

B.EP.301 Aufbaumodul 2: Conversion and Continuity in the Medieval North

Term:	Summer 2015	Instructor:	Dr P. S. Langeslag
Time:	Tue 10–12	Office:	SEP 2.306
Room:	VG 1.102	Phone:	0551/3919706
Credits:	6 (incl. lecture)	Office hours:	Wed 2–3
Prerequisites:	Aufbaumodul 1	E-mail:	planges@gwdg.de

Course Description

Between the fifth and thirteenth centuries AD, Christianity gradually spread through the cultures of northern Europe, bringing with it an unprecedented degree of cultural assimilation. It also brought a technologically advanced medium of written communication, however, and this was soon used to perpetuate the thought-world of these changing but distinct cultures. Between *Edda* and *saga*, otherworld voyage and biblical verse, the early literature of northern Europe attests to an immense cultural richness, offering rare glimpses into obscure mythical and legendary worlds whose bearing on contemporary social values remains little understood.

This course will have two main *modi operandi*. One half of our work will be cultural-literary: short lectures and translated selections from the early literatures of Ireland, England, Germany, Old Saxony, and Scandinavia will give students an insight into these written cultures and prompt them to consider questions of belief, conversion, and empire. Students will learn to deal critically with the intersections between religion, culture, and politics, and to identify authorial aims in the representation of these domains. The seminar's second pillar will be language study: students will improve their Old English reading comprehension, but they will also make a first acquaintance with Old High German, Old Saxon, and Old Norse through the comparative study of their grammars and some engagement with original texts. The only language prerequisite is a basic understanding of Old English (as acquired in Aufbaumodul 1).

Texts read will include extracts from the Hiberno-Latin *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*; the Old English *Genesis B* and *Exodus*, along with excerpts from *Beowulf*; the Old High German *Muspilli*; passages from the Old Saxon *Heliand* and the Dano-Latin *Gesta Danorum*; and selections from Old Norse eddic and *saga* material.

Please note: this course has a substantial language component! Students will train their understanding of Old English and make a first acquaintance with Old Saxon, Old High German, and Old Norse. There will be an opportunity to join an optional weekly reading tutorial in which we will look at one or more of these languages in more detail.

Aims

Students will improve their knowledge of and skills in

- The literatures of medieval Ireland, England, Germany, Old Saxony, and Scandinavia;
- Old English, Old High German, Old Saxon, and Old Norse reading comprehension;
- Comparative Old Germanic grammar;
- Conversion theory; and
- The history of religion.

Assessment

Assessment will be in the form of a written exam (90 minutes) consisting of open questions from the accompanying lecture; linguistic and thematic commentaries on one or more seen texts; and open questions on seminar content with reference to narrative, culture, and language.

Required Texts and Resources

Extracts from the bibliography below will be made available on StudIP. Handouts, lecture slides, and lists of key concepts will be made available at studium.langeslag.org/conv15, so bookmark this site right away. For the language component of this course, students are advised to pick up a copy of Robinson, *Old English and Its Closest Relatives* (see bibliography below).

Schedule

wk	date	topic	reading	in the original
1	14 Apr	Secrets of Missionary Success		
2	21 Apr	Monks and Boats	Robinson ch. 1; <i>Navigatio Sancti Brendani</i> (O'Meara)	
3	28 Apr	The Battle for England	Robinson ch. 2; Bede's <i>Historia ecclesiastica</i> chs. 2.1 (tail end), 1.23, 1.30, 1.32, 2.9–14 (Colgrave & Mynors)	
4	5 May	Sexing Up the Bible	Robinson ch. 6; <i>Genesis B</i> (Anlezark); <i>Exodus</i> (Tolkien)	
5	12 May	Magic	Review Magic Sheet of Old English Inflections (Baker); <i>Æcerbot</i> (Storms)	At least <i>Æcerbot</i> ll. 1–42
6	19 May	Ingeld and Christ	Alcuin's letter to Speratus (Bullough); <i>The Dream of the Rood</i> (Pope); <i>Beowulf</i> ll. 64–114 (Swanton)	Review <i>Rood; Beo</i> ll. 64–114
7	26 May	READING WEEK — NO CLASS	Robinson ch. 9	
8	2 June	Light from the West	<i>Vita Bonifatii</i> chs. 4–8 (Rau); Daniel's letter to Boniface (Kylie); <i>Muspilli</i> (Braune/Robinson/Bell)	<i>Muspilli</i> ll. 37–62
9	9 June	The Saxons Subdued	Robinson ch. 5; <i>Capitulatio de partibus Saxoniae</i> (Munro); <i>Heliand</i> fitts 1, 11–13, 16–18, 33, 55, 58, 66 (Murphy)	
10	16 June	The <i>Heliand</i>	<i>Heliand</i> ll. 4317–4335, 4352–4377 (Cathey)	<i>Heliand</i> ll. 4317–4377
11	23 June	The Eddic Tradition	Robinson ch. 4; <i>Völuspá</i> (Orchard); Prologue to the Prose Edda (Faulkes)	
12	30 June	When Pórr and Christ Collide	<i>Íslendingabók</i> ch. 7 (Halldór Hermannsson); <i>Þiðranda þátr ok Pórhalls</i> (Kruse, in Böldl et al.); <i>Gesta Danorum</i> book 3 (Fisher)	
13	7 July	Old Norse Cosmology	“Outlines of Grammar” (Craigie); Magic Sheet of Old Norse Paradigms (Hall); Selections 1 “The Highest God”, 4 “The Ash of Yggdrasil” (Craigie)	Craigie ##1, 4 (+ 5 if you like)
14	14 July	Wildcard Session	TBA	
15	21 July	EXAM: KWZ 0.602 @ 10:15–11:45		

References and Further Reading

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