkien and Old English

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 5-7 p.m. over zoom.

**COVID Update:** Given that we are learning Old English together in this course, we will be in a classroom (at least for the first few months; I'm hoping to move back to a department seminar room in January). We need to be face to face to talk through problems with the language, and for me to write on a chalkboard or a whiteboard so that you can see patterns. In the worst-case scenario, if the campus locks down again, we'll do zoom and I'll share my screen and figure out how my new laptop with pen works. Also, since you will want to do presentations, a classroom is preferable but we will have a backup plan.

If at some point in the year the senior administration suddenly locks down the campus, we will remain synchronous, with our principal time still being Mondays 12:30-3:30. However, since all the research currently available argues what we all know, which is that concentration over zoom is difficult after the first ninety minutes, I will be sending out a doodle poll available September 14-20 to find a ninety-minute slot elsewhere in the week. If we are shut down, we'll use Mondays 12:30 - 2 for class plus the second slot later in the week, and we will use Mondays 2 - 3:30 for optional queries, discussion, and perhaps for an extra presentation or two, depending on how the timing works.

### **Course introduction:**

Mondays 12:30-3:30  
University College 4401 (second term, I hope); first term, FNB 1200 (possibly moving to UC 1405)

At the age of sixteen, a master at King Edward's School in Birmingham lent Ronald Tolkien an Anglo-Saxon primer, which he devoured with enthusiasm before turning to the reading of *Beowulf*, then Middle English, then Old Norse, and then Germanic philology as a subject of some fascination. And then he turned to inventing languages. In this course, we will study Old English as Tolkien did, beginning with introductory short prose texts, then some of the shorter poems, and then *Beowulf*, always comparing our approach to Tolkien's, and the primer and reader that he used with our own introductory texts. When we get to *Beowulf*, we will read his landmark Gollancz Lecture from 1936, which arguably turned the study of the poem from the quarrying philologists and archaeologists, and towards scholars of literature and culture. We will also consider the other poems which Tolkien addressed in his scholarly role as Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon in the University of Oxford. Alongside, we will engage with the works that Tolkien wrote himself, inspired by the medieval texts he studied professionally. We will read *The Lord of the Rings*, and some of his other works, and consider their reception during and after Tolkien's life, and will delve somewhat

into Tolkien's own compositions in Old English, and his other engagements with Anglo-Saxon matters.

### Required Texts:

Henry Sweet, *An Anglo-Saxon Primer*. Trieste Publishing, May 2, 2018. \$13.69 (reprint)

Peter S. Baker, *Introduction to Old English*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. \$46.84. See below for long discussion of Baker!

Fr. Klaeber, ed. *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*. Andesite Press, August 2017. \$26.06. (reprint)

J.R.R. Tolkien, *Lord of the Rings*. 3-vol. set. New York: HarperCollins, 2007. \$26.55

J.R.R. Tolkien, *Sauron Defeated: The History of the Lord of the Rings, Part 4*. ed. Christopher Tolkien. London: UK General Books, 1994. \$20.55

Humphrey Carpenter, *Tolkien: The Authorized Biography*. London: Ballantine Books, 1985. \$17.93 OR Michael White, *Tolkien: A Biography*. Penguin, 2001.

J.R.R. Tolkien, *Beowulf: A Translation and Commentary together with Sellic Spell*. London: HarperCollins, 2015. \$26.08

Some course materials posted to class website, or available through library.

On Baker. The Bookstore declared Baker's *Introduction to Old English* as out of print this summer. I'm not convinced, as this is the standard textbook in the field. However, I checked his standard website:

[www.oldenglishaerobics.com](http://www.oldenglishaerobics.com)

The website is extremely useful. It says that a login is required, but I've clicked on most of the texts and they all seem to come up at once. Possibly, Baker has reacted to Blackwell stopping his book by just making it readily available. This is a good thing. Also on his website is a link to purchase the book through Google, which is odd, too.

[https://books.google.ca/books?id=kYwV8K\\_naloC&dq=baker+introduction+to+old+english](https://books.google.ca/books?id=kYwV8K_naloC&dq=baker+introduction+to+old+english)

At any rate, Baker provides an excellent introduction to Old English. Get a copy of the book in print if you can, as you will want it for the glossary and his very careful presentation of the texts with solid introductions.

