

# Letteratura Inglese I- English Literature I

## Prof. Paola Della Valle

- Corso di Laurea in Lingue e Letterature Moderne – **L11**
- Insegnamento/Course **LIN 0107** – 9 credits -Students **A-L**
- Office hours: By appointment, in my virtual room on Webex:

<https://unito.webex.com/meet/paola.dellavalle>

- Send an email to: [paola.dellavalle@unito.it](mailto:paola.dellavalle@unito.it)
- [http://www.lingue.unito.it/do/docenti.pl/Show?\\_id=p\\_dellava](http://www.lingue.unito.it/do/docenti.pl/Show?_id=p_dellava) (my profile)

## Programme of the Course and Registration:

[https://www.lingue.unito.it/do/corsi.pl/Show?\\_id=07bc](https://www.lingue.unito.it/do/corsi.pl/Show?_id=07bc)

- [www.lingue.unito.it](http://www.lingue.unito.it)
- Studiare → insegnamenti → Corso di Laurea in Lingue e Letterature Moderne → Letteratura Inglese,
- Course code LIN 0107, Prof. Della Valle, (A –L)
- Programme
- At the bottom of the page:
  - 1 - **Icons: Materiale didattico** (course material)/ **Bacheca appelli** (exam dates)/ **Orario lezioni** (timetable) / **Access to Moodle**
  - 2 - Materiale didattico (icon with a treasure chest). NOT USED: Material will be loaded on Moodle)
  - 3 - Registrarsi/Please enrol in the course
  - 4 - Link to Moodle (directly from the icon or see next slide)

# Booking and Moodle

- The materials of the lessons (powerpoint slides, texts, short videos commenting the poems, will be posted on Moodle). Not the texts of the poems of the booklet (available at the copy-shop).
- **Access to Moodle:** from the icon at the bottom of the course page or directly through this link :  
<https://elearning.unito.it/lingue/course/view.php?id=87>

# Timetable (2024-25)

- **Lun-Mart-Merc 10-12/Mon-Tue-Wed 10-12 – Aldo Moro: Room S3 in the basement)**
- **60 hours (approximately) from February 2<sup>nd</sup> to April 30<sup>th</sup>**
- **Cancelled lesson: Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> Feb 2025.**
- **Easter holidays from 17<sup>th</sup> April to 22<sup>nd</sup> April included (cancelled lessons: 21<sup>st</sup> +22<sup>nd</sup> April)**
- **Other lessons will be announced in class, on the Department website and on Moodle.**
- **The (possible) break for the Graduation session will be communicated later**

# The exam consists of a General part + Text Analysis

- General part: from the origins to pre-Romanticism (the Eighteenth Century included)
- Book: P. Bertinetti, *English Literature. A Short History*, Piccola Biblioteca Einaudi (pp. 1-152)
- This part can be taken with an optional written multiple-choice test in presence (Esonero). There is only ONE ESONERO at each session. For the summer session: 8<sup>th</sup> May 2025 at 3 pm.
- It is always the first date (marked as written exam”) in the list of appelli

# Text Analysis 1: The Books

- W. Shakespeare, *Othello/Otello*, a cura di C. Pagetti (edizione con testo a fronte), Einaudi ,with Italian parallel translation
- W. Shakespeare, *La bisbetica domata*, a cura di I. Plescia (edizione con testo a fronte), Feltrinelli.
- Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko: or the Royal Slave*, Norton Critical Edition (suggested edition) or Einaudi with Italian parallel text (suggested edition, with comment of Maria Antonietta Saracino)
- D. Defoe, *Moll Flanders*, Penguin (suggested edition)
- H. Fielding, *Joseph Andrews*, Penguin (suggested edition)
- Samuel Richardson, *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded* , una selezione (edizione da decidere).
- Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Penguin

# Text Analysis 2: The Poems

- A collection of poems. You can buy the booklet (dispensa) at: L'Angolo della copia, C. S. Maurizio 22 oppure L'Angolo della Tesi, Complesso Aldo Moro, V. S. Ottavio 18.
- For a digital copy:
- Phone: 011-8600206/011-8391085
- Email: [angolodellacopia@gmail.com](mailto:angolodellacopia@gmail.com) oppure [angolodellatesi@gmail.com](mailto:angolodellatesi@gmail.com)

# Exams and material

- 1 **optional** written test on the general part (esonero) for every session. The esonero is the first date in every session (e.g. 8<sup>th</sup> May 2025). The grade of the **esonero lasts for one year (from one session to the same session the next year)**
- 2 or 3 oral 'appelli' on the texts every session.
- OR All the programme orally in the oral appelli
- Oral exams: 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 6<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> June, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2025.



