

**English 319: Old English Language, Literature, and Culture**  
**MWF 9:00-9:50, 302 Clough**

Professor Lori Garner  
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Course website: <https://moodle.rhodes.edu>

### **Course Description**

*Frige mec frodum wordum...*

In this course you will learn to read the very earliest English literature in its original form, poetry and prose from an intriguing medieval culture that has exerted profound influence even in modern times. Old English was the language spoken by the Anglo-Saxons from roughly 600-1100 AD, and the period's stories of heroes, saints, monsters, and exiles have inspired such writers as J.R.R. Tolkien, Ezra Pound, and Seamus Heaney. Since most Modern English speakers must learn Old English as a foreign language, our work will involve intensive study of Old English grammar with the primary goal of translating a wide range of evocative texts. Each week will involve a combination of work with grammar, literature (original language), and scholarship in Anglo-Saxon studies. Course requirements include daily exercises and readings, a series of quizzes and examinations, oral recitation, and a final research project. Prerequisites: Any 200-level literature course or permission from the instructor.

### **Textbooks and Electronic Materials**

Peter Baker, *Introduction to Old English* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Blackwell)  
Marsden, *The Cambridge Old English Reader*

Additional weekly readings relevant to course topics will be made available through Moodle. If you miss class for any reason, be sure to check Moodle or write to me for reading assignments.

In conjunction with our work in Baker's text, we will be using Baker's online supplements (keyed to *Introduction to Old English*) extensively, including online exercises, worksheets, and readings. Please make sure that the computer(s) you will be using have the capabilities to utilize these crucial resources. Alternatively, you can make use of the computer classrooms in Barret to complete online work: <http://faculty.virginia.edu/OldEnglish/index.html>

Last, we will be using an online edition of *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Bosworth and Toller) as a supplement to the glossaries in our texts: <http://beowulf.engl.uky.edu/~kiernan/BT/bosworth.htm>

Additional resources will be added throughout the semester to Moodle.

### **Course Requirements**

Weekly Quizzes: 20%

- Weekly quizzes will provide opportunities to review and apply your language and translation skills on a regular basis. Your highest 10 quizzes will count toward your final grade. Whenever possible, quizzes will be completed online prior to class. If you miss class for any reason, please contact me and check the Moodle sites for any missed instructions.
- Quizzes cannot be made up except in the most extenuating circumstances. In such cases, special arrangements need to be made ahead of time and documentation will likely be requested.

Exams: 45%

- Three examinations will test your skills in translation, your knowledge of the Old English language, and your understanding of Anglo-Saxon culture.

- Any special arrangements for make-up examinations must be made ahead of time and outside of class. Except in the case of serious illness or other documented emergency, make-up examinations will receive a 20% deduction.

Final Project: 15%

- The final project offers you the opportunity to explore a subject treated at any point during the semester in greater depth. At the end of the semester you will submit a conference-length paper on the subject of your choice along with an abstract and bibliography. You will submit a written copy of your paper to me and will present your paper orally to a small group of your classmates at a “mini-conference” to be held at the time of our scheduled final examination. Additional details to follow.
- Please be aware as you plan your end-of-semester work that extensions will not be possible and late papers cannot be accepted except in cases of extreme illness or other documented emergency.

Oral Recitation: 5%

- Oral readings will be a prominent part of the class throughout the semester, and your work with Old English pronunciation will culminate with a passage recited for the class at the time of our regularly scheduled exam, following the “conference” presentations of your research in small groups (discussed above). Because all students will be required to participate in this reading, alternate times will not be possible, so please be sure to plan your travels and other commitments accordingly. Details will follow.

Participation/Daily Preparation: 15%

- At the end of each class period, you will be given lines to prepare or exercises to complete for the following class. In addition to helping to prepare you for graded quizzes and exams, your work preparing for class and your active participation will count towards a substantial portion of your grade. If for any reason you are unable to attend class or adequately prepare, please notify me ahead of time to make arrangements and avoid reductions of this portion of your grade.

