

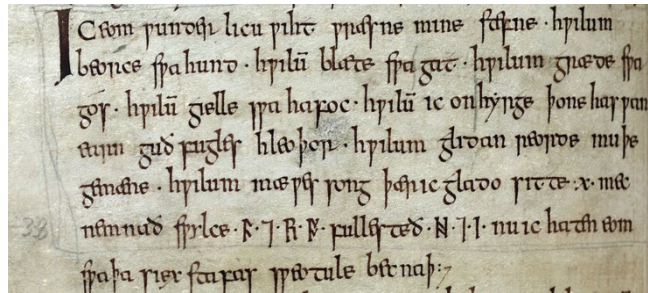
University of Utah
ENGL 6610-001

Wed 4.35pm – 7.25pm, [LNCO 3870](#) Office Hours: via Zoom, email for appointment
Fall 2023

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Medieval Literature (Old English Poetry: Craft Translation Practice)



Course Description

How is water like bone? A moth like a reader? A book like a beast? Early English poetry revealed in paradox and marvels, miracle and wonder (*wundor* in Old English). This class will provide a deep dive into the *wundor* of verse-craft in Old English (sometimes called “Anglo-Saxon”), the earliest surviving stage of the English language in our written records (our texts will range in date from the early eighth century AD to the tenth). For the first half of the semester we will intensively study Old English language, building up your understanding of Old English grammar, widening your vocabulary, and practicing your translation skills on several prose texts. During the second half of the semester we will read a range of shorter poems in the original Old English language, focusing in particular on the riddles of the late tenth-century manuscript known as The Exeter Book, which constitute a kind of early medieval English *ars poetica*. We will examine a number of the distinctive techniques of Old English verse, including kenning, variation and the alliterative metre (you probably say “meter”), as well as consider the theory and practice of translation as a literary activity. If you don’t like grammar and formal language study, this class might not be for you. But if you love riddles, crosswords, language games of all kinds, and poetry of devastating verbal ingenuity composed and written down over a thousand years ago by people whose names have been lost forever, then this class might just be your bag.

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. Assessment will reflect this combination of literary and language work.

Set Texts

-- *Introduction to Old English*, 3rd edition.
Ed. Peter S. Baker. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.
ISBN 978-0-470-65984-7

-- *The Old English Riddles of the 'Exeter Book'*
Ed. Craig Williamson. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977 (ppbk 2011).
ISBN 978-0-8078-9809-3

Make sure you obtain the **3rd edition** of Baker's *Introduction to Old English*. Earlier editions do not have the same texts we require for our course, and contained some errors which the 3rd edition has corrected. While e-books are available for both Baker and Williamson, please buy the books in hard (paper) copy. As this is a language-based course, you will want (and I will want you) to annotate your texts directly, and to bring them with you to class. There's also plenty of research that shows we concentrate better and retain more information when we read on the page compared with reading on the screen. The Campus bookstore should stock copies of both texts in the correct editions, or you can order them directly from Wiley and U North Carolina Press, where they are currently around \$60 each. 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.

While I will recommend other further reading (secondary and critical) from the library, there are **no other books necessary for purchase** for this course.

Both Baker and Williamson contain a glossary to Old English words used in their texts. Students who wish to consult a separate Old to Modern English dictionary can use the University of Toronto's [Dictionary of Old English](#), which is the most authoritative and up-to-date dictionary in terms of its scholarship. At present, however, this is only available for words starting A to I. The cheapest, most easily available single-volume paperback dictionary is J. R. Clark Hall, *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960). You will readily find copies of this available both new and second-hand online, as well as in the Marriott Library. [Bosworth-Toller](#)'s dictionary is much older than either of these (and so occasionally not always up-to-date or accurate in its underlying scholarship), but has been made available online in its entirety and for free. Other online dictionaries may be available, but I can't vouch for the accuracy of those I haven't used.

Resources and Reference Works to Help with OE Language Self Study (optional)

Peter Baker's [Old English Aerobics](#), and especially his 'Magic Sheet'.

[Old English Online](#), hosted by the University of Cork

Dr Alaric Hall (University of Leeds)'s youtube videos [Introducing Old English](#)

Gneuss, Helmut, 'The Old English Language', in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. M. Godden and M. Lapidge (Cambridge: University Press, 2013), pp. 19-49.

Hasenfratz, Robert and Thomas Jambeck, *Reading Old English: A Primer and First Reader*, revised edition (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2011).

Lass, Roger, *Old English: An Historical Linguistic Companion* (Cambridge: University Press, 1994).

McLaughlin, John, *Old English Syntax: A Handbook* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2012).

Mitchell, Bruce, *Old English Syntax*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985).

Mitchell, Bruce and Fred Robinson, *A Guide to Old English*, 8th edn (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

Smith, Jeremy J., *Old English: A Linguistic Introduction* (Cambridge: University Press, 2009).

