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## ENGL 320-01, Topics in Medieval Literature: The Anglo Saxons Language, Literature, and Culture, Fall 2009

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**English 320: Topics in Medieval Literature**  
**The Anglo Saxons: Language, Literature, and Culture**  
**MWF 2:00-2:50, Clough Hall 114**

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Course website: <https://moodle.rhodes.edu>

Welcome to the class! This course is intended as an introduction to the tremendous diversity and complexity of the Anglo-Saxon world. To this end, we will examine Old English language and literature within the various historical, social, and religious contexts of early medieval England. Readings reflecting the period's multiplicity of cultural traditions and covering a wide range of genres, will include not only *Beowulf* and well-known Old English lyric poems but also lesser-known healing charms, riddles, law codes, and even Anglo-Latin histories. On Mondays and Wednesdays, all readings will be in modern English translation. Fridays will be reserved for "Old English Workshop," and on these days we will work with original language texts with the goal of gaining an appreciation of the literature in its original language contexts. [Important caveat: While this course will have a strong linguistic component, it is *not* a course on Old English, which would be devoted more exclusively to original language learning and reading. For those who would like to pursue the Old English language more intensively, I would be happy to recommend additional resources.] All course materials will be further contextualized through available archaeological and manuscript evidence as well as current critical methodologies. At or near the conclusion of the semester, all who wish to participate can attend part or all of a "Beowulfathon," where we will read the entire text of *Beowulf* in Old English. Our ultimate goal in all endeavors throughout the semester will be to understand and appreciate Anglo-Saxon texts in a manner closer to that of their original medieval audience(s). Prerequisites: Any 200-level literature course or permission from instructor.

### Course Goals

The sequence of readings and assignments has been designed with the following objectives in mind:

- 1) Gaining a broader understanding and appreciation of Anglo-Saxon intellectual/cultural activity;
- 2) Gaining factual knowledge (terminology, classifications, methods, trends) relating to the study of Anglo-Saxon literature, language, and culture;
- 3) Learning to *analyze* and *critically evaluate* ideas, arguments, and points of view.

### Texts

To the best of my knowledge all of these texts are available at the Rhodes College bookstore. Please notify me as soon as possible if you encounter any problems obtaining these assigned texts. [Note: It will be very important for everyone to have these specific texts, and other translations will not substitute.]

- *Poems and Prose from the Old English*. Alexandra H. Olsen and Burton Raffel. Yale UP, 1998.
- *An Invitation to Old English and Anglo-Saxon England*. Bruce Mitchell. Wiley-Blackwell, 1994.
- *Beowulf*. Trans. Roy Liuzza. Broadview, 1999.
- [Note: Please make sure that you have this particular translation of *Beowulf*. Translations, notes, and commentary vary widely, and it is crucial for class purposes that we all be working from the same text. Thanks!]
- Bede. *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. Penguin Classics, 1991.
- Additional readings will be distributed as handouts, made available on the Moodle site, or placed on library reserve.

### Course Requirements

- Short Writing Assignments (20% total, 5% each)
  - three translation assignments, with essays explaining your goals and choices in translation and describing the challenges you faced. Specific details will be provided later in the semester. (3 pages each)

