Lecture 1
An Introduction to Old English: Who, Where, What, When, Why

Dr Stuart D. Lee
Stuart.lee@ell.ox.ac.uk
Hwæt! We Gardena in geardagum, þeodcyninga, þrym gefrunon, hu ða æþelingas ellen fremedon.
Course Aims

- Introduce basics of Old English - the language, literature, and culture
- Prepare you for Paper 3(a)
- Promote an enjoyment of Old English
- Point to the importance of Old English
Lectures

- Week 1. Introduction
- Week 2. Old English Language
- Week 3. Old English Poetry
- Week 4. Old English Prose
- Week 5. Old English Films

© G. Keller, Wikimedia Commons, 2009, CC ASA 2.5
All on the Web!

- https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/
- Log in as 'yourusername' (e.g. magd0123) password is your email password
- Humanities Division > English Faculty > Information for Undergraduates > Resources for Mods > Old English
What does the term ‘Anglo-
€3bn tax bill sends Porsche's VW bid into a spin
Management Today
All of which looks a bit rum to the eyes of anyone more used to the Anglo-Saxon model of governance, but it seems to work OK for the Germans. ...
See all stories on this topic

Why Not Affirmative Action For White Evangelicals?
VOA News
The Supreme Court, far from being the last redoubt of the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant in America, reflects the collapse of the WASP establishment, ...
See all stories on this topic

Struggle within Iranian elite continues
Real News Network - New York, NY, USA
... language coverage is intelligible to a minority of Iranians while it reaches a mainly anglo-saxon world who will be interested from the geo-political ...
See all stories on this topic

Your number's up. First mobile directory goes ex-directory
TelecomTV - London, UK
A bloody nuisance and a downright liberty to which a short sharp two word Anglo Saxon retort is the best possible response.
Look up 118 800 this morning and ...
See all stories on this topic

Will fixing up your apartment in Israel pay off?
Ha'aretz - Tel Aviv, Israel
The knowledge that renovations, even slight ones, can hasten the sale of a home and even increase its value recently prompted Anglo-Saxon realtors to offer ...
See all stories on this topic

THE ASHES: A dream run
Business Spectator - Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
Flintoff then launched himself at the 170cm Phillip Hughes, initiating the 21-year-old in some old-fashioned Anglo-Saxon as he tested out his technique ...
See all stories on this topic

Walter Cronkite, World's Most Overrated Reader of the News
Pajamas Media - El Segundo, CA, USA
While the colonies differed on many questions, at least the people of the colonies were of the same Anglo-Saxon stock. Democracy, civilization itself, is at ...
See all stories on this topic

Google Blogs Alert for: anglo-saxon

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: The complete and utter bard
By Anonymouse
The original language was Anglo-Saxon (Old English), but these later entries are essentially Estuary English in tone. You could say, this is an EU "Withdrawalist, Libertarian and generally reactionary blog. Regular, but amateurish"(If ...
The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle - http://saxontimes.blogspot.com/

European Journal of Archaeology » Blog Archive » EJA Review ...
By Troels
The exception is mound 17 with its undisturbed weapon inhumation and a horse in a separate grave cut, featuring the first complete set of Anglo-Saxon harness metalwork to come to light (more have been found since). ...

Bones Economics: Is American Capitalism a Religious Construct?
By Ringo
Unfortunately, some still backward thinking parts of America still think that successful capitalism should be ruled by precepts
This hoard is perhaps the most important collection of Anglo-Saxon objects found in England. It compares and perhaps exceeds those objects found at Sutton Hoo. Originally discovered by metal detectorist Terry Herbert in July 2009 and subsequently excavated by Birmingham University Archaeology Unit and Staffordshire County Council.

Leslie Webster, former Keeper of Prehistory and Europe at the British Museum
Old English - language and literature NOT historical period or ‘people’

Medieval - language, literature, and historical period NOT ‘people’

Anglo-Saxon - everything

‘Dark Ages’ - !!!!!
Define: Old English
Define: Old English

‘Old English is a term used to refer to the language and literature spoken and written in ‘England’ during the rule of the Anglo-Saxons (i.e. c. 450AD up until the mid-eleventh century)’
Key Questions

- **When?** i.e. what period of history are we really talking about?
- **Who?** i.e. who were the Anglo-Saxons?
- **Where?** i.e. where did they come from and where did they go?
- **What?** i.e. what is ‘Old English’
- **Why?** i.e. why is this all so important?
Key Questions

- **hwænne?** i.e. what period of history are we really talking about?
- **hwa?** i.e. who were the Anglo-Saxons?
- **hwær?** i.e. where did they come from and where did they go?
- **hwæt?** i.e. what is ‘Old English’
- **hwi?** i.e. why is this all so important?
When?

