

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

ENGL 401 Medieval Studies: *Beowulf* – Course Information (2008 1+2/3)

Course organisation

Tutor Dr Christine Franzen (VZ 720; work phone: 463-6805 or home: 476-6126; christine.franzen@vuw.ac.nz)

Classes will be held on Wednesdays, 11-1 in Murphy 301. Additional information or changes will be announced at classes and posted on the course blackboard site. (This course is partially co-taught with ENGL 320 which has an additional class on Monday 2-3 in Murphy 302.)

Course aims and objectives

The course includes a close study of *Beowulf* and, as a background to the study of the poem and of Old English literature in general, an introduction to some aspects of Anglo-Saxon culture and history.

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;
- show familiarity with a range of the secondary literature on the poem;
- write critically on the poem in a formal academic essay; and
- show familiarity with some important aspects of Anglo-Saxon culture and history.

Set texts

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

Recommended: a reasonably literal translation of the poem (I will discuss this at the first class meeting), 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 during 17 Oct-8 Nov (worth 40% of the final mark versus 60% for in-term work) will consist of: passages for translation (40 %; taken from sections of the poem totalling about 1000 lines); and two essays (30% each) on the poem itself.
2. One essay of about 3000 words (worth 25% of the final mark) on some aspect of *Beowulf* to be discussed and agreed on an individual basis. This essay will be due no later than **Friday, 10 October, 5:00 p.m.** **You must submit two copies of this essay.**
3. One essay of no more than 2500 words (worth 20% of the final mark) on some aspect of Anglo-Saxon culture, society, or history (such as ships/navigation, weapons and iron-working, some aspect of the legal system, a particular manuscript, an important figure, etc.) to be discussed and agreed on an individual basis. This essay will be due

no later than **Monday, 14 July, 5:00 p.m.** You must submit two copies of this essay.

4. Three translation and vocabulary tests worth a total of 15% (on dates to be agreed, not during study break) which will be taken from sections of the poem totalling no more than 500-700 lines.

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

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) If an essay is handed in late **without an extension**, it will be penalized by lowering the grade one step per week of lateness. Written work submitted late **without an extension** will be accepted **only** if received by Monday 13 October, 5:00 p.m.
- (iii) **In exceptional circumstances** extensions may be granted by me up to the last day of the examination period. 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 assigned weekly translation prepared, ready to contribute. The course is co-taught in the first trimester with ENGL 320: you may be asked to present 2 or 3 short seminar papers to the combined class, or to ENGL 401 only, on aspects of Anglo-Saxon culture and history and to lead seminar discussions on sections or aspects of the poem.

Workload is as for all 400-level full-year courses, about 12 hours per 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)/401 *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 are to be prepared for that session. **Students in ENGL 401 are not expected to attend the Monday sessions but may do so if they wish. After the mid-year break ENGL 401 students will carry on translating to the end of the poem without ENGL 320. ENGL 401 will probably stop meeting about halfway through trimester 2.**

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 – ENGL 320 only) (festivities, Hrothgar rewards Beowulf)
7	(M 7/4 W 9/4)	1050-1250	revision) (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 – ENGL 320 only) (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)
W 28/5 2152-2379a (Beowulf, fifty years later, resolves to fight the dragon)

Mid-year break – followed by 6 Wednesday sessions, starting 7 July, to finish translation/discussion.