

English 9171/4311E Tolkien and Anglo-Saxon

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Wednesdays 12:30-3:30 p.m.
University College 4401

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

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

J.R.R. Tolkien, ed. *Finn and Hengest*. ed. Alan Bliss. London: UK General Books, 1998. \$15.40

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

Optional Texts:

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

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)

Online assignments/response papers 6 @ 5% = 30%

In-class short presentations 2-3 times = 20%

40% of the evaluation will be your choice. The default which will kick in if you do not notify me in writing of your choice will be 4 X 5% additional online assignments/response papers, and 2 X 10% translation tests. Some examples of your options would be: 40% all on one final paper; 20% on a final paper plus two translation tests; 10% final paper, 5% added to presentations, 15% added to online assignments, one 10% test; two 20% papers due at the beginning of January and the beginning of April; and so forth. The default will kick in on September 30 because we do have to complete 15% of the course for all options by the end of November. I'll be very happy to meet with each of you once to discuss options, or to answer up to two emails proposing and discussing options. (I'm putting this unusual procedure in place because the course has both graduate and undergraduate students, and graduate students often believe that a big final paper is the best culminating project. Undergraduates might not take that view. Plus, I want to investigate different modes of assessment, in the hope of finding some that produce less anxiety and upset.)

Participation Policy: 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 (I think), so please make use of that if you need to be away; I'm happy 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, 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. I'll give you feedback on participation at the end of November and at the end of January so that you know where you stand.

Short Online Papers: Submitted on OWL, these will be 500-word engagements with one of the texts or ideas treated in the previous week.

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.

Late Policy: I'm inaugurating a new late policy this year. I'll be setting up OWL with assignment due dates for the short online papers. You all have to do six of these, and you can do as many as you want and I'll count the best six. However, I'm only going to mark papers that come into a particular due date on time. The window will remain open and you can submit papers into earlier dates as much as you want, but once the due date and time has passed, I will mark within the week the papers that arrived before that due date. Any papers that come in later will be marked at the end of December or after the end of classes. That is, if you want feedback from me, you will submit your paper by the due date for that assignment. There are all kinds of ramifications of this late policy, and I'm happy to discuss in class (once, maybe twice). But you will be able to figure them out on your own. If you are a born procrastinator, then you can write ten of these in early April. I don't recommend that approach. But you can do that. If you miss a short presentation for any reason, I will reschedule it once.

Course Syllabus (not final version):

Fall

Sept 12 Tolkien bio, intro, Introduction to Old English, OE pronunciation

19 Carpenter bio, OE first sentences, intro grammar

26 Tolkien, Homecoming of Beorhtnoth, Sweet's primer parables, Baker on nouns

Oct. 3 Tolkien and Sweet on language, Baker on adjectives, pronouns, start verbs

17 *LOTR 1*, Baker and Sweet on verbs

24 *LOTR 1 cont.*, more verbs

31 *LOTR 2*, Baker on adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions, syntax

Nov. 7 *LOTR 2*, translations from Sweet's primer

14 *LOTR 3*, Tolkien on AB language, Baker's Æthelthryth

21 *LOTR 3*, Baker on Anglo-Saxon Chronicle

28 Tolkien's imaginary world, Ohthere and Wulfstan

Dec. 5 Tolkien and OE poetry, Bede on Caedmon

Winter

Jan. 9 Riddles: Tolkien, Baker

16 Battle of Maldon, Beorhtnoth again

23 Tolkien *Sauron Defeated*, “The Wanderer”

30 Tolkien and the Inklings, “Dream of the Rood”

Feb. 6 Tolkien on *Beowulf*, Klaeber’s *Beowulf* – Scyld Scefing, Hrothgar, Grendel

13 Tolkien’s precis of *Beowulf*, Klaeber death of Grendel

27 *Finn and Hengest*

Mar. 6 Tolkien and the OED, death of Grendel’s mother

13 Tolkien and Old English at Oxford, history in *Beowulf*

20 *Beowulf* and dragons

27 Final Presentations 1

Apr. 3 Final Presentations 2, Course conclusions

Topics to Consider (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 for Undergraduates:

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.

Downloadable Student Medical Certificate

(SMC):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

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

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.