Grading Breakdown

Language & translation test: 20%

Short (5 pages) paper: 30%

Final paper/project (12-15 pages): 50%

(papers to be typed, 12-point font, double spaced and page-numbered)

94-100% = A	77-79.9% = C+	67-69.9% = D+	0-59.9% = E
90-93.9% = A-	74-76.9% = C	64-66.9% = D	
87-89.9% = B+	70-73.9% = C-	60-63.9% = D-	
84-86.9% = B			
80-83.9% = B-			

PLEASE NOTE: to pass this course, you must pass all elements of assessment.

Course Timetable

NB – this is an indicative timetable. I may deviate from it, depending on how quickly/slowly we work through the material, and depending on your interests and what you would like to study. Broadly, we are building up your language and translations skills until the break, and then reading shorter Old English poems (verse riddles) after the break.

Note that riddle numbers given here are those used by your editor, Craig Williamson. There are several competing ways of numbering the Old English Exeter Book riddles (for reasons I will explain). These numbers do not always correspond to those used by other editors; usually (but not always), if you add two to Williamson's number, you'll get the number used in other common editorial schemes.

Week 1

Aug 23rd Course introduction. Introduction to Old English.

Week 2

Aug 30th Old English language: nouns, cases, articles

Week 3

Sept 6th Old English language: verbs

Week 4

Sept 13th Translating Old English: the Fall of Adam and Eve. Baker, 181-183.

Week 5

Sept 20th Translating Old English: Alfred's preface to Gregory's *Pastoral Care*. Baker, 197-202

Week 6

Sept 27th Translating Old English: Bede's story of Caedmon. Baker, 210-215.

LANGUAGE & TRANSLATION TEST

Week 7

Oct 4th Translating Old English poetry: Caedmon's Hymn, variation, kenning and metre. Baker, 146-156 & 210-215.

Week 8 FALL BREAK

Week 9

Oct 18th Riddles: 14, 15, 63, 66. Williamson, 77-78, 105-106.
NB *do not consult the notes in the back of Williamson: they will offer you solutions and ruin the fun!*

Week 10

Oct 25th Riddles: 5, 6, 7, 55. Williamson, 72, 73, 101.

Week 11

Nov 1st Riddles: 10, 13, 76, 81. Williamson, 74, 76-77, 111, 115.

SHORT PAPER DUE NOV 3rd.

Week 12

Nov 8th Riddles: 27, 28a/28b, 31, 38. Williamson, 85-88, 91-94.

Week 13

Nov 15th Riddles: 3, 12, 19, 21, 35. Williamson, 71, 75, 80-81, 97.

Week 14

Nov 22nd Riddles: 23, 42, 43, 52, 60. Williamson, 82, 96-97, 100, 104.

Week 15

Nov 29th Riddles: 24, 45, 49, 88. Williamson, 82-83, 97, 99, 118.

Week 16

Dec 6th Student Presentations on final projects

FINAL PROJECTS DUE DEC 15th.

Screens and Devices in Class

Many of us need to be contacted in an emergency by family members if we have caring responsibilities. Some of you will prefer to take notes directly on a keyboard. For these reasons you are welcome to have phones, laptops, devices open in class. But please be respectful to me and to each another. Keep devices in silent/vibrate mode. Pay attention when someone else is talking. Don't be distracted by pings, bings and notifications (please close social media apps), and do your internet shopping after class has finished. We don't have a lot of in-person discussion time. Let's not waste it. We can be online every other minute of the day outside of class. Class time is special. Oh, and bring your books. Did I say that already? Bring your books. They're better than screens.

Absence

If you need to be absent from class for a genuine reason (sometimes work/family/life/health stuff just comes up), please, as a courtesy, write to me as soon as you can to explain your absence. If you are experiencing an ongoing issue or difficulty that is preventing you from attending and engaging in the course, please contact me and let me know. I am sympathetic (I have grown daughters who were at university through Covid – I know how hard things can be) and I will work with you where I can to make reasonable adjustments to enable you to succeed. If your difficulty is of the nature of a disability, you must register with the Center for Disability & Access for me to accommodate you – see below.

Assessment

Language and Translation Test

This will be posted and submitted via Canvas, between the week 6 and week 7 classes (time to be arranged in consultation with students). Half of the test will consist of closed questions testing your knowledge of specific grammar points (noun case endings, verb tenses etc), while the other half will be a short passage of prose for you to translate into clear, accurate Modern English.

Shorter Paper

Due at the end of Week 11. This will be an in-depth study of one riddle (or, by agreement with me, a suitable pair of riddles). You may choose any riddle from the Exeter Book; it need not be one we have studied (or will study) in class. You can choose a riddle to which there is scholarly consensus as to its meaning, or one which is disputed or as yet unsolved. Your study should critically assess the previous scholarship on your riddle, including weighing the persuasiveness of different solutions that have previously been put forward for your riddle. Your paper should either propose a convincing new solution to your chosen riddle, or it should otherwise advance an argument or thesis of your own device.

