

## English 9171/4311E Tolkien and Old English

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 5-7 p.m. over zoom.

**COVID Update:** Given that we are learning Old English together in this course, we will be in a classroom (at least for the first few months; I'm hoping to move back to a department seminar room in January). We need to be face to face to talk through problems with the language, and for me to write on a chalkboard or a whiteboard so that you can see patterns. In the worst-case scenario, if the campus locks down again, we'll do zoom and I'll share my screen and figure out how my new laptop with pen works. Also, since you will want to do presentations, a classroom is preferable but we will have a backup plan.

If at some point in the year the senior administration suddenly locks down the campus, we will remain synchronous, with our principal time still being Mondays 12:30-3:30. However, since all the research currently available argues what we all know, which is that concentration over zoom is difficult after the first ninety minutes, I will be sending out a doodle poll available September 14-20 to find a ninety-minute slot elsewhere in the week. If we are shut down, we'll use Mondays 12:30 - 2 for class plus the second slot later in the week, and we will use Mondays 2 - 3:30 for optional queries, discussion, and perhaps for an extra presentation or two, depending on how the timing works.

### **Course introduction:**

Mondays 12:30-3:30  
University College 4401 (second term, I hope); first term, FNB 1200 (possibly moving to UC 1405)

At the age of sixteen, a master at King Edward's School in Birmingham lent Ronald Tolkien an Anglo-Saxon primer, which he devoured with enthusiasm before turning to the reading of *Beowulf*, then Middle English, then Old Norse, and then Germanic philology as a subject of some fascination. And then he turned to inventing languages. In this course, we will study Old English as Tolkien did, beginning with introductory short prose texts, then some of the shorter poems, and then *Beowulf*, always comparing our approach to Tolkien's, and the primer and reader that he used with our own introductory texts. When we get to *Beowulf*, we will read his landmark Gollancz Lecture from 1936, which arguably turned the study of the poem from the quarrying philologists and archaeologists, and towards scholars of literature and culture. We will also consider the other poems which Tolkien addressed in his scholarly role as Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon in the University of Oxford. Alongside, we will engage with the works that Tolkien wrote himself, inspired by the medieval texts he studied professionally. We will read *The Lord of the Rings*, and some of his other works, and consider their reception during and after Tolkien's life, and will delve somewhat

into Tolkien's own compositions in Old English, and his other engagements with Anglo-Saxon matters.

**Required Texts:**

Henry Sweet, *An Anglo-Saxon Primer*. Trieste Publishing, May 2, 2018. \$13.69 (reprint)

Peter S. Baker, *Introduction to Old English*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell 2010

On Baker. The Bookstore declared Baker's *Introduction to Old English* as out of print this summer. I'm not convinced, as this is the standard textbook in the field. However, I checked his standard website:

[www.oldenglishaerobics.com](http://www.oldenglishaerobics.com)

The website is extremely useful. It says that a login is required, but I've clicked on most of the texts and they all seem to come up at once. Possibly, Baker has reacted to Blackwell stopping his book by just making it readily available. This is a good thing. Also on his website is a link to purchase the book through Google, which is odd, too.

[https://books.google.ca/books?id=kYwV8K\\_naloC&dq=baker+introduction+to+old+english](https://books.google.ca/books?id=kYwV8K_naloC&dq=baker+introduction+to+old+english)

At any rate, Baker provides an excellent introduction to Old English. Get a copy of the book in print if you can, as you will want it for the glossary and his very careful presentation of the texts with solid introductions.

Optional Texts:

Sweet, Henry, *An Anglo-Saxon Primer* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895)

**Participation:** This is a senior capstone course for undergrads and for grads it is one of probably three courses. It meets 24 times, so missing some or all of more than a couple of classes will be severely debilitating to your progress in the course (especially since we're spending a lot of time on language and on close reading). At the same time you are adults and will have calls on your time that are significant. The medical certificate policy applies both to grads and undergrads, so please make use of that if you need to be away; I'm willing if necessary to have a conversation with you if need be about medical issues but it's not really my business. This is the work of the academic counsellors. That said, participation marks will be given for attendance to the full class (lateness is really unprofessional), for engagement (that is, having read the materials in advance, prepared the homework, and generally faced up to the exigencies of the course), to the quality of questions and answers, and to helpfulness with colleagues. In senior courses such as this one, participation can be taking over the discussion and pontificating, which is not good participation and will not be rewarded, or it can be making one or two very useful points or helping someone else out if you understand Old English verbs and they don't, or if you have *Lord of the Rings* at your fingertips and they don't.

