

Old English Oddities

B.EP.301

Revision of October 19, 2021

Term:	Winter 2021/2022	Instructor:	Dr P. S. Langeslag
Time:	Tuesdays 16:30–18:00	Office:	SEP 2.306
Room:	Verfügungsgebäude 3.104	Office hours:	By appointment (office or online)
Credits:	6	E-mail:	planges@uni-goettingen.de
Prerequisites:	B.EP.204		

Overview

Course Description

This course is aimed squarely at improving students' Old English reading comprehension by way of a florilegium of little-studied texts, notes, and scribbles. By discussing the possible aims and contexts of these various compositions, students will develop an understanding of the circumstances in which medieval texts were produced, while the variety of genres encountered will give them a sense for the range found within the corpus of Old English.

Assessment

A **written exam** (60 minutes, 8 February 2022 at 16:30 in our regular classroom) covers the seminar material. (In a departure from earlier practice, the associated **lecture course** will be assessed in a separate exam to be administered by its convenor; you'll want to register separately for each of the two exams.) The seminar exam will consist of questions on the texts, contexts, genres, individuals, and concepts discussed in class, as well as the translation of unseen Old English prose. Weekly readings, translation work, and in-class instruction will serve alongside active class participation to prepare you for the exam.

Required Texts and Resources

Texts will be made available online. You are advised to keep a grammar and dictionary of Old English close at hand throughout the term (see **Recommended Resources** below). My videos for B.EP.204 may also help refresh your knowledge of Old English grammar and translation strategies.

Readings

I have curated and edited a range of texts, from which we will together decide on a week-to-week basis what to read next. We will start off with a collection of brief notes and scribbles; after that, the pool of readings available to us includes, among other things (in approximate ascending order of length and difficulty):

- A Newtonian proverb (1 clause)¹
- A cryptogram in Bodley 572 (1 clause)
- The Brussels Cross inscription (3 clauses plus 2 verse lines)
- Two metrical proverbs in Royal 2 B. v (3 verse lines)
- A compound prose riddle in Cotton Vitellius E. xviii (5 clauses)
- The age of the Virgin Mary (5 clauses)
- Morning devotion (5 clauses)
- Against gout (8 clauses)
- The Apostles' Creed (21 clauses)
- An injunction against bloodletting (8 clauses)
- A prayer for mercy and support (9 clauses)
- Solomon's gold (9 clauses)
- A tranquil mind (10 clauses)
- The six ages of the world (11 clauses)

1. I have defined reading units that are often one syntactical clause in length, to help in the assignment of translation turns.

- **Permission to ring bells** (12 clauses)
- *Alleluia* (18 clauses)
- **Jerome and Damasus** (19 clauses)
- **An encyclopaedic sequence in Cotton Julius A. ii** (19 clauses)
- *Thureth* (11 verse lines)
- **A charm against beeswarms** (8 verse lines plus two lines of prose introduction)
- **Ælfric on just war** (31 clauses)
- **Ælfric's *Three Estates*** (33 clauses)
- **The typology of church bells** (34 clauses)
- **Nocturns** (37 clauses)
- **Psalter introductions** (45 clauses)
- **Ely guild regulations** (29 sentences)
- **A verse prayer** (79 verse lines)
- *The Whale* (88 verse lines)
- *Æcerbot* (a mix of prose and verse)

I will use Stud.IP's Blubber plugin to announce what we're reading each week.

Diversity

This course is run with the understanding that students bring a variety of backgrounds into the classroom in such domains as socioeconomics, appearance, culture, religion, ability, gender, age, home/family situation, and sexual identity. With different backgrounds come different needs and sensitivities. If you feel your needs or those of a fellow student require special attention or are being compromised, please feel free to make this known to me by whatever channel seems most appropriate. (For more serious concerns, the **Faculty** and the **University** each have their own points of contact.) I will treat all requests seriously and with confidentiality, and will seek to make accommodations within my abilities and reason. At the same time, you too owe it to your fellow students to treat them with respect regardless of their background and identity. Do not stand in the way of anyone's well-being.

Tutorials

If you want extra practice with translation from Old English, look for tutorials and reading groups on **Stud.IP**.

Recommended Resources

Baker, Peter S. *Introduction to Old English*. 3rd ed. Malden, MA: Wiley–Blackwell, 2012.

The standard current textbook.

———. "Old English Aerobics." <http://www.oldenglishaerobics.net>.

Old English grammar and translation exercises.

Bosworth, Joseph, ed. *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*. Ed. and enlarged by T. Northcote Toller. With enlarged addenda and corrigenda by Alistair Campbell. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973. <https://bosworthtoller.com>.

The most complete dictionary of Old English to date, if rather outdated (the main dictionary was published in 1898). Please note that the online surrogate represents the 1898 edition, not the 1973 edition with Campbell's revisions and addenda.

Cameron, Angus, Ashley Crandell Amos, Antonette diPaolo Healey, et al., eds. *Dictionary of Old English: A to I*. Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project, 2018. <https://doe.utoronto.ca/>.

The best, if incomplete, dictionary of Old English. Accessible to Göttingen students via [this link](#).

Campbell, Alistair. *Old English Grammar*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1959.

The standard reference grammar. Just in case you have the stomach for that kind of thing.

Clark Hall, J. R., ed. *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*. 4th ed. Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching 14. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960.

An affordable paperback dictionary, if outdated.

Hasenfratz, Robert, and Thomas J. Jambeck, eds. *Reading Old English*. Revised edition. Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2011.

A current and especially user-friendly introduction to Old English.

Holthausen, Ferdinand, ed. *Altenglisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1934.

*Just in case you should want to look into the origins of specific words; but you may find **Wiktionary** is more complete.*

Marsden, Richard, ed. *The Cambridge Old English Reader*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

A good selection of texts (though not much beyond the trodden path) accompanied by detailed notes, a glossary, and reference grammar.

Mitchell, Bruce, and Fred C. Robinson. *A Guide to Old English*. 8th ed. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

A good standard textbook now gradually aging out of use.

“Wiktionary.” <https://www.wiktionary.org>.

A pretty robust resource for its etymological and inflectional sections.