

**English 346/546  
Old English  
Fall 2019**

I also remembered how . . . I had seen churches all across England filled with books and precious objects, and with great numbers of God's servants, who were able to learn exceedingly little from these books, because they could not understand them, the language in which they had been written not being their own.

Alfred, King of Wessex (trans. Burton Raffel)

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**Course Description and Objectives**

This is an introductory course in Old English, the earliest form of the English language (or, to be more precise, one of its dialects). Learning Old English can give you a better understanding of how Modern English works and where some of its grammar and vocabulary came from. It can also make intermediate periods of the language (such as Chaucer's or Shakespeare's) seem less alien.

This course is more like a course in a foreign language than most English courses. Students will learn grammatical and other linguistic concepts and will need to do some memorization of vocabulary and forms. On the other hand, unlike a true foreign language, Old English is close enough to Modern English that you will be able to recognize many words, and one semester's study is sufficient to enable you to read authentic historical and literary texts. By the end of the course, students should be able to

- recognize essential features of nouns, pronouns, and verbs necessary to
- identify syntax (the relationship between words in a sentence) and
- use a glossary effectively, and thereby
- read any Old English text with some facility, given a big enough glossary and enough time.

**Text (purchase)**

Robert Hasenfratz and Thomas Jambeck, *Reading Old English: A Primer and First Reader*, Revised Edition (West Virginia UP, 2011), \$ 44.95. ISBN 978-1-933202-74-7

Note: If you buy your book somewhere other than the bookstore, be sure to get the revised edition.

Some additional exercises and readings may be supplied in photocopy or online. There are also resources on the internet which you may find useful; you can find links to recommended sites in Canvas.

## Requirements and Grading

Learning a language requires constant practice, so expect to be active in class and to have homework for most classes.

### Homework:

For most classes, you will have some exercises to do or a reading passage to prepare. Normally, I will not collect or grade your preparation; we will go over the material in class, and if you've worked through it to the best of your ability, you'll be in good shape to benefit from what we do in class. Showing up unprepared is better than not showing up at all, but unprepared students will gain considerably less from class as a rule. Occasionally (with or without advance notice), I may have you write out answers to a few questions on the homework, or a translation of a passage, which I will collect and grade. (These grades will count as quiz grades.) This is most likely to happen when I get the impression that not everyone is diligently preparing for class.

To allow for some flexibility in scheduling (to adapt to the progress of the class), I'll give you a schedule of topics and homework for a few weeks at a time and may need to make minor adjustments to it. Be sure to check Canvas when you are absent to get any new schedules or updates.

### Quizzes:

There will be several planned quizzes (roughly once a week; see schedules for specific dates), as long as we are focused on grammar (probably mid-November). Quizzes will emphasize the material from the preceding week, but knowledge of a language is by nature cumulative. I will drop the lowest quiz grade from the average, which will contribute **25%** of the course grade for students enrolled in 346 (20% for 546).

### Tests:

There will be two tests during the semester, on **September 30** and **November 4**, as well as a final exam. Each test contributes **25%** to the course grade (20% in 546) and the final exam **25%** (20% in 546). The final exam is comprehensive, but will consist primarily of passages to translate. These will include passages from works we read as a class and sight-reading passages. Our final exam time is **Thursday, December 19, 8-10 am**.

### Graduate Project:

Students enrolled in English 546 will complete an additional project which will contribute 20% of the course grade. The specific project can be tailored to the student's needs and interests; please plan to meet with me during the fourth or fifth week of the semester to discuss options and settle on a plan. Examples of projects include an annotated translation of a text (or portion of a longer text) or an annotated bibliography on a grammatical or phonological issue, etc.

<b>Policies</b>
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**Attendance:** Regular attendance is expected. Attendance will not directly affect your grade, but absences are likely to affect your ability to learn the material. Also, in the case of a borderline grade, diligent preparation and fearless participation in class will nudge the grade upward. If what we do in class is not helping you learn the material, it's in your best interest to let me know that.

**Make-up work:** Missed quizzes (including unannounced homework checks) or tests can be made up only in extraordinary circumstances.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** If you have a disability and may need accommodations for this course, please contact the Disability and Assistive Technology Center. Call 715 346-3365 or email [datctr@uwsp.edu](mailto:datctr@uwsp.edu) to make an appointment or get more information. DATC is located in room 609 of Albertson Hall (a.k.a. Library).

