

**VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
SCHOOL OF ENGLISH, FILM, THEATRE, AND MEDIA STUDIES**

ENGL 320 *Beowulf* – Course Information (2008 1/3)

Course organisation

Coordinator Dr Christine Franzen (VZ 919; work phone: 463-6805 or home: 476-6126; christine.franzen@vuw.ac.nz)

Classes will be held on Monday 2-3 in Murphy 302 and Wednesday 11-1 in Murphy 301. Additional information or changes will be announced at classes and posted on the course blackboard site.

Course aims and objectives

The course involves a close study of the first part of *Beowulf* (up to line 2379a) in the original language and the rest in translation. We aim to gain sufficient facility in reading Old English to appreciate the poetic language and technique as well as the poem as a piece of literature. The course is partially co-taught with ENGL 401, and students in 401 may, in some of the Wednesday sessions, present papers on aspects of Anglo-Saxon culture and history which should contribute to everyone's appreciation of the poem.

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- translate *Beowulf* demonstrating a good standard of accuracy and comprehension;
- be responsive to the detail of the poem as well as the whole of it;
- discuss critical issues and themes arising from the poem; and
- write critically on the poem in a formal academic essay.

Set texts

Beowulf (A Student's Edition), ed. George Jack (Oxford: OUP, 1994).

Recommended: a reasonably literal translation of the poem (*I will talk about this in the first session*), and for those who do not have it already: *Course Notes: ENGL 215 Introductory Grammar*.

A Reading List will be distributed.

Assessment

1. A three-hour final examination, not open-book, sometime between 2-28 June (worth 40% of the final mark versus 60% for in-term) will consist of:
 - a. 40%: passages for translation (taken from sections of the poem totalling about 600-800 lines).
 - b. 60%: one essay on the poem itself. A range of topics will be offered; you will be told to avoid any substantial overlap with your in-term essay.
2. One essay or project of about 2500-3000 words (worth 30% of the final mark). The essay will be due no later than **Friday 30 May, 5:00 p.m.**
3. Two translation tests and vocabulary tests, worth 15% each, on **Monday 31 March** and **Monday 5 May**. The translation in each test will be taken from sections of the poem totalling about 400-600 lines.
Students may, if they wish, write an additional short essay (about 1500-2000 words) on some aspect of the poem or Anglo-Saxon society to be agreed with me. I will use the best two of three grades from the two translation tests and this essay in calculating

this 30 % of your final grade. If you choose to write this optional essay, it must be handed in by Monday 19 May, 5:00 p.m.

The tests are designed to check and encourage progress in translating the poem through attention to grammar and vocabulary. The method of marking translation will be described before the class tests. The essays will encourage you to think critically about the poem.

Due dates, extensions, and penalties for late work

- (i) If you need an extension beyond the due date for an essay, you must apply to me in writing **before** the due date providing supporting documentation (e.g. medical certificate, note from Counselling Service) if available.
- (ii) Written work submitted late **without an extension** will be accepted **only** if received by Monday 2 June, 12:00 p.m. Please note that **the only required essay** for this course is due on the Friday of 12th week (30 May).
- (iii) **In exceptional circumstances** extensions may be granted by me up to the last day of the examination period (28 June). The University does not permit the School to accept work after this date.

Mandatory course requirements

1. You must complete all the in-term written work noted above.
2. You must attend a minimum of 70% of the classes.*

You are expected to come to class with your weekly translation prepared, ready to contribute to translation and discussion. You may be asked to prepare and lead discussion on a section or aspect of the poem.

* Most of the work will be covered in the Wednesday sessions: the set translation for the week and discussion of the literary significance of the passage. You will need to organize your time well in order to complete the set translation from week to week. Several of the Monday sessions will be used, particularly in the beginning, for grammar and translation revision. If your translation skills are very good, you will not be required to attend these first few Monday sessions. **All students should make every effort, however, to attend every Wednesday session.**

Workload is about 18 hours/week including class contact hours.

GENERAL UNIVERSITY STATUTES AND POLICIES

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the Victoria University Calendar available in hardcopy or under "about Victoria" on the VUW homepage at:

http://www.vuw.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/calendar_intro.html

Information on the following topics is available electronically at:

http://www.vuw.ac.nz/home/studying/downloads/course_outlines_general_information.pdf

- Academic Grievances
- Student and Staff Conduct
- Meeting the Needs of Students with Impairments
- Student Support

ENGL 320 *Beowulf* – Course Schedule (2008)

Every effort will be made to keep to this schedule, but some adjustment may be necessary. The lines indicated are those which will be translated and discussed in the Wednesday session and must be prepared for that session.

Week	Date	lines	
1	M 25/2 W 27/2	1-85	introduction and revision (background to the Danish dynasty, Hrothgar, the hall)
2	M 3/3 W 5/3	86-228	grammar and translation revision (Grendel, Beowulf arrives in land of the Danes)
3	M 10/3 W 12/3	229-404	grammar and translation revision (1 st and 2 nd challenges to Beowulf)
4	M 17/3 W 19/3	405-610	grammar and translation revision (Beowulf and Hrothgar meet, 3 rd challenge)
5	NO CLASS – Easter break W 26/3	611-836	(the fight against Grendel)
6	M 31/3 W 2/4	837-1049	Translation test #1 (festivities, Hrothgar rewards Beowulf)
7	M 7/4 W 9/4	revision 1050-1250	(Finn episode, in translation ; the Queen's worries)
Mid term break			
8	M 28/4 W 30/4	1251-1472	revision (Grendel's mother attacks, Beowulf prepares to fight)
9	M 5/5 W 7/5	1473-1686	Translation test #2 (the fight against Grendel's mother)
10	M 12/5 W 14/5	1687-1887	Looking ahead to the end of the poem (Hrothgar's 'sermon', Beowulf's departure)
11	M 19/5 W 21/5	1888-2151	Looking ahead to the end of the poem (Beowulf's return to the Geats, his report to Hygelac)
12	M 26/5		Looking ahead to the end of the poem

