

English 3310: Old English Language and Literature (FW26)

Instructor: Michael Fox

Prerequisites

At least 60% in 1.0 of English 1020-1999; at least 60% in 1.0 of Medieval Studies 1000-1999; at least 60% in Linguistics 1027A/B; or permission of the Department.

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 have it 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.

Official Calendar Description

Studying the language and literature of England a millennium ago, we will move from introducing the language to simple prose texts to the poetry of the Exeter and Vercelli Books and, for most of the second term, to the study of *Beowulf*.

Custom Description

This course is about language, which means that you'll learn Old English and that you'll learn a fair bit about how language works generally. Old English is also where English literature starts, so you'll read the first poem written in English and you'll read selections from across some 400 years of Old English literature. Because our knowledge of the period is limited, you'll get a bit more history than you would in other courses, and you'll be asked to read some Old Norse literature (in English), some of the closest analogues in culture and content to what we'll read in the course. Along the way, you'll also learn about storytelling and its history.

Course Objectives

1. To develop the necessary linguistic skills (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, translation) to be able to read and engage critically and independently with texts written in the Old English period
2. To increase awareness of how language works generally, which will improve language-learning skills, and heighten appreciation of Modern English
3. To offer insight into the origins of English language, literature, and culture
4. To develop further the ability to analyze texts critically, and formulate and produce documents that have an effective thesis with a clear, well-articulated intent and a logical argument supported by adequate evidence from the text(s) under discussion

Course Materials ([bookstore link](#))

Baker, Peter S., *Introduction to Old English*, 3rd ed. (Oxford and Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012). **This textbook costs between \$55.00 (permanent ebook) and \$69.35 (paperback). This edition is required.**

Byock, Jesse, trans., with Russell Poole, *Grettir's Saga* (Oxford and London: Oxford University Press, 2009). **This textbook costs \$22.40 (paperback).**

Byock, Jesse L. (trans.) (1998). *The Saga of King Hrolf Kraki*. London: Penguin. **This textbook costs \$23.00 (paperback).**

Fulk, R.D., Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles, eds, *Klaeber's Beowulf*, 4th ed. (Toronto: UTP, 2008). **This textbook costs \$60.20 (paperback). This edition is required.**

Sturluson, Snorri, *The Prose Edda*, trans. Jesse L. Byock (London: Penguin, 2005). **This textbook costs \$24.00 (paperback).**

Beowulf. Any translation, any edition. You'll need this for two reasons: 1) to assist as you translate, and 2) to read the parts of *Beowulf* that we won't look at in Old English in class. Here's [a straightforward one](#), and here's [a scholarly one](#) where you can see the Old English (translation line with mouse-over if you select "translation" in the vertical "Options" tab in the middle of the screen: there's lots you can do with [this site](#)). If you like to hold a book while you read, [Roy Liuzza's translation](#) is precise (2nd edition, Broadview, 2012), and a recent facing-page translation that's quite good with solid and brief introduction and notes is Shippey (also a Tolkien expert) and Neidorf, [Beowulf: Translation and Commentary](#) (Uppsala Books, 2024). If you want to read newer takes by contemporary writers (instead of scholars), try [Seamus Heaney's translation](#) or [Maria Dahvana Headley's translation](#), but these won't be as much help when you're working through the Old English. **This textbook costs between \$0.00 (online options) and \$33.99 (paperback version of Shippey and Neidorf on Amazon).**

All other course materials will be posted to [OWL Brightspace](#). Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site regularly for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class. If students need assistance with the OWL site, they can seek support on the [OWL Brightspace Help](#) page. Alternatively, they can contact the Western Technology Services Helpdesk.

Electronic Devices

No aids are permitted for quizzes or the exam. Electronic devices of any kind (including calculators, cell phones, and smart watches) are not permitted.

Statement on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

In this course, the use of AI (automatic translation tools, grammar checkers, ChatGPT, etc.) is prohibited. If AI use is suspected, the instructor will ask for research notes, rough drafts, essay

outlines, and other materials used in preparing assignments. Students are expected to retain these materials until after final grades have been entered. In the unlikely event of concerns being raised about the authenticity of any assignment, students may be asked to produce these materials; an inability to do so may weigh heavily against them.

