

English 4431 — *Hwæt in the Worulde?* Old English for Undergraduates

T/Th, 9:30–10:50 am, Language Building 312

Dr. Upchurch, Professor of English

E-mail: Robert.Upchurch@unt.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays, LANG 409F, 11:15 am – 12:15 pm (on Zoom by appointment)

Course Description

Shakespeare's language was old, and it was English, but it was not Old English. Before both the playwright's Early Modern English and Chaucer's Middle English there was Old English (OE), the language of Beowulf (the source of Tolkien's orcs for Lord of the Ring fans). This course will give you the keys to unlock the magnificent "word-hoard" or linguistic treasure house from which the earliest poems and prose in the English language were constructed. The class is designed to enable you to read OE prose and poetry. We'll begin translating immediately while learning the grammar of Old English, and as the semester progresses we'll read (in Old English no less!) a variety of literary texts in prose as well as stylized, richly ornamented poems. We'll even examine some of them in their manuscript contexts. Opened to us will be a window onto England from the fifth to the eleventh centuries that will give us a glimpse of the cultural blending that occurred in the wake of clashes between Viking and English warriors, Christians and pagans, and heroic ideals and holy virtues.

Course Requirements and Grading

- 15% – Exam 1
- 25% – Exam 2
- 35% – Final Project
- 25% – Attendance (10%) & Participation (15%)

Attendance & Participation

You are expected to attend class and actively participate. This course is by nature participatory, collaborative, and discussion-based, and you will learn more, perform at a higher level, and have more fun if you come to class and participate actively. Since class attendance and class participation are essential and inextricably linked, I reserve the right to reduce a student's attendance and participation grades. Please note that upon a student's fourth unexcused absence, I will reduce the student's participation grade by 25 points, 30 points upon a fifth unexcused absence. Students who accumulate 6 or more unexcused absences will receive the final grade of "F" unless they withdraw from the class within the period authorized by UNT's academic calendar. Please consult Canvas for additional policies.

UNT COVID-19 Impact on Attendance Statement

Students are expected to attend class meetings regularly and to abide by the attendance policy established for the course. It is important that you communicate with the professor and the instructional team prior to being absent, so you, the professor, and the instructional team can discuss and mitigate the impact of the absence on your attainment of course learning goals. Please inform the professor and instructional team if you are unable to attend class meetings because you are ill, in mindfulness of the health and safety of everyone in our community. If you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19, please seek medical attention from the Student Health and Wellness Center (940-565-2333 or askSHWC@unt.edu) or your health care provider PRIOR to coming to campus. UNT also requires you to contact the UNT COVID Team at COVID@unt.edu for guidance on actions to take due to symptoms, pending or positive test results, or potential exposure.

Required Text

R. Hasenfratz and T. Jambeck, *Reading Old English, Revised Edition* (West Virginia UP, 2011).

- *Bring your book to every class or receive a reduction of your participation grade.*

Course Calendar

Exam dates and Final Project due dates will not change. The schedule of assigned readings and exercises may change, however, depending on the pace at which we're able to work productively as a community. If so, I will provide ample notice.

Acknowledgment: I have based this course calendar on and adopted the Final Project from the syllabus developed and generously shared with me by my colleague, Dr. Johanna Kramer, who researches and teaches Old English language and literature at the University of Missouri.

- 1/18 Introduction to the course

1/20 *ROE*, Chapter 1, OE Alphabets and Pronunciation (pp. 1-28)
Practice reading OE out loud: Exercise 1.9.5 (p. 28)

Listen to Chapter 2 of the [Gospel of Luke](#) read in OE
Listen to a variety of [OE recordings](#)

Stream and watch [King Alfred and the Anglo Saxons > Episode 1, Alfred of Wessex](#)
- 1/25 *ROE*, Chapter 2, Getting Started: Strong/Regular Nouns (pp. 30-41)
Start memorizing the definite article (2.5.1) and the tables of nouns forms (2.7-9)
Do Exercise 2.2 + Reading II, nos. 1-8

