

## 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*. Our focus for the year will be the context and historiography of thinking about Old English, with some examples of modern scholarship and with some consideration of how our thinking about Old English and early medieval England has changed in the two hundred years since scholars began considering these materials.

### Required Texts:

Baker, Peter. *Introduction to Old English*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed (Oxford: Blackwell, 2012). Also available online at <http://www.oldenglishaerobics.net/>

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

A printed text-based translation of *Beowulf* of your choice.

*Dating Beowulf: Studies in Intimacy*. Ed. Daniel C. Remein & Erica Weaver. (Manchester UP, 2020).

*Beowulf and Other Stories: A New Introduction to Old English, Old Icelandic and Anglo-Norman Literatures*. Ed. Richard North & Joe Allard. (Pearson/Longman, 2007).

### 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 people of early medieval England 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. We will also be reading *Beowulf* and some of the other course materials in the context of the study of Old English in the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries.

The final grade will be calculated as follows:

Final Exam	30%
In-class Translations and Commentary best 4 @ 5%	20%
Presentations and online written versions best 3 of 4 @ 5%	15%
1 @ 10%	10%
Analysis of <i>Beowulf</i> translation	10%
Essay expansion of one presentation	15%
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 UC 2418, and my office hours for the year are Mondays 10:30-12 and Wednesdays 10:30-12. My email is [mjtoswel@uwo.ca](mailto:mjtoswel@uwo.ca); I tend to reply very quickly, and almost always within twenty-four hours. I have zero social media presence.

### 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 and especially *Beowulf* 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
- ◆ a solid understanding of the historiography of Beowulf scholarship, and some understanding of the approaches and inherent biases of scholarly materials.

### NOT the Official Course Outline

This is not the official course outline. The official course outline will be 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: Introduction to Old English and early medieval England

October: Completion of OE grammar, some short prose texts, one longer prose text

November: Two prose texts, introduction to OE poetry, four OE poems,

Introduction to Beowulf

December: Beowulf, cognate and analogous texts

January: Beowulf and scholarship of the poem, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

February: Beowulf and translation studies

March: Beowulf and how to date the poem

April: Old English prose and poetry revisited