Grade Distribution

Quizzes (40%): The quizzes will test knowledge of Old English grammar and the ability to translate short passages of text. Early in the course, the focus will be on particular points of Old English grammar and very brief translations; later in the course, the quizzes will primarily involve translation. Six quizzes will be set, and your best five will count.

Assignments (10%; 15%): In the first half of the course, students will write brief assignments (approximately 1000 words) based on close readings and exploration of particular words or phrases in our first-term readings. In the second half of the course, students will have the option of a traditional research paper (roughly 2000 words on a topic related to *Beowulf* and its contexts) or a creative work (roughly 1500 words with 500 words of explanation) that demonstrates a thorough knowledge of *Beowulf*'s storytelling techniques. Detailed instructions and advice will be given at the appropriate time.

Final Exam (35%): Students will be asked to translate passages, identify and provide context for selections from material we have read, and write an essay (or essays) on a literary topic. A detailed breakdown of the final exam will be provided toward the end of the course.

General information about missed coursework

Students must familiarize themselves with the *University Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs* posted on the Academic Calendar:
<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/academicconsiderationSep24.pdf>

This policy does not apply to requests for academic consideration submitted for **attempted or completed work**, whether online or in person. The policy also does not apply to students experiencing longer-term impacts on their academic responsibilities. These students should consult: [Accessible Education](#).

For procedures on how to submit Academic Consideration requests, please see the information posted on the Office of the Registrar's webpage:

<https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academicconsiderations/>

All requests for Academic Consideration must be made within 48 hours after the assessment date or submission deadline.

All academic consideration requests must include supporting documentation; however, recognizing that formal documentation may not be available in some extenuating circumstances, the policy allows students to make one Academic Consideration request **without supporting documentation** in this course. However, the following assessments are excluded from this, and therefore always require formal supporting documentation:

- Examinations scheduled during official examination periods (defined by policy)

Quizzes. This course has 6 quizzes, and the 5 quizzes with the highest marks are counted towards your final grade. Should extenuating circumstances arise, students do not need to request Academic Consideration for the first missed quiz. Academic consideration requests will be denied for the first quiz. Academic Consideration requests may be granted when students miss more than one quiz.

Assignments. Students are expected to submit each of the assignments by the deadline listed. Should extenuating circumstances arise, students do not need to request Academic Consideration, and they are permitted to submit their assignment (up to 72 hours) past the deadline without a late penalty. Should students submit their assessment beyond 72 hours past the deadline, a late penalty of 5% per day will be applied. Academic Consideration requests may be granted only for extenuating circumstances that started before the deadline and lasted longer than the No-Late-Penalty Period (72 hours).

Schedule of Classes

First Term

September 10: Introduction

September 15-17: Baker, Chapters 1-4

September 22-24: Baker, Chapter 5 (including Minitext A)

September 29-October 1: Baker, Chapter 6 (including Minitext B)

QUIZ 1: Thursday, October 1

October 6-8: Baker, Chapter 7 (including Minitext C)

October 12-16: Reading Week, no classes

October 20-22: Baker, Chapters 8-9 (including Minitexts D and E)

QUIZ 2: Thursday, October 22

October 27-29: Baker, Chapters 10-12 (including Minitext F)

November 3: The Fall of Adam and Eve (Baker Anthology 1)

November 5: Baker, Chapter 13 (including Minitext I)

November 10-12: *Cædmon's Hymn* (Baker Anthology 8)

Quiz 3: Thursday, November 12

November 17-19: *Deor* (handout)

November 24-26: *Battle of Maldon* (Baker Anthology 11)

December 1-3: *The Wanderer* (Baker Anthology 12)

December 8: *Metrical Charm 3* (handout)

Assignment 1 due last day of term (December 22)

Second Term

January 5-7: *Beowulf*, 1-25 (myth of Scyld Scefing); *Beowulf*, 26-52 (great kings of Denmark)

January 12: *Grettir's Saga*, ch. 1-11 (story of Önnundr)

January 14: *Beowulf*, 53-85 (Danish succession; the building of Heorot); *Beowulf*, 86-125 (the appearance of Grendel)

January 19: *Beowulf*, 170-228 (hard times for the Danes; the coming of Beowulf)