What is wrong with this clip of film? What is right with it?

SOURCE: *The Vikings* (Dir. R. Fliescher, 1958, United Artists)
When?

- Mid-5th century (Bede - publishes in early eighth century - states 449) to October 14th 1066 (and beyond)
A word of warning
A word of warning

- Thor, Odin, Frig, Loki, Sagas, Vikings, Boats, Horned Helmets, etc
A word of warning

- Thor, Odin, Frig, Loki, Sagas, Vikings, Boats, Horned Helmets, etc
- THIS IS OLD NORSE
A word of warning

- Thor, Odin, Frig, Loki, Sagas, Vikings, Boats, Horned Helmets, etc
- THIS IS OLD NORSE
- THIS IS NOT OLD ENGLISH
A word of warning

- Thor, Odin, Frig, Loki, Sagas, Vikings, Boats, Horned Helmets, etc
- THIS IS OLD NORSE
- THIS IS NOT OLD ENGLISH
- Poetic Edda (13th Century) Prose Edda (by Snorri Sturluson, c. 1220)
Who?

- Angles, Saxons, Jutes (plus Franks, Huns, etc.)
- Angles (North & Midlands), Saxons (South-West to Essex), Jutes (Kent and Isle of Wight)
The Age of Migrations

Invasions of the Roman Empire
100 - 500 CE

Western Roman Empire

Eastern Roman Empire

Rome
Carthage
Constantinople

Angles, Saxons
Franks
Goths
Visigoths
Ostrogoths
Huns
Vandals
The Age of Migrations

Invasions of the Roman Empire
100 - 500 CE

Western Roman Empire

Chalons 451

Hun Capital

Visigoths

Rome

 Constantinople

Eastern Roman Empire

Carthage

Angles, Saxons

Franks

Goths

Visigoths

Ostrogoths

Huns
Brittonic or Celts
What else did they bring?
What else did they bring?

- Their society - kings, thanes, ceorls, slaves
What else did they bring?

- Their society - kings, thanes, ceorls, slaves
- Their religion/legends/stories - days of the week, cræft, wiccecræft, elves, dwarves, dragons, trolls, giants, orcs ...
What else did they bring?

- Their society - kings, thanes, ceorls, slaves
- Their religion/legends/stories - days of the week, cræft, wiccecræft, elves, dwarves, dragons, trolls, giants, orcs ...
- Their outlook on life - loyalty, feuds, exile, transience ...
What else did they bring?

- Their society - kings, thanes, ceorls, slaves
- Their religion/legends/stories - days of the week, cræft, wiccecræft, elves, dwarves, dragons, trolls, giants, orcs ...
- Their outlook on life - loyalty, feuds, exile, transience ...
- Their language
Key Questions

- hwænne? i.e. what period of history are we really talking about?
- hwa? i.e. who were the Anglo-Saxons?
- hwær? i.e. where did they come from and where did they go?
- hwæt? i.e. what is ‘Old English’
- hwi? i.e. why is this all so important?
Aside: Why ‘English’?
Aside: Why ‘English’?

- Englisc (pron. English)
Aside: Why ‘English’?

- Englisc (pron. English)
- Celts, etc. up to 8c used ‘Saxon’ > Sassenach/Seisnig
Aside: Why ‘English’?

- Englisc (pron. English)
- Celts, etc. up to 8c used ‘Saxon’ > Sassenach/Seisnig
- Pope Gregory (540-604) the Great had Angeli or Angli and gens Anglorum
Aside: Why ‘English’?

- Englisc (pron. English)
- Celts, etc. up to 8c used ‘Saxon’ > Sassenach/Seisnig
- Pope Gregory (540-604) the Great had Angeli or Angli and gens Anglorum
- Bede (673-735) used gens Anglorum (united through/by Christianity) but recognised Angles, Saxons, Jutes
Aside: Why ‘English’?

