

## English 4431, English Poetry – The Beginnings

T/Th, 3:30–4:50 pm, Language Building 218

Dr. Upchurch, Professor of English

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Office Hours | Thursdays, LANG 409F, 2:30–3:30 pm

### Course Description

The object of our study in this course will be the poetry written in English between the early 700s and 1065 in all of its stunning vitality from “the thrilling account of Beowulf’s battle with a treasure-hoarding dragon, from the heart-rendering lament of a lone castaway to the embodied speech of the cross upon which Christ was crucified from the anxiety of Eve, who carries ‘a sumptuous secret in her hand / and a tempting truth hidden in her heart,’ to the trust of Noah who builds ‘a sea-floater, a wave-walking / ocean-home with rooms for all creatures’ (*The Complete Old English Poems*). The goal of our study will be to discern the set of beliefs about life and universe represented in these poems and thus to understand what the people who wrote, read, and heard them believed about the nature of reality and their need for meaning, happiness, identity, morality, and hope.

**Required Text** — *Old English Poetry: An Anthology*, ed. and trans. R. M. Liuzza (2014)

- *Bring your book to each class to avoid a reduction in your participation grade.*

### Course Requirements and Grading

30% — Essay 1

40% — Essay 2

10% — Essay 3

20% — Attendance (10%) & Participation (10%)

### Attendance & Participation

You are expected to attend class and participate actively. This course is participatory, collaborative, and discussion-based, and you will learn more, perform at a higher level, and have more fun if you come and take part in class. Since in-person class attendance and class participation are essential and inextricably linked, a student’s attendance and participation grades may be reduced for poor attendance and/or poor participation. Attendance is taken daily and recorded on Canvas. All unexcused absences lower the attendance grade (for a list of university excused absences, **which does not include illness**, click [here](#)). After a student’s third unexcused absence, I will reduce the student’s attendance grade for a fourth and a fifth unexcused absence by 10 points each. No student may accumulate more than five absences (excused or unexcused). Students who accumulate a sixth absence – the equivalent of three weeks of class – will receive a final grade of “F” unless they withdraw from the class within the period authorized by UNT’s academic calendar. Students are responsible for keeping track of their absences.

### Policy on Generative AI Writing Tools – Prohibited Use

The use of generative AI writing [and rewriting] tools [such as ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Grammarly, or others] is prohibited in this class. Assignments for the course have been designed to help you develop as a writer without the use of these technologies. You will generate ideas, read, revise, and write on your own and/or in consultation with peers, me, or Writing Center tutors, and use of AI at any stage of your writing process is prohibited. You are the author of your work for the course, and authorship means you

take responsibility for your words and claims. Any use of AI technologies in your work will be considered a violation of UNT's [Student Academic Integrity policy](#) and addressed accordingly.

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### **Additional Policies**

Please consult the Welcome module for additional university policies on Student Conduct and ADA Accommodation among others.

### **Course Calendar**

#### Week 1

1/13 Introduction

1/15 *Prelude – **Strange Likeness?***

#### Week 2

1/20 **Early English Literary History:** Widsith

1/22 EELH *continued*

#### Week 3

1/27 **The Birth of English Poetry:** The Story of Cædmon

1/29 The Story of Cædmon *continued*

#### Week 4

2/3 **Charms:** The Metrical Charms (plus PDF with charms for unfruitful land, birthing, and a journey)

2/5 **Gnomic Poetry:** Maxims I (PDF), Maxims II

#### Week 5

2/10 **Catalog Wisdom Poetry:** The Gifts of Men, The Fortunes of Men

2/12 **Wisdom Poetry:** Vainglory, The Order of the World, Precepts

#### Week 6

2/17 **Lyric and Elegy:** The Wanderer, The Seafarer

2/19 *Interlude*

**2/22** Draft of Essay 1 due by 11:59 pm in Canvas

#### Week 7

2/24 **Worship and Prayer:** The Lord's Prayer II, The Apostle's Creed, The Gloria I (PDFs)

2/26 **Christian Living:** Rewards of Piety (PDF), Instructions for Christians (PDF), Seasons of Fasting

**3/1** Peer Reviews of Essay 1 due by 11:59 pm in Canvas

#### Week 8

3/3 **Last Things:** Soul and Body I, Judgment Day II

3/5 *Interlude*

**3/8** Final Draft of Essay 1 due by 11:59 pm in Canvas

#### Week 9

3/10 SPRING BREAK

3/12 SPRING BREAK

Week 10

3/17 **Old Testament Narrative Poems:** Genesis

3/19 Genesis *continued*

Week 11

3/24 **Old Testament Narrative Poems:** Exodus

3/26 Exodus *continued*

Week 12

3/31 **New Testament Lyric Poems:** Christ I: Advent Lyrics

4/2 **New Testament Lyric Poems:** The Dream of the Rood

Week 13

4/7 **New Testament Lyric Poems:** Christ II: The Ascension (PDF)

4/9 **New Testament Lyric Poems:** Christ III: Judgment (PDF)

**4/12** Draft of Essay 2 due by 11:59 pm in Canvas

Week 14

4/14 **Heroic Poetry, Secular Hero:** Beowulf

4/16 Beowulf *continued*

**4/19** Peer Reviews of Essay 2 due by 11:59 pm in Canvas

Week 15

4/21 **Heroic Poetry, Christian Hero:** Andreas

4/23 Andreas *continued*

**4/26** Final Draft of Essay 2 due by 11:59 pm in Canvas

Week 16

4/28 *Postlude: Strange Likeness*

4/30 Essay 2 Workshop

**5/1** Essay 3 due by 11:59 pm in Canvas