

Term Paper: Specifications and Suggested Topics

Assignment: Write a paper on any literary, text-critical, palaeographical, source-critical, historical, linguistic, or metrical aspect of *Beowulf* and/or *The Fight at Finnsburg*. Not admissible are discussions of present-day adaptations or comparisons with analogues in current popular culture.

Length: Within ten percent of 3,000 words for **M.EP.02b**; within ten percent of 7,500 words for **B.Eng.631**, **M.EP.05b**, and **M.EP.05d**. Please note that the paper length for your module has substantial implications for the appropriate choice of topic and scope.

Approval: Run at least the topic, and ideally (at a later stage) a detailed sentence outline, by your instructor for approval. (See [these slides](#) for an explanation of the appropriate sentence outline format.)

Deadline: Final term paper due on 31 March; try to have a topic by late November.

Some Possible Topics

The following lists are intended to give you an impression of the range of appropriate topics, but please do not infer that you are limited to the options listed. While you may copy out a topic directly from this list, you may prefer to come up with your own, and it is at any rate your own responsibility to formulate a research question. Remember that originality of argument (and by implication originality of research question) is a factor in the assessment of your paper (see marking grid overleaf).

Please refer to the following lists of topics for inspiration. *A “Beowulf” Handbook* is often your starting point for research, but also look for newer work especially on topics like dating the text (Neidorf 2014), or quantitative approaches (Neidorf et al. 2019; Plecháč et al. 2021); for metrical work see **CLASP** and “[The Electronic Beowulf](#)” in addition to a generous selection of metrical theories (start with Terasawa).

- The narrative function of Unferth
- The function and relevance of transparent names in *Beowulf*
- The meaning of *wyrd* in *Beowulf* and in the corpus of Old English
- Rules of succession in *Beowulf* and pre-Conquest England
- *Beowulf* and royal genealogy
- *Beowulf* as propaganda
- Typology in *Beowulf*
- Moralizing in *Beowulf*
- The lexical profile of *Beowulf*
- The metrical profile of *Beowulf*

- A new reading of the Finnsburg fragment and episode
- The political implications of the Swedish wars
- The main movement and message of *Beowulf*
- Monsters as allegory
- Monsters as red herrings
- Reading *Beowulf*'s biblical allusions through the lens of MS Junius 11
- The worth of the female experience in *Beowulf*
- Good kingship in *Beowulf*
- Cruces in *Beowulf*
- The narrative and codicological riddles of the “Homecoming of Beowulf” section
- What metrical statistics can tell us about *Beowulf*
- What we can learn from the miscopying of names in *Beowulf*
- What other Old English verse can tell us about *Beowulf*
- Quantitative methods and the structural unity of *Beowulf*

Marking Grid

The following marking grid indicates the considerations used to mark papers for this course (but not their weighting):

Aspect	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Argument (quality, originality)										
Structure										
Methodology										
Close reading & analysis										
Use of secondary sources										
Grasp of source language <i>and/or</i> analytical methods										
Command of academic English										
Mechanics (style, referencing, formatting)										
Length										