1/27 *ROE*, Chapter 2, Getting Started: Nouns (pp. 42-57)
Do Reading II, nos. 9-16
- 2/1 *ROE*, Chapter 3, Weak Nouns and Weak Verbs (pp. 60-66)
Do Exercise 3.1 + Reading III.i, "The Gospel of Luke" (p. 83)

2/3 *ROE*, Chapter 3, Weak Nouns and Weak Verbs (pp. 66-82)
Do Exercise 3.2 + Reading III.ii, "Exeter Book Riddle #82" (p. 86)
- 2/8 *ROE*, Chapter 4, Weak Verbs Class III and Irregular Verbs (pp. 90-96)
Do Exercises 4.3-4 (pp. 104-6)

2/10 *ROE*, Chapter 4, Weak Verbs Class III and Irregular Verbs (pp. 96-109)
Reading IV, "Wonders of the East [1]" (pp. 109 -11)
- 2/15 Exam Review

2/17 **Exam 1**
- 2/22 *ROE*, Chapter 5, Learning How to Translate (pp. 116-58)
Do Exercises 5.1-6

2/24 *ROE*, Chapter 5, Learning How to Translate (pp. 116-58)
Do Reading V, "Wonders of the East 2" (p. 160)
- 3/1 *ROE*, Chapter 6, Adjectives and Adverbs, Prepositions (pp. 168-82).
Do Exercises 6.1-4 (pp. 174-5, 179-80, and 187-9) + Reading VI, "Wonders of the East 3,"

- lines 1-11 (p. 208)
- 3/3 *ROE*, Chapter 6, Adjectives and Adverbs, Prepositions (pp. 182-206).
Do Exercise 6.5 (pp. 203-5) + Reading VI, “Wonders of the East 3,” lines 12-26 (p. 208)
- 8 3/8 *ROE*, Ch. 7, Personal Pronouns, Reflexives, Relatives (pp. 216-24)
Do Exercises 7.1-2 (pp. 220-1 and 228-9) + Reading VII.i, “Prognostics” (p. 245)
- 3/10 *ROE*, Ch. 7, Personal Pronouns, Reflexives, Relatives (pp. 224-30)
Do Exercise 7.3 (p. 237-9) + Reading VII.ii, “Monastic Sign Language” (pp. 248-9)
- 3/15 SPRING BREAK
- 3/17 SPRING BREAK
- 9 3/22 *ROE*, Chapter 8, Strong Verbs I, Classes 1, 2, 3, and 4
Do Exercise 8.1 (p. 263) + Reading VIII.i, “Prognostics 2” (pp. 277-8)
- 3/24 *ROE*, Chapter 8, Strong Verbs I, Classes 1, 2, 3, and 4
Do Exercise 8.2 (pp. 270-1) + Reading VIII.ii, “From Vercelli Homily IX [1]” (pp. 281-2)
- 10 3/29 Exam Review
- 3/31 **Exam 2**
- 11 4/5 Transcribe the entry for *Æðelþryð* from [CCCC 196, pp. 37-8](#)
Introduction to Final Project
- 4/7 *ROE*, Chapter 9, Strong Verbs II, Classes 5, 6, and 7 (pp. 288-301)
Do Exercise 9.3 + Reading IX, “From Vercelli Homily IX [2]” (pp. 301-2)
- 12 4/12 Read “A Quick Guide to OE Poetry” (*ROE*, pp. 480-91)
Translate *The Battle of Brunanburh*, lines 1-44a
- 4/14 Translate *The Battle of Brunanburh*, lines 44b-73
- 13 4/19 Translate *The Dream of the Rood*, lines 1-39
- 4/21 Translate *The Dream of the Rood*, lines 40-77
- 4/24 Final Project (Part I) due by 11:59 pm on Canvas**
- 14 4/26 Translate *The Dream of the Rood*, lines 78-121
- 4/28 Translate *The Dream of the Rood*, lines 122-56
- 15 5/3 Translate *Beowulf* (handout)
- 5/5 Translate *Beowulf* (handout)
- 5/8 Final Project (Part 2) due by 11:59 pm on Canvas**