

Spring 2017

ENG 430/530: Old English III: Beowulf

Fridays 12-3, 275 Lillis

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course documents uploaded to Canvas

Part I: Course Description

This course will use the tools and knowledge acquired in previous terms of Old English to read the dragons 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.

Recommended

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. 2nd 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.

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.)



fitt ii: Syllabus

Lines for a given week will be narrowed down from the passages given below.

Week 1

Introduction; *Beowulf*, ll. 867-897, Sigemund kills a dragon; ll. 2200-20: The throne passes to Beowulf; ll. 2231b-2311; The dragon (in class we'll focus first on Sigemund's dragon and the Lay of the Last Survivor, ll. 2247-66). 130 lines.

Week 2

Beowulf, ll. 2313-95: Dragon attacks, Beowulf comes to the throne. 82 lines.

Week 3

Beowulf, ll. 2391-2471: Beowulf reminisces; Hæthcyn kills Herebeald. 80 lines.
Assignment 1: Metrics

Week 4

Beowulf, ll. 2510-2601: Dragon fight (make sure you read ll. 2471-2509 in translation). 91 lines.

Week 5

Beowulf, ll. 2602-93: Wiglaf and the retainers. 91 lines.

Week 6

Beowulf, ll. 2694-2711a, 2729-2820: Death (read ll. 2711b-28 in translation). 168 lines.

Week 7

Beowulf, ll. 2821-91: Wiglaf and the Retainers. 70 lines.
Assignment 2: Editing Theory

Week 8

Beowulf, ll. 2900-3057: Political situation. 157 lines.

Week 9

Beowulf, ll. 3058-3136: Wiglaf's eulogy. 78 lines.
Assignment 3: Translating Theory

Week 10

Beowulf ll. 3137-82: Beowulf's funeral. 45 lines.
Old English Composition due.

To be scheduled: a feast. Week 10 or finals week.

Final: 10.15, Thursday, June 15? (The finals schedule gives somewhat puzzling guidance here. Please check your own finals schedule to make sure this time doesn't conflict with your other finals.)

fitt iii: 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.

Grading Breakdown

Undergraduates

Class Preparation and Participation	20
Textual assignments	50
Final Exam	30

Graduate Students:

Class Preparation and Participation	15
Textual assignments	25
Final Exam	25
Term project	35

Please keep track of your own grades, both so that you can figure out your own standing in the class, and so that you can correct the grades you get from me should I happen to make a mistake in calculation.