

Beowulf: From Meadhall to Movie

Start date 6 March 2020**End date**

8 March 2020

Venue Madingley Hall Madingley
Cambridge
CB23 8AQ**Tutor** Professor Edward James**Course code**

1920NRX037

Director of ISP and LL

Sarah Ormrod

**For further information on this
course, please contact the Lifelong
Learning team**Zara Kuckelhaus, Fleur Kerrecoe
shortcourses@ice.cam.ac.uk or 01223 764637**To book**See: www.ice.cam.ac.uk or telephone 01223 746262

Tutor biography

Edward James is Emeritus Professor of Medieval History at University College Dublin. He has held Chairs of Medieval History at both Reading and UCD; before that he was in the Department of History at the University of York, and was Director of the Centre for Medieval Studies for five years.

His DPhil from Oxford was in early medieval archaeology, and he has always emphasised the importance of archaeology for understanding the history of this period, and vice versa. He has published numerous articles on the archaeology and history of early medieval Europe, focussing on France. His first book was *The Merovingian Archaeology of South-West Gaul* (1977), which was followed by an edited book on Visigothic Spain (1980), *The Origins of France* (1982), *The Franks* (1988), *Britain in the First Millennium* (2000) and *Europe's Barbarians* (2009). He is currently working on a book on a late sixth-century Frankish queen, Fredegund. In another life he is a science fiction and fantasy fan. He published *Science Fiction in the Twentieth Century* with Oxford UP in 1994, and co-edited *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction* (2003), which won a Hugo Award at the 2005 World Science Fiction Convention, and *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature* (2012). In 2014 he prepared an extensive website on "Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of the Great War", for which he was awarded the BSFA Best Non-Fiction Award.

Course programme

Friday

Please plan to arrive between 16:30 and 18:30. You can meet other course members in the bar which opens at 18:15. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

19:00	Dinner
20:30 – 22:00	Session 1: An Introduction to the <i>Beowulf</i> Poem: Language and Structure
22:00	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Saturday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Session 2: The Debates on Composition and Date
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Session 3: The Manuscript: BL Cotton Vitellius A.XV
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	Session 4: <i>Beowulf</i> Criticism: The State of the Art
18:00	Free
18:30	Dinner
20:00 - 21:30	Session 5: Tolkien and <i>Beowulf</i>
21:15	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Sunday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Session 6: <i>Beowulf</i> and the Modern Novel
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Session 7: <i>Beowulf</i> at the Movies
12:45	Lunch

The course will disperse after lunch

Course syllabus

Aims:

- to introduce *Beowulf* as a poem and as a source of academic controversy and debate
- to discuss the ways in which *Beowulf* has been tackled by academics
- to examine the ways in which *Beowulf* has served as a source of inspiration in the twentieth century and beyond.

Content:

The course is intended to be an introduction to the Old English poem *Beowulf* itself and to the various academic controversies that it has generated, but also an introduction to the way in which *Beowulf* has been brought into modern culture, as a translated poem and as an inspiration for novels, comic books and movies. J.R.R. Tolkien will be discussed as a pivotal figure, both as the most influential of *Beowulf* scholars but also as someone who used *Beowulf* as an inspiration for his own fantasies.

Presentation of the course:

Each session will be a mixture of presentation mingled with discussion. Everyone should bring along a translation of *Beowulf* to each class; if they are different translations (as they will be) that can help give rise to the problems of translating the text!

As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:

- demonstrate a knowledge of the actual text of *Beowulf*
- show an understanding of the main academic debates about *Beowulf*
- be aware of some of the most significant ways in which the poem has influenced modern culture.

Reading and resources list

Listed below are texts that might be of interest should you wish to supplement your learning on the course. Any essential reading is marked with an asterisk *

Reading a translation of *Beowulf* before the course would be useful, as would reading Tolkien's "*Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics*" (1936). There are numerous translations of the poem, in both verse and prose. If you are seriously interested in *Beowulf* then I would strongly recommend buying either *or both* of the Norton Critical editions. One has a prose translation by E. Talbot Donaldson, and the other has a verse translation by Seamus Heaney. Both of them have useful collections of secondary material, which do not overlap. (The Heaney one has a reprint of the Tolkien essay.) If anyone wants to delve into the language of the original, Michael Alexander's *Beowulf: A Glossed Text* (Penguin Classic) is one way of doing it: it has the whole text of the poem in Old English, with each word translated. R.D. Fulk, *The Beowulf Manuscript* (Harvard University Press, 2010) has the text of everything in the *Beowulf* manuscript with a facing translation.

Other useful reading:

Bjork, Robert E. and John D. Niles, eds. *A Beowulf Handbook* (University of Exeter Press, 1997)
Brey, Claire and Jo Storey, *Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms: Art, Word, War* (British Library 2018).
Clark, David. *Beowulf in Contemporary Culture* (Cambridge Scholars, 2020).
Godden, Malcolm, and Michael Lapidge, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, Second ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2013).
Kiernan, Kevin S. *Beowulf and the Beowulf Manuscript* (University of Michigan Press, 1997)
North, Richard, *The Origins of Beowulf, from Vergil to Wiglaf* (Oxford University Press, 2006)
Orchard, Andy, *A Critical Companion to Beowulf* (D.S. Brewer, 2003)
Shippey, T.A. and Andreas Haarder, eds, *Beowulf: The Critical Heritage* (Routledge, 1998)
Tolkien, J.R.R. *Beowulf: A Translation and Commentary* (HarperCollins, 2016)

The digital copy of the MS can be found at

http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=cotton_ms_vitellius_a_xv

Additional information

Venue

Details of how to find Madingley Hall can be found on our website:

<http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk/who-we-are/how-to-find-the-institute>

Refreshments

Tea and coffee and lunch will be provided. If you have any specific dietary requirements or allergies and have not already advised us, please inform our Admissions Team on ice.admissions@ice.cam.ac.uk or +44 (0)1223 746262.

Note Students of the Institute of Continuing Education are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current Institute course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

Information correct as of: 20 January 2020