### Optional Texts:

Sweet, Henry, *An Anglo-Saxon Primer* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1882).

<https://archive.org/details/ananglosaxonpri04sweegoog>

Sweet, Henry, *An Anglo-Saxon Reader in Prose and Verse, with Grammatical Introduction, Notes, and Glossary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1876).

<https://archive.org/details/ananglosaxonrea00sweegoog>

Tolkien, J.R.R. "The Monsters and the Critics" lecture, available at:

<http://producer.csi.edu/cdraney/2011/278/resources/Tolkien%20-%20The%20Monsters%20and%20the%20Critics.pdf>

### Course Evaluation:

Participation 10%

(Attendance, engagement, quality of questions and answers, helpfulness with colleagues).

This year I am splitting the participation grade into segments. You'll get a grade at the end of October, December, February break, and April, each worth 2.5%.

Online assignments/response papers 6 @ 7% = 42%

48% of the evaluation will be your choice, with two caveats: every student must do one, and preferably two, presentations in class individually worth not more than 15% and any final paper will not be worth more than 20%.

**The default which will kick in if you do not notify me in writing of your choice by midnight on Sunday 27 September will be 2 X 5% additional online assignments/response papers, 2 X 10% presentations, and 2 X 9% translation tests.**

Some examples of your options would be:

- 20% on a final paper, 20% on a January paper plus two translation tests at 5%;
- 10% final paper, 15% presentation, 15% added to online assignments, one 10% test;
- two 15% papers due at the beginning of January and the beginning of April, and two 10% presentations;
- 5 additional online assignments at a slightly higher degree of difficulty for 10% each; and so forth.

I am happy to discuss your choice in person or over zoom, and I will respond to a couple of emails on the topic, although not to a long exchange. I'm putting this unusual procedure in place because the course has both graduate and undergraduate students, and because in a year-long course we have more options for creativity.

However, the last time I offered this course there was some abuse of this option, so this time there are a few more rules, as noted above.

**Participation:** This is a senior capstone course for undergrads and for grads it is one of probably three courses. It meets 24 times, so missing some or all of more than a couple of classes will be severely debilitating to your progress in the course (especially since we're spending a lot of time on language and on close reading). At the same time you are adults and will have calls on your time that are significant. The medical certificate policy applies both to grads and undergrads, so please make use of that if you need to be away; I'm willing if necessary to have a conversation with you if need be about medical issues but it's not really my business. This is the work of the academic counsellors. That said, participation marks will be given for attendance to the full class (lateness is really unprofessional), for engagement (that is, having read the materials in advance, prepared the homework, and generally faced up to the exigencies of the course), to the quality of questions and answers, and to helpfulness with colleagues. In senior courses such as this one, participation can be taking over the discussion and pontificating, which is not good participation and will not be rewarded, or it can be making one or two very useful points or helping someone else out if you understand Old English verbs and they don't, or if you have *Lord of the Rings* at your fingertips and they don't.

**Short Online Papers:** Submitted on OWL, these will be 500-word engagements with one of the texts or ideas treated in the previous week. Students generally want more specific comments about what is expected here. You can do research, and it's a smart idea to take something we discuss briefly in class and dig into it more deeply. At the same time it's possible to write an excellent short paper that uses only the materials we are reading and studying in the course. You can choose to write about the Old English material, or the Tolkien material, or the connections between the two: it's up to you. I'm happy to discuss your paper briefly, and I will mark it fairly quickly (within the week, and often the next day) so as to give you feedback for the next paper. The idea here is for you to solidify your learning several times each term, so that you really know the course materials and can develop your ideas. Students in past iterations of this assignment sometimes pick a theme they will carry through all their papers, or an approach, or a theory to apply, or they focus on a particular character or ideal. Some simply work each week to figure out something they can apply from a previous course or from their own knowledge. Where students go wrong is in two ways: in thinking that this assignment is only worth 5% and so can be written in an hour or two on the evening it is due, and in thinking that only a beautifully-finished and elegant analysis with dozens of references (references do not count in the word limit) will do, so they never finish their papers and end the year with a dozen half-started papers. The last time I offered this course I decided to leave all the weekly assignment windows open so that students could submit behind; this was a disastrous decision, so this year the portals will close as specified. There will be one extra portal each term for you to submit something that you wanted to do but never finished earlier on. Three papers must be submitted by the last due date in December, and obviously three more by the last due date in April. You can, however, do all six in the fall, and you can write up to two extra online papers to improve your results (though a higher grade is not guaranteed).