Final Paper/Project

Due at the end of exams week. This can EITHER consist of an extended essay advancing a thesis about a theme, topic or device across several of the Exeter Book riddles (e.g. the representation of sexuality, or domesticity, or the function of metaphor), OR a portfolio of your own translations and/or riddles with accompanying critical essay. In this latter case your portfolio must include original translation of between 50 and 100 lines from the Old English riddles (whether several short riddles, or one longer one, is up to you; unlike your translation for the language test, these may be 'free' translations, rather than literal, if you choose), OR 25-50 lines of translation and original riddles of your own composition, to a similar length. In either case, a portfolio should be accompanied by a self-reflective critical essay of eight to ten pages, with scholarly bibliography, outlining your method, approach and use of sources in making your translations/riddles, as well as detailing any problems you encountered and how you dealt with them. You are encouraged to discuss ideas for your final paper/project with me as early as possible during the second half of the semester. In the last class of the semester all students will have the opportunity to present an outline of their final paper/project to the rest of the class for formative peer-to-peer feedback, which should inform the final writing-up stage of your work.

Planning, drafting and re-writing

I am more than happy to discuss ideas and plans for your papers in office hours (please contact me to make an appointment). I cannot read full drafts in advance of submission; I don't have time to do this for all of you if you requested it, and it disadvantages those students whose work-life balance means they can't get a draft to me sufficiently in advance to benefit from my help. However, I WILL allow every student to re-write the shorter paper, if they are disappointed in its grade, as long as they submit the re-written paper to me by the Thursday class of week 15. This allows you to benefit from the feedback and comments I have given you on your work, and also rewards extra effort that you put in (the grade of the re-written essay, if higher, will replace that of the original submission). Please note that in this case I will be looking for evidence that you have understood and taken onboard my feedback on the first version. Obviously I can't extend this same offer to the final paper/project.

Plagiarism:

Part I.B.2.c of the University of Utah Student Code designates plagiarism as academic misconduct, and defines it as “the intentional, unacknowledged use or incorporation of any other person’s work in, or as a basis for, one’s own work offered for academic consideration or credit or for public presentation.” This includes the submission of essays written and sold by others even if *they* claim to be “not plagiarized”; *your* submission of it, under your own name, constitutes plagiarism.

Here are some reasons never, ever even to consider plagiarizing:

- (1) free or purchased online essays are invariably garbage
- (2) the highly specific nature of our texts and assignments makes plagiarism pointless
- (3) it's literally *my job* to notice the inconsistencies in style that are the hallmarks of plagiarism
- (4) I have anti-plagiarism software resources at my disposal
- (5) cleverer people than you have plagiarized and still gotten caught
- (6) the work it takes to plagiarize effectively > the work of writing the paper yourself.

Part V.B stipulates that students found guilty of plagiarism “may be subject to academic sanctions including but not limited to a grade reduction, failing grade, probation, suspension or dismissal from the program or the University” (www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.html). So no matter how desperate you are or how untraceable you think it is, just don't do it. You are only cheating yourself, and you will be caught. If you are unsure about what constitutes plagiarism, see me.

Students with Disabilities (ADA statement): *The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability & Access, 162 Olpin Union Building, 801-581-5020. CDA will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability & Access. [NB. This means if you have a pre-existing disability you **must** register with the CDA *before* you can request accommodation, which they will then do on your behalf.]*

University Safety Statement: *The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677). You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit safeu.utah.edu.*

Addressing Sexual Misconduct. Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677 (COPS).

English Department Diversity Statement. Literature allows us to imagine the lives of others and broaden our perspectives. How we talk about it together, in the physical or virtual classroom, is part of that process. Our diverse identities and experiences will inform and enhance those discussions. As we confront sometimes difficult topics, each member of the class is expected to foster a respectful, generous, and supportive classroom environment that makes room for productive difference and reasoned debate.

Content Accommodation Policy:

NB – with his kind permission I have adopted the wording of this section from Professor Richard Preiss's syllabus, as I couldn't think of a better way to put this myself. As Prof. Preiss writes:

The past is a different country. Literature documents the full scope of human experience, and human experience is culturally (and thus historically) determined. Despite being less permissive about political speech, religious freedom, codes of dress, and women's rights, medieval and early modern England was more at ease with sexuality and bodily function than we are – yet often in ways that were themselves intolerant of difference. In order to explore early English literature and thought fully, it is often necessary to discuss concepts – racism, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, sexual violence, heresy, atheism, mental and physical disability – that, depending on one's background, history of trauma, and maturity, may be discomfiting. We will treat these matters sensitively, but we cannot pretend they are not there. (Nor do they disappear once we leave the early modern period: modernity has not been much better, and may be getting worse.) No one will be forced to write on topics that violate their ethical or religious sensibilities, but no allowances will be made for missed classes, assignments, or poor participation on this account. If you find the realities of human history or the physical side of human life unwholesome, this course may not be for you.

“It is the student's obligation to determine, before the last day to drop courses without penalty, when course requirements conflict with the student's sincerely-held core beliefs. If there is such a conflict, the student should consider dropping the class” (<http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-100.html>). For more information, please consult the University of Utah Regulations website.

Prof Chris Jones, January 2023