

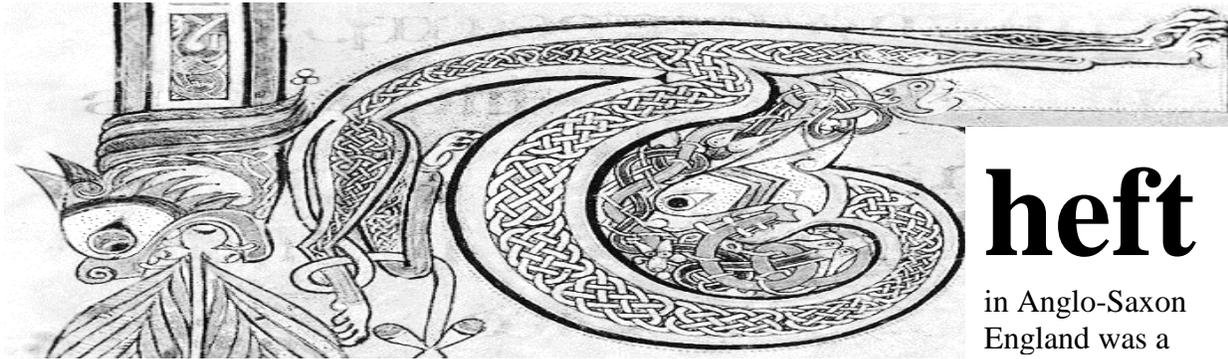
Fall 2015

ENG 407: The Gift in Medieval Literature

M 2-5pm in 627 PLC

Instructor: Professor Stephanie Clark
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office hours: W 1:45-2:45 and F 1:45-3:45
course website: on Canvas

Part One: Course Description and Goals



capital crime while murder was not. Why might this be? In the 12th century there was a lively debate on there was a lively debate on whether it was appropriate to love one's spouse. Who would debate this and why? This class will consider questions like this as we read from a broad selection of early medieval literature. To frame the medieval literature, we will read several modern works that consider how and why objects circulate as gifts, how gifts gain meaning, and how gift-giving works as a form of symbolic communication to say things that often can't be said outright. We will focus on several over-arching questions: What social functions and meanings does the gift have and how can these meanings be manipulated? Which is better (and why, and to whom): the gift that expects reciprocation, or the gift freely given with no expectation of return? How can we tell when a giver's intentions in gift-giving are pure (and why does this matter)? In what ways is a gift a test, what does it test, and can it ever be a trap? As the opening questions show, pursuing this topic will lead us in some surprising directions through a variety of medieval genres, such as heroic epic, sermons, and romance. While gift-giving was much more central to pre-modern societies than it is today, thinking about early practices of gift-giving can help us see ourselves more clearly and imagine alternative ways of organizing society and exchanging things.

Required Texts: *Do not buy e-books.*

Beowulf. Trans. Roy Liuzza. Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2000. ISBN 978-1-55111-189-6

Njal's Saga. Trans. Robert Cook. London: Penguin, 2001. ISBN 0-14-044769-5

Additional readings on Canvas. These must be printed out full-sized and brought to class.

Optional: Mauss, Marcel. *The Gift.* Trans. W.D. Halls. New York: W.W. Norton, 1990, chapters 1 and 2.
ISBN 978-0-393-32043-5

Recommended: Any style/grammar book as a reference for MLA style and to look up grammatical issues marked in your papers (online resources are generally not accurate enough to rely on).

Part Two: Syllabus

In lieu of coursepacket, all course readings besides Beowulf and Njal's Saga will be posted on Canvas. These must be printed out full size and brought to class.

UNIT I: RECIPROCITY

Week 1

Mauss, Marcel. *The Gift*, chapters 1 and 2.

Tacitus, *Germania*, selections.

Gurevich, Aaron. "Wealth and Gift-bestowal in Scandinavia." *Historical Anthropology of the Middle Ages*. Ed. Jana Howlett. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992. 177-89.

Week 2

Beowulf.

Week 3

Ine's Law Code

Hill, John. "Beowulf and Danish Succession: Gift-giving as an Occasion for Complex Gesture." *Medievalia et Humanistica* n.s. 11 (1982): 177-97.

Donahue, Charles. "Potlatch and Charity: Notes on the Heroic in *Beowulf*." *Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Essays in Appreciation for John C. McGalliard*. Ed. Lewis Nicholson and Dolores Warwick Frese. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975. 23-40.

Baker, Peter. "Loot and the Economy of Honour." *Honour, Exchange, and Violence in Beowulf*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2013. 35-76.

Week 4

Genesis A and B. Anglo-Saxon Poetry. Trans. and ed. S.A.J. Bradley. London: Everyman, 2000. ll. 1-1054.

Simmel, Georg. "Faithfulness and Gratitude." *The Gift: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*. Ed. Aafke E. Komter. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996. 39-48.