**Short Online Papers:** Submitted on OWL, these will be 500-word engagements with one of the texts or ideas treated in the previous (600-1000) word papers.

**Course Syllabus (very drafty draft: see the website for a much more detailed series of tabs which mark each week's plan and lesson materials you should have at hand for the class):**

Fall

Sept 14 Tolkien bio, intro, Introduction to Old English, OE pronunciation

21 Carpenter bio, OE first sentences, intro grammar

28 Carpenter bio, Sweet's primer parables, Baker on nouns

Oct. 5 Tolkien and Sweet on language, Baker on adjectives, pronouns, start verbs

19 Tolkien on philology in OE and the OED, Baker and Sweet on verbs

26 Tolkien and the Oxford English school, more verbs, Short OE texts

Nov. 2 Tolkien and archaeology, Baker on adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions, syntax

Nov. 9 Tolkien on Middle English and AB language, translations from Sweet's primer

16 Tolkien's imaginary world, Baker's Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Othhere and Wulfstan

23 Old English poetry

30 *LOTR I, Battle of Maldon*

Winter

Jan. 4 *LOTL*



Downloadable Student Medical Certificate

(SMC):[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf)

#### 4. Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

##### Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

##### Plagiarism Checking:

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement,

As part of a successful graduate student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their health and wellness a priority. Western provides several on campus health-related services to help you achieve optimum health and engage in healthy living while pursuing your graduate degree. For example, to support physical activity, all students, as part of their registration, receive membership in Western's Campus Recreation Centre. Numerous cultural events are offered throughout the year. for example, please check out the Faculty of Music web page <http://www.music.uwo.ca/>, and our own McIntosh Gallery <http://www.mcintoshgallery.ca/>. Information regarding health- and wellness-related services available to students may be found at <http://www.health.uwo.ca/>. Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone they feel comfortable confiding in, such as their faculty supervisor, their program director (graduate chair), or other relevant administrators in their unit. Campus mental health resources may be found at [http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental\\_health/resources.html](http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/resources.html).

Extra material required in the age of Covid, probably not relevant:

Some components of this course will involve online interactions. To ensure the best experience for both you and your classmates, please honour the following rules of etiquette:

- please “arrive” to class on time
- please use your computer and/or laptop if possible (as opposed to a cell phone or tablet)
- ensure that you are in a private location to protect the confidentiality of discussions in the event that a class discussion deals with sensitive or personal material
- to minimize background noise, kindly mute your microphone for the entire class until you are invited to speak, unless directed otherwise
- [suggested for classes larger than 30 students] In order to give us optimum bandwidth and web quality, please turn off your video camera for the entire class unless you are invited to speak
- [suggested for cases where video is used] please be prepared to turn your video camera off at the instructor’s request if the internet connection becomes unstable
- unless invited by your instructor, do **not** share your screen in the meeting

The course t.a. and instructor will act as co-hosts and moderators for the class and will deal with any questions from participants. To participate please consider the following:

- if you wish to speak, use the “raise hand” function and wait for the instructor to acknowledge you before beginning your comment or question
- remember to unmute your microphone and turn on your video camera before speaking
- self-identify when speaking.
- remember to mute your mic and turn off your video camera after speaking (unless directed otherwise)

General considerations of “netiquette”:

- Keep in mind the different cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the students in the course.
- Be courteous toward the instructor, your colleagues, and authors whose work you are discussing.
- Be respectful of the diversity of viewpoints that you will encounter in the class and in your readings. The exchange of diverse ideas and opinions is part of the scholarly environment. “Flaming” is never appropriate.
- Be professional and scholarly in all online postings. Cite the ideas of others ap}n