**Short Presentations:** 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. That is, feel free to impress me if you want, but I will be grading you on how much you convey to your colleagues and how much they engage with your presentation.

**Course Syllabus (very drafty draft: see the website for a much more detailed series of tabs which mark each week's plan and lesson materials you should have at hand for the class):**

Fall

Sept 14 Tolkien bio, intro, Introduction to Old English, OE pronunciation

21 Carpenter bio, OE first sentences, intro grammar

28 Carpenter bio, Sweet's primer parables, Baker on nouns

Oct. 5 Tolkien and Sweet on language, Baker on adjectives, pronouns, start verbs

19 Tolkien on philology in OE and the OED, Baker and Sweet on verbs

26 Tolkien and the Oxford English school, more verbs, Short OE texts

Nov. 2 Tolkien and archaeology, Baker on adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions, syntax

Nov. 9 Tolkien on Middle English and AB language, translations from Sweet's primer

16 Tolkien's imaginary world, Baker's Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, *Ohthere* and *Wulfstan*

23 Old English poetry

30 *LOTR I, Battle of Maldon*

Winter

Jan. 4 *LOTR I, The Wanderer, Wife's Lament* Riddles: Tolkien, Baker

11 *LOTR 2, Dream of the Rood*

18 *LOTR 2*, OE riddles

25 *LOTR 3*, Introduction to *Beowulf*

Feb. 1 Tolkien on *Beowulf*, Klaeber's *Beowulf* – Scyld Scefing, Hrothgar, Grendel

8 Tolkien's precis of *Beowulf*, Klaeber death of Grendel

22 *Beowulf, Sellic Spell*

Mar. 1 *Sauron Defeated*, death of Grendel's mother

8 *Sauron Defeated*, history in *Beowulf*

15 *Notion Club Papers, Beowulf* and dragons

22 Tolkien on *Beowulf, Beowulf*

29 *Beowulf*

Apr. 5 Final discussion and analysis

Topics to Ponder while you are thinking about the course (I hope you will pick two or three topics and pursue them through the course, so as to give coherence to your own engagement with Tolkien and with Old English):

Tolkien's Life

Tolkien's Research on OE & ME

Tolkien on *Beowulf*

Tolkien and Lexicography

Tolkien and Narrative

Tolkien & Allegory

Tolkien & Heroism

Tolkien & women

Tolkien & the monstrous

Tolkien and (Anglo-Saxon) history

Tolkien & astronomy/astrology

Tolkien & poetry/song

Tolkien & religion  
 Tolkien historiography & publication history as intersecting with study of Old English (!)  
 Tolkien's geography & climate  
 Tolkien's cartography  
 Tolkien illustration (own & others) and OE  
 Tolkien filmography and OE  
 Christopher Tolkien & OE  
 Tolkien and Little England & OE  
 Tolkien and the Great War & OE  
 Tolkien and elegy  
 Tolkien and race/Critical Race  
 Tolkien and apocalypse  
 Tolkien and epic  
 Tolkien and time  
 Tolkien and animal studies  
 The postmodern Tolkien  
 The postsecular Tolkien  
 The deconstructionist Tolkien  
 other?

Extra Material Required by various policies:

1. Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.
2. Students are fully responsible for looking at and being familiar with the information posted on the department website at <http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html>
3. Accommodation

Statement regarding Illness:

In order to ensure fairness and consistency for all students, academic accommodation for work representing 10% or more of the student's overall grade in the course shall be granted only in those cases where there is documentation indicating that the student was seriously affected by illness and could not reasonably be expected to meet his/her academic responsibilities. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Associate Dean, Undergraduate.

Academic accommodation for work representing less than 10% of the student's overall grade will similarly be granted only in cases of documented illness. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at [http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf).