### Additional Notes

*Class preparation:* Please read all materials carefully and complete all assigned exercises before you come to class. Bring questions about what is difficult or confusing to you. Also come prepared to share your thoughtful insights and responses. It is your responsibility to notify me *before* classtime of any problems completing readings or assignments. While time spent completing readings and assignments will no doubt vary from student to student and from day to day, you should expect to spend several hours preparing for each hour that you are in class. See helpful tips on time management at <http://www.rhodes.edu/12089.asp>.

*Honor code:* All work must adhere to the honor code: “As a member of the Rhodes community, I pledge I will not lie, cheat, or steal, and that I will report any such violation that I may witness.”

*Plagiarism and academic integrity:* The Rhodes College Honor Council Constitution defines plagiarism as follows: “Cheating includes plagiarism; specifically, it is the act of using another person’s words or ideas and representing them as one’s original work. This includes, without limitation, using information from any source without proper reference, getting ideas or words from a classmate’s paper, failure to properly punctuate direct quotes, and obtaining a paper from someone else. Ignorance is not an excuse for these violations. It is the student’s responsibility to consult the professor, an Honor Council member, or writing handbooks for procedure for properly acknowledging sources.” Barret Library offers the following advice for avoiding possible plagiarism (<http://www.rhodes.edu/barret/15554.asp>):

- Acknowledge and cite all sources properly.
- Use quotation marks around words that are not your own.
- Properly introduce and indent longer quotations that are not your own.
- Use footnotes or endnotes to acknowledge another’s words or ideas.
- Do not paraphrase too closely.

Please note also that all written work (including assigned translations) must be original work produced specifically for this course. No paper or portion of a paper—even if revised— may receive credit if it has already received or will receive credit in another class. Please ask me or a Writing Center staff member if you have any doubt about even a small portion of a paper that you have produced.

*Attendance:* As the official Student Handbook explains, Rhodes College “considers interactive engagement with other students and the professor, in a structured setting, to be one of the essential and central components of the academic program. . . . Absenteeism is not to be taken lightly” (<http://www.rhodes.edu/studenthandbook/2176.asp>). Regular attendance is thus expected and counts as a part of your participation grade. Three tardies will be treated as one absence. In addition to the effect of absences on your participation grade, after three unexcused absences, your overall grade may automatically be reduced by 2 percentage points each day, down to 60%. (In other words, a student will not fail on the basis of attendance alone, but poor attendance could theoretically reduce a grade as low as D-.) For example, if your course average at the end of the semester is an 80% and you have 4 unexcused absences, your course grade will be lowered to 78%. I will take roll or distribute a roll sheet at the beginning of each class. I will have a sign-in sheet for late arrivals at the front of the room. Please note that it is *your* responsibility to sign the sheet if you arrive late in order to avoid recorded absences. Absences and tardies may be excused only if I have been notified ahead of time and outside of class. If you miss class, be sure to check the course website for missed material or assignments. Students whose reasons for absence raise privacy concerns should seek assistance from the Office of Student Affairs: <http://www.rhodes.edu/campuslife/1186.asp>.

*Course Website:* We will be using Moodle extensively for readings and assignments, including Peter Baker’s online Old English exercise keyed to our textbook. If you do not have a personal computer compatible with Moodle, please make use of the Computer labs in Barret to complete graded work and access required readings. Grades will also be posted to Moodle regularly. If you suspect an error in your reported grade, please notify me within one week of receiving the grade. (Please do not wait until the end of the semester to challenge grades.) While I will always make allowances for campus-wide outages, please note that individual problems with a personal computer or account will not serve as an excuse for late assignments.

*Special Accommodations:* If you require any disability-related accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible. I am more than happy to help make any necessary arrangements. If you have not already done so, please contact the Office of Disability Services: 901-843-3885. For further information, go to <http://www.rhodes.edu/disabilityservices/default.asp>.