- Englisc (pron. English)
- Celts, etc. up to 8c used ‘Saxon’ > Sassenach/Seisnig
- Pope Gregory (540-604) the Great had Angeli or Angli and gens Anglorum
- Bede (673-735) used gens Anglorum (united through/by Christianity) but recognised Angles, Saxons, Jutes
- Alfred the Great (late 9c) used Angelcynn (trnsl. gens Anglorum)
Aside: Why ‘English’?

- Englisc (pron. English)
- Celts, etc. up to 8c used ‘Saxon’ > Sassenach/Seisnig
- Pope Gregory (540-604) the Great had Angeli or Angli and gens Anglorum
- Bede (673-735) used gens Anglorum (united through/by Christianity) but recognised Angles, Saxons, Jutes
- Alfred the Great (late 9c) used Angelcynn (trnsl. gens Anglorum)
- Through mutation becomes Engla(cynn) hence Engla lond by time of Cnut (1016)
Old English

- The language of the Anglo-Saxons
- Old English (up to the 12th century)
- Middle English (12th - 15th century)
- Early Modern English (mid-15th century to 18th century)
- Modern English (18th century onwards)
- So Old English is related to Modern English
1611

Our Father which art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name...
1611

Our Father which art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name...

1380
Our Father which art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name...

Oure fadir þat art in heuenys. Halewid be þi name...
Our Father which art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name...
Our Father which art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name...

Oure fadir þat art in heuenys. Halewid be þi name...

þu ure fæder. þe eart on heofonum. Sy ðin nama gehalgod
Our Father which art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name...

Oure fadir þat art in heuenys. Halewid be þi name...

Þu ure fæder. þe eart on heofonum. Sy ðin nama gehalgod

PRONOUNCE þ and ð as ‘th’
Old English - A Foreign Language?

‘We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and the streets; we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender’

‘One small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind’


M. Bragg *The Adventure of English* (Hodder, 2003)
The 100 most popular words in English are from Anglo-Saxon

England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, USA, Australia, New Zealand...

English is the *lingua franca* of the world

English is the language of the Internet and the ‘world wide webbe’
Eala min God, ic kann ne hit belyfan!
Ic wæs næfre þis feor aweg fram ham
Ic wylle þine hand healdan,
Ic wylle þine hand healdan
Ond æfter eallum, þu eart min wundorweal
The Saxon Characters or Letters, that bee most strange, bee here knowne by other common Characters set over them.

d. c. th. th. f. g. h. r. s. t. w. y. and. that.
o. e. y. p. z. h. p. r. v. p. y. y. y.

Æ. Æ. Th. Th. E. M. S. W. And.

The Saxon useth our note of Full-point commonly for all other distinctions.

Anglo-Saxon Writing/Literacy
Oral culture

- Ideas/facts/stories passed down from word to mouth as opposed to a literate culture
- Elevates - sounds, names, memory
- Knowledge does not accumulate as much as in literate culture
- Allows for people to change a text more readily for the present
- Authorship / Performance / Audience
Runes

- First writing that appears are ‘Runes’
- Runic alphabet is called ‘Fu(th)orc’ - first six letters
  - OE run = ‘secret’, so runstafa = rune-stave
- Stones, coins, jewellery, weapons, poems (70 inscriptions) - magic (?) as in casting the runes
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roman</th>
<th>Roman</th>
<th>Roman</th>
<th>Roman</th>
<th>Roman</th>
<th>Roman</th>
<th>Roman</th>
<th>Roman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>w</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>d</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u/v</td>
<td>h</td>
<td></td>
<td>t</td>
<td>a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>th</td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>ae</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>ea</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>y</td>
<td></td>
<td>gh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>x/z</td>
<td>ng</td>
<td>k</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>kh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Note the Roman Characters
The Franks Casket, 8th century

© Wikimedia Commons
The Franks Casket, 8th century

© Wikimedia Commons
“The Husband’s Message”
“The Rune Poem”
Old English charms/spells
Old Norse

The Franks Casket, 8th century
© Wikimedia Commons
Runes are not sufficient

With the resurgence of Christianity (597 AD) move to a literate culture

The monks and priests needed to communicate with the rest of Europe and a means to do so
The Alphabet (Old English Style)

A a, Æ æ, B b, C c, D d, E e, F f, G g, H h, I i, K k, L l, M m, N n, O o, P p, R r, S s, T t, Þ þ, Ð ð, U u, W w, X x, Y y