January 21: *Beowulf*, 371-89a (Hrothgar's knowledge of Beowulf); *Beowulf* 499-528 (Unferth)

January 26: *Beowulf*, 529-606 (Beowulf's response to Unferth)

January 28: *Beowulf*, 702b-54 (Beowulf meets Grendel)

QUIZ 4: Thursday, January 28

February 2: *Grettir's Saga*, ch. 12-16 (Grettir's boyhood); *Grettir's Saga*, ch. 17-24 (Grettir's first visit to Norway)

February 4: *Beowulf*, 755-836 (fight continued; defeat of Grendel); *Grettir's Saga*, ch. 25-35 (Grettir meets Glámr)

February 9: *Beowulf*, 864-915 (the Sigemund/Heremod digression); *Prose Edda*, pp. 95-103

February 11: *Beowulf*, 1169-91 (Wealtheow's speech)

February 15-19: Reading Week, no classes

February 23: *Beowulf*, 1215-31 (Wealtheow speaks again)

February 25: *Beowulf*, 1345-82 (Hrothgar explains about Grendel's mother)

QUIZ 5: Thursday, February 25

March 2: *Beowulf*, 1408-41a (journey to Grendel's mother's lair); *Beowulf*, 1492-1517 (beginning of the fight with Grendel's mother)

March 4: *Beowulf*, 1518-69 (fight with Grendel's mother)

March 9: *Grettir's Saga*, ch. 36-53 (Grettir's second visit to Norway; Grettir avenges his brother's murder; Grettir's outlawry); *Grettir's Saga*, ch. 54-67 (more outlawry; haunting at Sandhaugar)

March 11: *Beowulf*, 1687-1727 (Hrothgar's speech)

March 16: *Beowulf*, 2200-20 (passage of time and the arrival of the dragon); *Beowulf*, 2236b-66 (the 'last survivor' speaks)

March 18: *Grettir's Saga*, ch. 68-93 (death of Grettir; vengeance for Grettir's death); *Beowulf*, 2510-37 (Beowulf's resolution)

QUIZ 6: Thursday, March 18

March 23: *Beowulf*, 2550-91a (Beowulf versus the dragon)

March 25: *The Saga of King Hrolf Kraki*

March 30- April 1: *Sellic Spell*; *The Sagas of the Hrafnista Men*; *Thor and the Midgard Serpent*

April 6: *Beowulf*, 2729-51 (Beowulf's dying speech)

April 8: *Beowulf*, 3156-82 (Beowulf's funeral); Conclusion and Review

Assignment 2 due last day of classes

Additional information

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, here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences.pdf

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>).

Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays

Students should review the [policy for Accommodation for Religious Holidays](#). Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but **not later than two weeks** prior to writing the examination/term test. In the case of conflict with a midterm test, students should inform their instructor as soon as possible but not later than one week prior to the midterm.

Religious Accommodation requests for final exams should be submitted via the Student Absence Portal.

Academic Accommodation is “a means of adjusting the academic activities associated with a course or program of student in order to permit students with disabilities to participate in those activities at the University and to fulfill the essential requirements of a course or program.”

<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodationdisabilities.pdf>. Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with **Accessible Education** at the earliest opportunity. “[Accessible Education](#) plays a central role in Western's efforts to ensure that its academic programs are accessible for all students.”

Special Examinations

A Special Examination is any examination other than the regular examination, and it may be offered only with the permission of the Dean of the Faculty in which the student is registered, in consultation with the instructor and Department Chair. Permission to write a Special Examination may be given on the basis of compassionate or medical grounds with appropriate supporting documents. To provide an opportunity for students to recover from the circumstances resulting in a Special Examination, the University has implemented Special Examinations dates. These dates as well as other important information about examinations and academic standing can be found [here](#).

Academic Advising

Your Home Faculty's Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters.

Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here: <https://registrar.uwo.ca/facultyacademiccounselling.html>

Mental Health Support

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Gender-based and sexual violence

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/student-support/survivor-support/get-help.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Learning Development and Success

Counsellors at the Learning Development and Success Centre <https://learning.uwo.ca> are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.

USC

Additional student-run support services are offered by the USC: <https://westernusc.ca/services/>.