*Library Reserve:* Occasionally, books that might be especially helpful for your research may be placed on reserve in Barret Library. Books to be used for article reviews will also be held on reserve. For information on using Library Reserves, go to <http://www.rhodes.edu/barret/4446.asp>.

*Additional Resources:* Success in this course and others is likely to be enhanced with careful time management, good study habits, and a general sense of well-being. The Counseling Center offers free and confidential counseling to Rhodes students: <http://www.rhodes.edu/counselingcenter.asp>. In addition, helpful links and information on such issues as test anxiety, procrastination, homesickness, study skills, and stress are available at <http://www.rhodes.edu/12077.asp>.

*Extenuating Circumstances:* If you need to discuss extenuating circumstances, please arrange a time to meet with me or contact me by email. Please avoid using the time immediately before and after class to ask for special arrangements. Information on late penalties can be found under course requirements.

## Schedule

*The skeletal syllabus below is designed to give you a general sense of course topics and progression, while still allowing the flexibility needed to most effectively meet your specific needs and interests throughout the semester. Each week I will assign lines for translation, exercises to be completed, and secondary readings addressing weekly topics (which will typically be available through Moodle). If you miss class for any reason, please ask me or check the Moodle site for daily assignments.*

### Week 1

- Introduction (Baker, Ch. 1)

### Week 2 (1/19, 1/21)

- Language: Pronunciation (Baker, Ch. 2)
- Literature: "The Fall of Adam and Eve" (Baker)
- Culture: Literacy

### Week 3 (1/24, 1/26, 1/28)

- Language: English, Old and Modern, Basic Grammar (Baker, Ch. 3)
- Literature: Laws of Anglo-Saxon Kings (Marsden)
- Culture: Law

### Week 4 (1/31, 2/2, 2/4)

- Language: Case, Personal Pronouns (Baker, Chs. 4 and 5)
- Literature: "Cynewulf and Cyneheard" (Baker)
- Culture: Germanic contexts

### Week 5 (2/7, 2/9, 2/11)

- Language: Demonstrative, Relative, and Interrogative Pronouns (Baker, Ch. 5 cont.)
- Literature: "Othere and Wulfstan" (Baker)
- Culture: King Alfred's contributions
- \*Exam 1\*

### Week 6 (2/14, 2/16, 2/18)

- Language: Nouns, Strong and Weak (Baker, Ch. 6)
- Literature: "Battle of Maldon" (Baker)
- Culture: Scandinavian Relations

### Week 7 (2/21, 2/23, 2/25)

- Language: Verbs, weak; *beon* (Baker, Ch. 7)
- Literature: selected Old English charms
- Culture: Medicine

### Week 8 (2/28, 3/2, 3/4)

- Language: Verbs, strong (Baker, Ch. 7 cont.)
- Literature: Maxims
- Culture: Gender

### Week 9 (3/7, 3/9, 3/11)

- Language: Verbs, preterit present and irregular (Baker, Ch. 7 cont.)
- Literature: Ælfwine's Prayerbook
- Culture: Prayer
- \*Exam 2\*

### Week 10 (3/21, 3/23, 3/25)

- Language: Adjectives and Numerals (Baker, Chaps. 8-9)

- Literature: “The Ruin”
- Culture: Architecture

Week 11 (3/28, 3/30, 4/1)

- Language: Conjunctions and Correlation (Baker, Chs. 10-11)
- Literature: “Dream of the Rood”
- Culture: Art and sculpture

Week 12 (4/4, 4/7, 4/8)

- Language: Syntax (Baker, Chs. 12-14)
- Literature: Ælfric’s *Colloquy*
- Culture: Labor and learning

Week 13 (4/11, 4/13, 4/15)

- Language: Verse Form, Metrics (Baker, Chs. 15-16)
- Literature: Riddle 26
- Culture: Manuscripts
- \*Exam 3\*

Weeks 14 and 15 (4, 18, 4/20, 4/25, 4/27)

- Mini-Unit: *Beowulf*

319 Final Exam Time (conference papers, oral readings): Wed, May 4, 8:30 am