- one article/book chapter review, summarizing/analyzing a relevant scholarly article and contextualizing it in terms of course material. Article reviews will be posted to the course website to serve as a collective resource for the class. A list of possible articles and book chapters along with specific guidelines will be provided later in the semester. (2-3 pages)
- Research Paper: 25% (breakdown below)
  - topic approved on time 1%
  - paper 15%
    - Your term research paper (10-12 pages) offers the opportunity for you to develop your thoughts and research in more depth on a topic related to *Beowulf*, the text we will be spending the most time with this term. Please note that the writing process will be very important for this project, with grades assigned for planning and pre-writing stages as well as the paper itself. Additional information and requirements regarding the paper and the progress report will be provided later in the semester.
    - Research papers must be submitted in hard copy AND electronically through the Moodle website. Please do not send assignments as attachments through email unless you experience problems with Moodle.
  - progress reports and annotated bibliography 9%
    - Late progress reports and bibliographies will be subject to a 25% penalty. Submissions after the paper is due may not receive credit.
    - With the progress report, you will submit an annotated bibliography summarizing, critiquing, and contextualizing a number of relevant scholarly sources with regard to your particular topic.
    - Specific details and instructions will be provided at a later point.
- Quizzes and Class Activities: 10%
  - A series of graded quizzes, exercises, and other class activities will allow you opportunities to demonstrate your knowledge and retention of key skills and concepts. Possible graded activities will include such things as posts to Moodle forums, in-class oral reading of Old English passages (after we have covered pronunciation of course!), short objective reading quizzes, small group work, or short translation work for Old English workshop days. More days than not, we are likely to have short assignments or quizzes alongside reading, so please budget your time accordingly and be sure to check the Moodle site or check with me if you have to miss a class for any reason.
  - Because of the logistical problems involved in making up quizzes and in-class activities, two scores will be dropped to allow for occasional illness or emergency. Any special arrangements for extenuating circumstances must be made ahead of time and outside of class. Please note that quizzes may or may not be announced ahead of time. If you miss class, be sure to check the website to see if online assessments or other activities have been assigned.
- Examinations: 35% (combined)
  - We will have three examinations during the semester, including the cumulative final examination. The first two will each constitute 10% of your final average, and the final examination will be worth 15%.
  - Please note that 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. No make-up examinations will be administered more than one week after the original exam except in the most dire (and thoroughly documented) situations. In the case of missed final examinations, make-up exams (with the 20% deduction) must be completed within 48 hours of the originally scheduled time. Please be sure to work all travel arrangements, employment, and other plans around the scheduled final examination time.
  - Detailed review guides will be provided two class periods prior to each exam.
- Participation: 10%
  - Your participation grade will be determined on the basis of your attendance, the quality of your contributions to discussion, your preparation for and participation in class activities, and your completion of any ungraded assignments.

- Please note that while the course's success will depend largely on class discussion, there are many ways to participate. Those who speak often will not automatically receive higher grades than more quiet students. If you seldom speak in class, you can participate by making more frequent contributions to online forums or contributing more actively in small groups.
- In all cases, contributions to discussion (in class and online) should demonstrate careful reading of course materials and must be respectful of other students' ideas and points of view. For information on the attendance policy, see below.

### **Additional Notes**

*Class preparation:* Please read all materials carefully 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 writing in English 151 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. 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>. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to check the course website and/or contact me for any notes or assignments you may have missed.

*Computer problems:* Please be aware that computer and printing problems will not serve as an excuse for late assignments. Back up your hard-drive files frequently, and always keep a second hard copy of your assignments. 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.

*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>.

### **Tentative Schedule**

[Note: All readings and assignments should be completed by classtime on the dates provided below. If you miss class for any reason, please check the Moodle site for any changes or additions. Please be sure to notify me as soon as possible and before the start of class if you encounter any problems.]

W 8/26: Introduction to class

F 8/28: *Beowulf* Prologue pp. 53-54; *Invitation to OE* pp. 1-16 (introduction); #1 (spelling), #10-11 (punctuation), #169-71; #453 (alliteration); #456 (compounds); #457 (formulae)

M 8/31: *Beowulf* Appendix E (212-231), B3 and B4 (pp. 179-80); *Invitation to Old English* #194-197 (Sutton Hoo); #406 (burial practices)

*Drop/add period ends: 9/1*

W 9/2: *Beowulf* 54-83; *Invitation to Old English* #9 (timber buildings)

F 9/4: **\*Translation Assignment 1\*** Due; *Invitation to OE* 2-9 (pronunciation); In class we will work with text 35 (Grendel's Approach to Heorot, p. 298—no need to read this ahead)

*Labor Day: No class 9/7*

W 9/9: *Beowulf* 84-118; Appendix A5; *Poems and Prose from the Old English* 39-40; *Invitation to Old English* #345-346 (loyalty and vengeance)

F 9/11: *Invitation to Old English* #13-33 (introduction, inflections, element order, prepositions); #202-203 (Text 10, "Warriors at Rest")

M 9/14: *Beowulf* 118-50; Appendix B2 (pp. 177-78)