* Q V Z appear in Latin, Roman numerals, and proper names
Problem Characters

* æ called asc, pronounced ‘a’ as in ‘cat’
* þ called thorn, pronounced ‘th’ (was originally a rune)
* ð ð called eth pronounced ‘th’
* ‘w’ was written Ƿ by the Anglo-Saxons but in modern editions appears as ‘w’ (because it’s too confusing)
\( W = \text{wyn (w)} \quad \text{eth (th)} \quad \text{thorn (th)} \quad \text{æ = ash (a)} \)
Key Questions

- hwænne? i.e. what period of history are we really talking about?
- hwa? i.e. who were the Anglo-Saxons?
- hwær? i.e. where did they come from and where did they go?
- hwæt? i.e. what is ‘Old English’
- hwi? i.e. why is this all so important?
Why is Old English so important?
Why is Old English so important?

- Because it is....
Why is Old English so important?
Why is Old English so important?

- Because it is....
Why is Old English so important?

- Because it is....
- Because it shows us where English comes from and how it relates to other languages - more next week
Why is Old English so important?
Why is Old English so important?

- Because it is....
Why is Old English so important?

- Because it is....
- Because it shows us where English comes from and how it relates to other languages
Why is Old English so important?

- Because it is....
- Because it shows us where English comes from and how it relates to other languages
- Because of what it tells us about the history, society, and geography of England
Culturally we live in Medieval-land
Wordle of P. Wormald’s ‘Anglo-Saxon Society and its Literature’ in Godden and Lapidge’s *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*
Cultural Importance
Cultural Importance
Cultural Importance

- The Staffordshire Hoard
Cultural Importance

- The Staffordshire Hoard
- Hopkins, Pound, Auden, Heaney, Jones, Hill, etc.
Cultural Importance

- The Staffordshire Hoard
- Hopkins, Pound, Auden, Heaney, Jones, Hill, etc.
- More in week 5
Cultural Importance

- The Staffordshire Hoard
- Hopkins, Pound, Auden, Heaney, Jones, Hill, etc.
- More in week 5
Summary
Summary

- Old English is the language and literature of the Anglo-Saxons
Summary

- Old English is the language and literature of the Anglo-Saxons
- Anglo-Saxons ruled England from c.450AD to the Norman Conquest (1066)
Summary

- Old English is the language and literature of the Anglo-Saxons
- Anglo-Saxons ruled England from c.450AD to the Norman Conquest (1066)
- Old English is directly related to Modern English (many of our words come from Old English)
Old English is the language and literature of the Anglo-Saxons

Anglo-Saxons ruled England from c.450AD to the Norman Conquest (1066)

Old English is directly related to Modern English (many of our words come from Old English)

Old English was first oral (with runic inscriptions) then used alphabet (with some special characters) writing on manuscripts
Old English is the language and literature of the Anglo-Saxons

Anglo-Saxons ruled England from c.450AD to the Norman Conquest (1066)

Old English is directly related to Modern English (many of our words come from Old English)

Old English was first oral (with runic inscriptions) then used alphabet (with some special characters) writing on manuscripts

Old English literature is culturally important
Conversational Old English: The Bar

- Twa beoras!
- Hwæt! Þin gangpytt is brocen.
- Cymest þu hier oft?
- Hwæt is Þin ferende-rim?
- Ut, nu!
Next week
Next week

- Translation workshop next wednesday 4.00!!!!
Next week

- Translation workshop next Wednesday 4.00!!!!
- Look at the handouts, and ask any questions
Next week

- Translation workshop next wednesday 4.00!!!!
- Look at the handouts, and ask any questions
- Find a poem called ‘The Ruin’ in translation
Next week

- Translation workshop next Wednesday 4.00!!!!
- Look at the handouts, and ask any questions
- Find a poem called ‘The Ruin’ in translation
- Why do we say ‘hound’, the Germans ‘hund’, but the French ‘chien’?
Next week

- Translation workshop next Wednesday 4.00!!!!
- Look at the handouts, and ask any questions
- Find a poem called ‘The Ruin’ in translation
- Why do we say ‘hound’, the Germans ‘hund’, but the French ‘chien’?
- Why do we use apostrophes in a phrase like the girl’s car?
Next week

- Translation workshop next wednesday 4.00!!!!
- Look at the handouts, and ask any questions
- Find a poem called ‘The Ruin’ in translation
- Why do we say ‘hound’, the Germans ‘hund’, but the French ‘chien’?
- Why do we use apostrophes in a phrase like the girl’s car?
- Why do people from the North say ‘nowt’ and ‘owt’?