Winter 2022
ENG 423: The Age of Beowulf
Instructor: Professor Clark

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Part 1: Course Description

This course will focus on better understanding Beowulf and the culture that produced it by five approaches: reading Beowulf slowly and carefully; reading several other Old English texts that help us understand the characteristics of OE literature; reading scholarly essays on Beowulf; and reading modern adaptations and translations of the poem (or watching them). For the term project, you’ll create your own adaptation of Beowulf.

Part 2: Texts Needed

A note on texts: Different editions of medieval texts can come from different manuscript traditions, and translations can be looser or more faithful. In some cases, this means if you get an edition other than the one assigned, you’re actually getting a story with a different plot. Therefore, so we’re all working from the same text, get the editions assigned.

This is the best current translation of Beowulf in that it is pretty literal while also capturing some of the poetic effects. Any edition will do, but the line numbers of the first edition don’t match the later ones.


Another note on texts: I entirely understand the desire to save money, and I always try to balance the need to assign the best editions against the need to procure books cheaply. I strongly encourage you to **buy (don’t rent) your books**, because you don’t save that much by renting, and **books become your own (and irreplaceable) once you annotate them**. Annotation allows you to interact with them in more significant, rigorous ways that help you internalize the stories.

Along those lines, **e-editions are not suitable for serious reading and study**. You can read more effectively and efficiently by reading in hard copy rather than e-copy (I read on Kindle, and I read on my tablet; they each have their place, but neither can replace paper books for serious reading). E-copies also make texts difficult to navigate in class and to cite in papers. Plus, you’re always online. You don’t need to read more things on a screen: save your eyes and read in hard copy.

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**Part 3: Schedule**

**THIS SCHEDULE – not Canvas – is your guide to the course. Make sure to put due dates in your calendar/planner.**

**Readings and assignments are listed on the day that they’re due.**

**For a 4-credit college course, you should be putting in an average of 8-12 hours a week outside of class. I didn’t make this up; it’s the accreditation standard for university-level education.**
Weekly Rhythm:
This class has a set schedule of assignments and due dates we follow every week beginning in Week 2/3. Here it is:

Mondays:
1) All readings for the week should be completed by class time
2) Discussion Board questions due from that week’s Discussion Leaders by midnight (these begin in Week 3)
3) Final summary post due from the former week’s Discussion Leaders by midnight (post to the current week’s discussion board).
4) Complete Exercises with group members’ comments and the author’s response due by midnight (starting Week 3, after the first round of Exercises)

Tuesdays by midnight: Exercise for the week due on Canvas. No late Exercises will be accepted under any conditions (a grace period has been set in Canvas; if the forum is open you can turn it in)

Wednesdays: Discussion Leaders will summarize class and any responses posted to their questions by posting a follow-up comment on the Canvas discussion board by midnight

Fridays:
1) All Working Group evaluations must be completed by class and turned in by midnight
2) The discussion board for the week closes Friday at midnight. Responses to that week’s questions can be made any time during the week. No late responses are accepted

It is your responsibility to keep track of due dates. Please enter all due dates below in your calendar or planner.

All assigned readings for the week should be completed by Mondays in order to fully participate on the Discussion Boards.

Week 1

Monday: Introductions
Sign up for your week to write discussion questions here: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1VuadozQOiV2dmqrFCJhcFdGlb787traerobDdDLcok/edit?usp=sharing

Wednesday: The Wanderer, three translations
DUE by class: reading. Print and bring translations to class
DUE by midnight: your “translation” of The Wanderer. See directions on Canvas
Friday: *The Wanderer*, cont.

**Week 2**

**Topic: Beowulf ll. 1-1816, Liuzza translation**

*All readings for the week should always be completed by Monday*

**DUE:**

- **Monday:** Discussion Board opens: *Beowulf* ll. 1-1816, Liuzza translation. Respond to two questions any time before Friday midnight.
- **Tuesday by midnight:** Self-grading Essay 1. Directions on Canvas

  *This essay asks you to spend a significant amount of time reading the course materials and planning out your schedule for the term. Please don’t try to get it done at the last minute.*

*See “Weekly Rhythm” above for all standard weekly deadlines*

**Week 3**

**Topic: Beowulf* ll. 1817-end, Liuzza translation**

**Monday:** No class. Martin Luther King Jr. Day

*In observance of the holiday, I encourage Discussion Leaders to post your questions before Monday*