Downloadable Student Medical Certificate

(SMC):[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf)

#### 4. Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

Plagiarism Checking:

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

#### 5. Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Extra material required for Graduate Students:

##### 1. Statement on Academic Offences:

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_grad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf)

##### 2. Graduate Course Health and Wellness

As part of a successful graduate student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their health and wellness a priority. Western provides several on campus health-related services to help you achieve optimum health and engage in healthy living while pursuing your graduate degree. For example, to support physical activity, all students, as part of their registration, receive membership in Western's Campus Recreation Centre. Numerous cultural events are offered throughout the year. For example, please check out the Faculty of Music web page <http://www.music.uwo.ca/>, and our own McIntosh Gallery <http://www.mcintoshgallery.ca/>. Information regarding health- and wellness-related services available to students may be found at <http://www.health.uwo.ca/>. Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone they feel comfortable confiding in, such as their faculty supervisor, their program director (graduate chair), or other relevant administrators in their unit. Campus mental health resources may be found at [http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental\\_health/resources.html](http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/resources.html).

Extra material required in the age of Covid, probably not relevant:

### **Recording of Class Meetings:**

Our classes will not be recorded. If we are obliged to shift to emergency remote delivery of this course, the two class meetings on Mondays from 12:30-3:30 p.m. and at the second time determined by our doodle poll will be entirely over zoom, but will not be recorded.

One reason for not recording is privacy issues, and another is that you should focus and pay attention during the class. All the research suggests that when students can "watch" the class at a time of their own choosing they "forget" or they "multitask" and the effort is largely wasted. A third reason is that no one has offered me a webcam with which to record these sessions, and I'm pretty sure my faculty would tell me to buy one, learn how to use it, hire someone to record the class, and figure out how to upload it myself (apparently OWL does not permit the uploading of files this large). That's a lot of work for something I consider a complete waste of time, my time and yours.

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation, or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. (Note there is no circumstance in which I will give written permission.) I cannot stop you from bad behaviour on this point, but I can say unequivocally that this would be bad behaviour.

### **Contingency plan for an in-person class suddenly being locked down and required to move to emergency remote delivery**

In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, all remaining course content will be delivered entirely online and synchronously at the times indicated in the timetable (and at the second time that we have agreed on in September). The grading scheme will not change. Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online and synchronously as determined by the course instructor.

### **Statements concerning Online Etiquette**

Some components of this course will involve online interactions. To ensure the best experience for both you and your classmates, please honour the following rules of etiquette:

- please “arrive” to class on time
- please use your computer and/or laptop if possible (as opposed to a cell phone or tablet)
- ensure that you are in a private location to protect the confidentiality of discussions in the event that a class discussion deals with sensitive or personal material
- to minimize background noise, kindly mute your microphone for the entire class until you are invited to speak, unless directed otherwise
- [suggested for classes larger than 30 students] In order to give us optimum bandwidth and web quality, please turn off your video camera for the entire class unless you are invited to speak
- [suggested for cases where video is used] please be prepared to turn your video camera off at the instructor’s request if the internet connection becomes unstable
- unless invited by your instructor, do **not** share your screen in the meeting

The course t.a. and instructor will act as co-hosts and moderators for the class and will deal with any questions from participants. To participate please consider the following:

- if you wish to speak, use the “raise hand” function and wait for the instructor to acknowledge you before beginning your comment or question
- remember to unmute your microphone and turn on your video camera before speaking
- self-identify when speaking.
- remember to mute your mic and turn off your video camera after speaking (unless directed otherwise)

General considerations of “netiquette”:

- Keep in mind the different cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the students in the course.
- Be courteous toward the instructor, your colleagues, and authors whose work you are discussing.
- Be respectful of the diversity of viewpoints that you will encounter in the class and in your readings. The exchange of diverse ideas and opinions is part of the scholarly environment. “Flaming” is never appropriate.
- Be professional and scholarly in all online postings. Cite the ideas of others appropriately.

Note that disruptive behaviour of any type during online classes, including inappropriate use of the chat function, is unacceptable. Students found guilty of Zoom-bombing a class or of other serious online offenses may be subject to disciplinary measures under the Code of Student Conduct.