**Email:** Your UWSP email account is the university's standard method of communication with you, and you should check it regularly. I may at times use email to contact the class or individual students; I will routinely use Canvas for reminders and announcements.

**Use of Technology:** Phones, tablets, or other devices should be silenced and put away, unless you are using them to take or refer to notes and you have the discipline to avoid distractions. Note: Students may not make audio, video, or photographic recordings of lectures or other class activities without written permission from the instructor. Anyone violating this policy will be asked to turn off the device being used. Refusal to comply with the policy will result in the student being asked to leave the classroom, and possibly being reported to the Dean of Students.

**How I calculate grades:** Letter grades are converted to points, and points back to a letter grade for the course, using the following scale: D, 60-66.99%; D+, 67-69.99%; C-, 70-72.99%; C, 73-76.99%; C+, 77-79.99%; B-, 80-82.99%; B, 83-86.99%; B+, 87-89.99%; A-, 90-92.99%; A, 93-100%. An assignment not turned in or quiz/test not attempted is a 0, but an F that represents a credible effort will earn points in the F range.

Any change to the syllabus will be announced in class and posted in Canvas.

## Schedule for Sept. 3 – 30

Date	Topics covered	What you should prepare
Sept. 3	Introductions	
Sept. 5	Where Old English fits in language families; who spoke Old English and when; alphabet and pronunciation; tricks for recognizing OE words.	Reading chapter 1 before class may be useful, but not essential.
Sept. 9	Sentence functions; introduce the concept of case.	Review/practice pronunciation. Read Appendix 1 (pages 358-395). If this is familiar material for you, skim through and just stop to read anything that is new or that you are unsure of. If it is unfamiliar, read it carefully and make a note of anything you don't understand or want clarification on. Then ( <b>still before class</b> ), take the "quiz" in Canvas on sentence basics. This "quiz" doesn't count in your grade, but the results will be helpful to me in getting a handle on where the entire class is with this material.
Sept. 10, 12	More work on sentence functions if necessary; the OE case system; the demonstrative pronoun.	Reading pp. 29-35 and 42-50 of Chapter 2 before Tuesday's class may be useful but is not essential.
Sept. 16	<b>Quiz</b> , covering forms of <i>sē</i> (p. 34), case. Strong nouns (pages 36-40)	Prepare for quiz.
Sept. 17	Continue strong nouns, start pronouns	Start learning noun paradigms; do exercises 2.1 and 2.2 (pp. 40-41 and 51-53)
Sept. 19	Personal, reflexive, relative, and interrogative pronouns (Chapter 7).	Finish exercise 2.3 and Reading II (pages 51-57) if we did not do them in class Tuesday:.
Sept. 23	<b>Quiz</b> , covering nouns and pronouns, including vocabulary: <i>æðeling</i> , <i>cwēn</i> , <i>cyning</i> , <i>dæg</i> , <i>engel</i> , <i>folc</i> , <i>gēar</i> , <i>God</i> , <i>miçel</i> , <i>mid</i> , <i>sweord</i> , <i>þegn</i> , <i>þurh</i> , <i>wer</i> , <i>wīf</i> . Irregular verbs (pages 97-104)	Prepare for quiz. You may find the exercises in Chapter 7 that we didn't do in class useful.
Sept. 24	Weak nouns (pages 60-66).	Start learning the irregular verbs, especially <i>wesan/bēon</i> , <i>dōn</i> , and <i>gān</i> . Do exercise 4.3 (pp. 104-105) if we didn't in class Monday.
Sept. 25	Minor nouns (Chapter 10, pages 310-323)	Do exercise 3.1 (pp. 63-66)
Sept. 30	<b>Test</b> , covering <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the demonstrative pronoun/definite article (<i>sē</i>, etc.)</li> <li>• personal pronouns</li> <li>• strong nouns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• weak nouns</li> <li>• irregular verbs</li> <li>• Vocabulary: words from Sept. 23 quiz plus weak nouns <i>ēage</i> and <i>nama</i>.</li> </ul>