

Spring 2016

# ENG 430/530: Old English III: Beowulf

T,Th 12-1.20 in 260 Condon

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*course documents uploaded to Canvas*

## Part 1: Course Description

This course will use the tools and knowledge acquired in previous terms of Old English to read the monsters section of *Beowulf* with critical and philological skill. We will pay attention to language, literary, and scholarly issues. To this end, please come to every class prepared to translate, parse, and comment on the assigned text.

### **Required Texts: do not buy e-books**

*Beowulf: A Student Edition.* Ed. George Jack. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994. ISBN 0 19 871044 5.

Bjork, Robert E. and John D. Niles, eds. *A Beowulf Handbook.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997. ISBN 0-8032-6150-0.

*Beowulf: A New Verse Translation.* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Trans. R. M. Liuzza. Toronto: Broadview Press, 2013 ISBN: 9781554810642. The first edition from 2000 is fine, ISBN 978 1 55111 189 6. There's also an edition with Old English and the translation side-by-side if you prefer that: from 2012, ISBN 978-1554811137.

### Recommended

*Klaeber's Beowulf*, 4th ed. Ed. R.D. Fulk, Robert Bjork, John Niles. Toronto: U Toronto P, 2008. *This is the edition to get if you're serious about Beowulf.*

Neque enim possunt carmina, quamvis optime composita,  
ex alia in aliam linguam ad verbum sine detrimento su-  
decoris ac dignitatis transferri.

—The Venerable Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*

(It is impossible to make a literal translation of poetry, no matter how well written, into another language without losing some of the beauty and dignity.)



National Library, Stockholm

## Part 2: Syllabus

*Lines for a given week will be narrowed down from the passages given below.  
Assignments will always be due on Mondays unless otherwise stated.*

### **Week 1**

T Introduction, Review  
Th *Beowulf* ll. 1-52: Scyld Scefing

### **Week 2**

T *Beowulf* ll. 64-114: Grendel; Liuzza to l. 114  
Th *Beowulf* ll. 134b-169: Grendel's depredations; Liuzza to l. 169

### **Week 3**

T *Beowulf* ll. 371-498: Hrothgar and Beowulf; Liuzza to l. 498  
Assignment 1: Metrics  
Th cont. assigned lines

### **Week 4**

T *Beowulf* ll. 499-606: Beowulf and Unferth; Liuzza to l. 606  
Th cont. assigned lines

### **Week 5**

T *Beowulf* ll. 702b-836: Beowulf and Grendel; Liuzza to l. 836  
Assignment 2: Word Study. (N.B.: This assignment requires you to go to the library. Do not leave it until the last minute.)  
Th cont. assigned lines  
Please ask for an optional, ungraded midterm if you want one.

### **Week 6**

T *Beowulf* ll. 1008b-1045: Hrothgar's Gifts; Liuzza to l. 1045  
Th *Beowulf* ll. 1192-1231: Wealhtheow's Gifts; Liuzza to l. 1230

### **Week 7**

T *Beowulf* ll. 1171-1159a: The Fight at Finnsburg  
Assignment 3: Editing Theory  
Th cont. assigned lines

### **Week 8**

T *Beowulf* ll. 1251-1306a: Mrs. Grendel; Liuzza to l. 1306a  
Th *Beowulf* ll. 1321-1382: Hrothgar's description of the Grendels and their home; Liuzza to l. 1382.

### **Week 9**

T *Beowulf* ll. 1492-1590: Beowulf fights Mrs. Grendel; Liuzza to l. 1590

Th cont. assigned lines  
Assignment 4: Translating Theory

**Week 10**

T *Beowulf* ll. 1700-1784: Hrothgar's "sermon"; Liuzza to l. 1887

Th cont. assigned lines  
DUE: Graduate students' term project.

**Final:** Tuesday, June 7 at 8-freaking-a.m.

## Part 3: Learning Outcomes

**Main Goals:** Through in-depth study of *Beowulf* in the original language, you should gain skill in close and careful reading of a particular medieval text as well as deeper knowledge of the culture that produced it. This class builds on Old English I and II in furthering your knowledge of Old English and giving you a better grasp of Modern English grammar. This class will also allow you to situate yourself more deeply within the long tradition of English literature and thought.

**Read/Analyze.** Your careful study of the assigned passages and texts in preparation for class should increase your level of comfort with the language and give you greater awareness of what is to be gained by close reading a particular text. Your reading will also tune you in to the conventions of Old English poetry. Lectures and supplementary reading will further orient you to the formal characteristics of Old English poetry.

**Contextualize.** Class lectures, assigned readings, and a variety of course assignments will introduce major terminology, methodology, and interpretive issues in studying *Beowulf* specifically and Old English and much medieval literature more generally. In addition, the resources will help situate *Beowulf* within its cultural, historical, and literary contexts. Class translation and parsing should increase your comfort with using grammatical terminology.

**Research.** The written assignments are designed to familiarize you with the some of the tools and techniques of Old English linguistic research and the issues and methodologies involved in editing and translating.

**Write.** You should gain skill in writing focused and clear grammatical prose.