



Beowulf
Mount Holyoke College
2013
Syllabus

COURSE

This course introduces you to the epic poem *Beowulf* in its original language and in translation. Written between c. 750 and c.1000 A.D., *Beowulf* is the chief poetic achievement of Anglo-Saxon England. It is a poem of stunning artistry, complex structure, and profound wisdom. *Beowulf* inspired J. R. R. Tolkien and Seamus Heaney as it continues to inspire today. We will read the poem extremely closely. As we do, we will put it into its historical and literary contexts, imagining Anglo-Saxon readers as well as modern ones. Recommended for students who have completed ENGL 310-01, Old English. We meet Monday evenings, 7:00 pm - 10:00 pm, Shattuck Hall.

ATTENDANCE

Please attend classes. Learning Old English is cumulative. Please do not substitute virtual for real presence: any use of my lectures in written, electronic, or recorded form without my prior consent is illegal.

BOOKS

Books are available at [Odyssey Books](#) in the mall at 9 College Street.

Klaeber's Beowulf, 4th ed. Edited by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles.

Beowulf, ed. and trans. Roy Liuzza

And the CD-ROM of the Beowulf manuscript is coming in to Amherst Books, corner of Main Street and Pleasant Street (at the light), Amherst.

Kevin Kiernan et al., eds., *The Electronic Beowulf*, 3rd edition.

For those without Old English, here are some free resources you will absolutely need.

- Sweet's [Anglo-Saxon Primer](#). A very good, brief introduction to the grammar.
- Drout's [King Alfred's Grammar](#). A step-by-step introduction to English and Old English grammar.
- [Grammar chart](#)
- Peter Baker's [Introduction to Old English](#).

STRUCTURE & OBJECTIVES

The course is both a language course, and a course in literary culture. Many of the students will already have learned Old English, so if you have not taken English 310-01, then you should take advantage of the on-line grammars to catch up quickly. I will be making available a number of resources to help you read Old English effectively. Please check the resources section of this site often.

One half of each class will be dedicated to the language of the poem. This means lexicon, syntax, and semantics. It also means memorizing paradigms. If you don't like foreign or ancient languages, then this course is not for you. The second half of each class will be dedicated to discussion.

You are also expected to complete your readings and translations prior to each class--the readings average 100-200 pages per week. The translations should take about 4 to 6 hours per week. [Here is *Beowulf* in MS Word](#). Those without Old English can limit themselves to as much per class as they can manage--but you must be up to speed within 8 weeks.

CONFERENCES

Please meet with me at least once during the semester (at the least to check your grades to ensure my gradebook and your grades match up). Please make an appointment to meet at a time convenient to you and I will try to oblige--Mondays are usually best.

ASSIGNMENTS

There are two **papers**, 1500 wds.(25% each), and two **translations** (20% each). Participation counts for 10%. See [Grading Policies](#) and [Papers](#) for more information on how I assign grades. Paper description in [Notes](#).

WEB SITE

This syllabus is a copy of the one on the website. That website constitutes the binding syllabus, and is subject to change. You will also find schedule, handouts, and all assignments on the web. It is an integral part of the course. Here is the address:

http://people.umass.edu/sharris/in/e310-01_beo.html