**DUE:**

- **Monday:** Discussion Leaders post questions by midnight on this week’s reading
- **Tuesday, midnight:** Exercise 1: Beginnings and Endings, due by midnight
- **Friday by class/midnight:** Exercise 1 Evaluations for Group Members

**Week 4 Discussion Leaders:** Post questions to Discussion Board by Monday, on one of the articles assigned for next week. Sign up for your article on this Google document:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1NiDkV6L0NLNmbWYaf-GNQsaTgtZS1eBJ4XYfz-g4LO4/edit?usp=sharing

*See “Weekly Rhythm” above for all standard deadlines*

**Week 4**
Topic: scholarly articles on Beowulf. All are posted to Canvas. Print them and bring them to class for in-class training on how to skim an academic article

➢ Bazelmans, Jos. “Beyond Power: Ceremonial Exchanges in Beowulf.” 60 pp. This article is long, but you can entirely skip sections 2-4 (14 pages), and there are a number of charts that take up some of the space.
➢ Damico, Helen. Wealhtheow and the Valkyrie Tradition OR Peter Baker, “Three Queens,” in Honour, Exchange, and Violence in Beowulf.” (the decision will be made as the class progresses)
➢ Hill, John. “Beowulf and the Danish Succession: Gift Giving as an Occasion for Complex Gesture.”
➢ Trilling, Renée. “Beyond Abjection: The Problem with Grendel’s Mother Again.”

DUE
➢ Monday by midnight: Complete Exercise 1
➢ Tuesday by midnight: Exercise 2: Find an Article
➢ Friday by class/midnight: Exercise 2 Evaluations

See “Weekly Rhythm” above for all standard deadlines

Week 5

Topic: Judith. Text on Canvas

DUE
➢ Monday by midnight: Complete Exercise 2
➢ Tuesday by midnight: Exercise 3: Mirroring
➢ Friday by class/midnight: Exercise 3 Evaluations
➢ Friday by midnight: Midterm Check-in (Canvas survey)

See “Weekly Rhythm” above for all standard deadlines

Week 6

Topic: Beowulf, Headley translation

DUE
➢ Monday by midnight: Complete Exercise 3
➢ Tuesday by midnight: Exercise 4: Key Words/Concepts
➢ Friday by class/midnight: Exercise 4 Evaluations

See “Weekly Rhythm” above for all standard deadlines

No discussion board next week. Instead, choose one of the movies below to watch before Monday. Sign up for your movie here:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wYGWQjxaHZOEi3YVwh8M1ElhDelDnJfEfult50ewk7qM/edit?usp=sharing

Week 7

**Topic:** Beowulf movie adaptations. **Must be watched by Monday’s class**

**Note:** The Mere Wife (for next week) is 320 pages long. It’s not a hard read, but you’ll enjoy it more if you start reading it now. This week’s assignment has been made lighter to enable you to do that.

**Monday:** In class meet with your Movie Group for movie discussion and to plan presentations

**Wednesday & Friday:** Class discussion of adaptations

**DUE**

➢ Monday by midnight: Complete Exercise 4
➢ Tuesday by midnight: Exercise 5: Compare Translations
➢ Friday by class/midnight: Exercise 5 Evaluations
➢ **Friday by class:** Brief Project Proposal. Directions are given on Canvas as part of the project directions

See “Weekly Rhythm” above for all standard deadlines

Week 8

**Topic:** The Mere Wife

**DUE**

➢ Monday by midnight: Complete Exercise 5
➢ Tuesday by midnight: Exercise 6: Inset Narratives
➢ **Friday by class/midnight:** Exercise 6 Evaluations

See “Weekly Rhythm” above for all standard deadlines

Week 9

**Topic:** Saga of the Volsungs
DUE
➢ Monday by midnight: Complete Exercise 6: Adaptation Critique
➢ Tuesday by midnight: Exercise 7: Adaptation Critique
➢ Friday by class/midnight: Exercise 7 Evaluations

See “Weekly Rhythm” above for all standard deadlines

Week 10

Topic: your adaptations

DUE
➢ Monday by class: Creative component of your adaptation. You’ll present it to your working group. Your goal is to give each other helpful critique to use as you put the finishing touches on your project. Each group will choose one project to present to the entire class on Monday and Wednesday
➢ Monday by midnight: Complete Exercise 7
➢ Friday by class: Beowulf adaptation, complete. Full directions on Canvas

Finals Week
Second Self-grading essay due Tuesday, March 15 by 2.45