W 9/16: Liuzza's introduction to *Beowulf*; (*extended drop period ends, pass/fail ends*)

F 9/18: *Invitation to Old English* #223 (Text 11, "Lament of the Last Survivor"); #38-65 (inflections, articles, pronouns)

M 9/21: Review for Exam

W 9/23: **\*Exam 1\***

F 9/25: *Invitation to Old English* #66-69 (nouns); #500, 502 (paradigmns); #444 (Text 32, "A reluctant translator of scripture")

M 9/28: *Poems and Prose from the Old English* Introduction (xi-xxii); introduction to “heroic poems” (22); *Judith* 23-35

W 9/30: Corresponding portions from Latin Vulgate (Moodle); *Invitation to Old English* #381-385 (impact of Christianity)

F 10/2: *Invitation to Old English* #489; #224-38 (including Text 12, Judith’s warrior’s bring home plunder)

M 10/5: *Poems and Prose from the Old English* introduction to “Religious Poems”; Christ I Advent Lyrics 61-73; Latin antiphons (Moodle)

W 10/7: *Poems and Prose from the Old English* Genesis B 76-95; corresponding portion of Latin Vulgate (Moodle)

F 10/9: **\*Translation Assignment 2\***; *Invitation to Old English* Text 44 (p. 318, Satan’s defiance of God)

M 10/12: *Poems and Prose from the Old English* introduction to Elegies (5-6); “The Wanderer”; “The Seafarer”; “The Ruin”; “Deor”; *Invitation to Old English* #266-68 (stone buildings); #324-344 (warrior codes)

W 10/14: *Poems and Prose from the Old English* “A Woman’s Lament” (aka “Wife’s Lament”); “Wulf and Eadwacer”; “The Husband’s Message”; *Invitation to Old English* #359-71 (women); “Elfgifu’s Will” (150), “Ealdorman Elfheah’s Will” (152-53); “Ethelfleda’s Will” 153; “Wulfwaru’s Will” 154-56

F 10/16: *Invitation to Old English* Text 38 “The Wife’s Lament”

*Fall Recess: No class 10/19*

W 10/21: Write your own riddle (instructions on Moodle); *Invitation to Old English* #205-221 (weapons); Riddles handout (on Moodle)

F 10/23: *Invitation to Old English* #291-300 (manuscripts and Text 14, Riddle)

M 10/26: *Poems and Prose from the Old English*, 107-128 (Riddles); Review for Exam 2

W 10/28: **Exam 2**

F 10/30: *Invitation to Old English* #472 “Charm for Delayed Birth” (*withdraw period ends*)

M 11/2: *Poems and Prose from the Old English* Medical and Magical Prose 216-19; additional charms (Moodle); *Invitation to Old English* #396-405 (medicine); #372 (women and childbirth); 325 (rites)

W 11/4: *Poems and Prose from the Old English* “Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: AD 975 (42-43), introduction to “Historical Prose” and selections from Anglo-Chronicle 141-44 *Invitation to Old English* #179-87 (modern English sections only)

F 11/6: **Translation Assignment 3**

M 11/9: *Poems and Prose from the Old English* 120-28 Maxims; Selections from Bede TBA

W 11/11: Bede, selections TBA

F 11/13: **\*Article Review Due Online\*** *We will not meet as a class today.*

M 11/16: Bede, selections TBA

W 11/18: Bede, selections TBA; Bede’s Death Song

F 11/20: *Invitation to Old English* #427 “A non-combatant warrior king” and Text 20 (Caedmon’s Hymn)

M 11/23: **\*Progress Report with Annotated Bibliography Due\***

*Thanksgiving Break: No class 11/25 or 11/27*

M 11/30: reread *Beowulf* 53-83; bring tentative thesis and outline for research paper to class.

W 12/2: reread *Beowulf*; bring introduction and two body paragraphs to class.

F 12/4: reread *Beowulf*; bring complete draft of research paper to class.

M 12/7: **\*Research Paper Due\***

W 12/9: Review for Final Exam

*Reading Day: 12/10*

**Final Examination: Monday, December 14, 5:30 pm, regular classroom**