Godelier, Maurice. "Some Things You Give, Some Things You Sell, but Some Things You Must Keep for Yourselves: What Mauss Did Not Say about Sacred Objects." *The Enigma of Gift and Sacrifice*. Ed. Edith Wyschogrod, Jean-Joseph Goux, and Eric Boynton. New York: Fordham University Press, 2002. 19-37.

PROPOSAL DUE via email any time before Friday.

Week 5

Njal's Saga, chs. 1-78 (126pp).

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. "The Principles of Reciprocity," "The Principles of Kinship." *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*. Ed. and trans. Robert Needham. Trans. James Harle Bell and John Richard von Sturmer. Rev. ed. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969. 52-68, 478-97.

Week 6

Njal's Saga, finish (178pp).

Miller, William Ian. "Gift, Sale, Payment, Raid." *Speculum* 61.1 (1986): 18-50.

UNIT 2: PURITY

Week 7

Derrida, Jacques. "The Time of the King." *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992. 1-33.

Week 8

Ælfric, "The Passion of the Blessed Martyr Lawrence." *The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church: The First Part Containing the Sermones Catholici, or Homilies of Ælfric*. Ed. and trans. Benjamin Thorpe. London: The Ælfric Society, 1844. 416-37.

Ælfric, "The Passion of St. Bartholomew the Apostle." *The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church: The First Part Containing the Sermones Catholici, or Homilies of Ælfric*. Ed. and trans. Benjamin Thorpe. London: The Ælfric Society, 1844. 454-77.

Angenendt, Arnold. "Do ut des: Gift and Countergift in the Early Medieval Liturgy." *The Long Morning of Medieval Europe: New Directions in Early Medieval Studies*. Ed. Arnold Angenendt, Jennifer R. Davis, and Michael McCormick. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008. 143-69.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE in hard copy any time before Friday.

Week 9 (Thanksgiving Week)

Andreas Capellanus. *On Love*. Trans. P.G. Walsh. London: Duckworth, 1993. Excerpts.

DRAFT WORKSHOP (out of class; this can be done through email). Complete before Wednesday.

Week 10

Godbout, Jacques T. and Alain Caillé. "Introduction," "Gift, Market, Disinterestedness." *The World of the Gift*. Trans. Donald Winkler. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998. 1-20, 171-95.

Caillé, Alain. "The Double Inconceivability of the Pure Gift." *Angelaki* 6.2 (2001): 23-39.

RESEARCH ESSAY DUE **in class**.

Personal Essay Due by Monday, December 7 at noon.

Part Three: Learning Outcomes

Main Goals: To better understand and more accurately represent the main ideas of medieval texts, to recognize the specific questions they explore and the cultural assumptions embedded within them. This class will also allow you to situate yourself more deeply within the long tradition of English literature and thought as well as to gain greater knowledge of some of the early literary traditions similar to it.

Read/Analyze. Your careful reading of the assigned texts in preparation for class should give you greater awareness of the particular characteristics of narrative-based or literary ways of knowing about the world. Lectures will focus on applying modern theoretical frames to medieval literature and will orient you to the formal characteristics of medieval literature. You should gain ability in analyzing and articulating which specific features in a medieval text carry medieval cultural content. Class discussion will give you opportunity to practice these skills.

Contextualize. The introductions to assigned texts read in preparation for class and class lectures will introduce major terminologies and methodologies necessary for the study of medieval literature. In addition, these two resources will help situate the texts read within their cultural, historical, and literary contexts. You should thus become able to recognize the cultural phenomena of the medieval world and analyze its presence in the primary texts. You should also be able to articulate continuities and breaks between the medieval and modern worlds. Both class discussion and the written assignments will give opportunity to practice and to try out your ideas.

Research. The major written assignments and the supplementary instructions posted online are designed to familiarize you with the logic of research and to further your acquaintance with the research tools at your disposal, some of which are specific to medieval research. This will give you the tools to research your own interests in the primary texts in an effective and academic way as governed by the disciplinary standards of English. You will practice reading academic articles accurately and efficiently, and you will present your own analyses of primary texts using secondary sources as appropriate, and giving proper acknowledgement for others' ideas and words.

Write. The written assignments are structured to train you in crafting persuasive and logical arguments from textual evidence. To gain greatest benefit, you must allow yourself adequate time for writing and revising; some of that is built into the process through the series of stepped assignments beginning with the research paper proposal and culminating with the research essay. You should therefore gain skill in writing focused analytic essays in clear grammatical prose that advance an original argument. There are various resources on campus to help you; my office hours are one of them.

Grading Breakdown:

<u>Research Project</u>	50%	Reading Notes:	25%
Essay Proposal	5%	Participation:	10%
Annotated Bibliography	20%	Personal Essay:	15%
Research Essay Draft	10%		
Research Essay	65%		