

University of Utah
ENGL 5700-001

TuTh 9.10am – 10.30am, [GC 3153](#) Office Hours: via Zoom, email for appointment
Spring 2023

Professor Chris Jones
Office: LNCO 3421

Email: chris.s.jones@utah.edu

Studies in Medieval Literature (Old English)



[Access course syllabus here](#)

Course Description

What did English sound like over a thousand years ago? What did its speakers care about, what patterns did they make with words, and what traces of their hopes, desires, fears and anxieties did they leave inked on vellum manuscript for us to read and wonder over a millennium after their anonymous makers have vanished? On this course we'll be learning to read some of the earliest surviving poems and prose texts in English in their original language: Old English. We'll encounter heroes and monsters, wandering exiles, ruined landscapes, talking trees and other strange creatures and objects that speak as if human, asking us to name and identify them. We'll study some of the cultural myths and historical patterns by which these earliest English speakers understood their place on the island of Britain in the seventh to eleventh centuries, settlers and immigrants, convinced of the imminence of the coming End Times, and we'll consider how those myths and ideas of so-called 'Anglo-Saxon England' still perform ideological work today.

The course will be structured so that Tuesday classes are dedicated to study and discussion of literary texts in dual-language versions (that is, the original Old English on one side of the page, and a Modern English translation on the other, for accessibility), and Thursday classes will be devoted to language study, gradually building up our knowledge of Old English from scratch. No previous experience with Old English is necessary, but students should be aware that unlike many English

courses, this one will entail study of grammar, syntax and vocabulary learning. In Thursday language classes emphasis will be on learning by doing, with hands-on exercises, activities and language games and quizzes. The aim is that by the end of the course students will be confident enough to read texts in Old English, with less and less reliance on the facing-page translation, and able to translate short, simple passages of Old English for themselves. Assessment will reflect this combination of literary and language work. Writers of Old English were obsessed with what they called *wundor*, ‘wonder’: that is, the miraculous or marvelous embedded in the mundane and everyday. Come and experience the *wundor* of Old English at first hand!

Set Texts

– *Old and Middle English c. 890-c. 1450: Anthology*, 3rd edition.
Ed. Elaine Treharne. Oxford; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.
ISBN: 978-1-4051-8120-4

– *Reading Old English: A Primer and First Reader*, revised edition.
Robert Hasenfratz and Thomas Jambeck. Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2011.
ISBN: 978-1-933202-74-7

Please note: you must make sure you obtain the **3rd edition** of Treharne’s *Anthology* and the **Revised (2011)** edition of Hasenfratz and Jambeck’s *Reading Old English*. Earlier editions do not have all the texts or materials we require for our course. The Campus bookstore should stock copies of both texts in the correct editions, or you can order them directly from Wiley and West Virginia University Press where they are currently just over \$60 and \$40, respectively. You may find cheaper copies from other online and second-hand retailers; if you do, just be sure that you are purchasing the correct editions. Please note that you will want to write in your books, especially *Reading Old English*, which includes study exercises I will set. So make sure any second-hand copies are ‘clean’. We will use the Treharne anthology mainly in our Tuesday classes for literary discussion, and *Reading Old English* in our Thursday classes for language study. We will only be using the first 300 or so pages of the Treharne anthology on this course (and not the Middle English sections), but it still represents the best value for money of any dual-text (i.e. Old English with facing-page Modern English translation) textbook that I can set for this course, and it has everything in it that we will need. While I will recommend other further reading (secondary and critical) from the library, there are no other books necessary for purchase for this course.