# The Anglo-Saxons

And Beowulf

# Important dates

- The Roman legions start leaving Britain in the second half of 300 A.D.
- The withdrawal is completed in 410 A.D. under Emperor Honorius
- 476 A.D.: official fall of the Roman Empire
- 450 A.D. (ca): The Angles, Saxons and Jutes begin conquest and settlement of Britain
- 597 A.D.: A mission from Rome, led by Augustine and sent by Pope Gregory I, begins to spread Christianity in England.
- Augustine of Canterbury is not Augustine of Hippo (Ippona) (354 – 430 ), theologian, philosopher and author of the *Confessions*.

# Britannia versus England

- **Britannia/Brittannia:** name given by the Romans to their colony. It comes from ‘Pritani’ or ‘Pretani’, meaning “tattooed folk” or “the painted ones”, in the Celtic language known as Common Brittonic or Proto-Brittonic.
- Great Britain = Great Land of the Tattooed people.
- **England:** name given by the Anglo-Saxons = Land of the Angles.

# The Anglo-Saxons first came in 449 A.D. (according to the Venerable Bede)

- The Angles → District of Angeln, Northern Germany (or Southern Sweden?)
- The Saxons → Saxony, Northern Germany
- The Jutes → Jutland, Denmark
- Who lived in Britain before the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons?
- The Romanised Celts (the **Britons**)

See: <https://www.ourmigrationstory.org.uk/>

# Before the Anglo-Saxons arrived (I)

- Stonehenge, about 3,000-2500 B.C. (Iberians?)

An astronomical laboratory? A pre-historical meeting-point for the seasonal gatherings of lowlands tribes? Later used as a druid temple? A monument to the ancestral dead? We don't know.

- 700 B.C. the first Celts appeared in Britain from North-West Germany . Celtic dialects → Gaelic (Scotland, Ireland) and Welsh (Wales)
- 55-54 B.C. Julius Caesar first invaded Britain – his campaigns are narrated in *De Bello Gallico*. First diplomatic and trading links with Rome
- In 43 A.D. , under Emperor Claudius, Britain became a colony of the Roman Empire. Real conquest.

# Before the Anglo-Saxons Arrived (II)

- Emperor Constantine the first Roman Emperor to convert to Christianity . The Edict of Milan (313 A.D.) declared tolerance for Christianity in the Roman Empire.
- In 380 A.D., under Emperor Theodosius, the Christian religion is the official religion of the Roman Empire.
- The Romanized Celts (the Britons) became Christian. The Celtic cross = a symbol of syncretism.
- 410 A.D. Complete withdrawal of Roman Legions from Britain. Official fall of the Roman Empire 476 A.D.
- 5th century (throughout 400 A.D.) : some Germanic tribes (Anglo-Saxons and Jutes) arrived in England and forced the Celts to move west and north (Cornwall, Wales, Scotland, Ireland).

# Stonehenge and the Celtic Cross



# Old English period (700-1150)

- this term refers to Germanic dialects spoken by Jutes, Angles and Saxons: Kentish, West-Saxon, Mercian and Northumbrian
- the West-Saxon reign was the most important religious, military and cultural centre in England - **King Alfred**
- West-Saxon was considered the first standard written language, associated with political, military and cultural power in society



# The Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy



# Anglo-Saxon language or Old English

- Inflectional endings of nouns (noun declensions)
- Verbs are conjugated
- Infinitives of the verbs: gongan, drincan
- Stress of words is as near the beginning as possible
- Old English: 700-1150

# King Alfred

- King of Wessex from 871 to c. 886 and king of the Anglo-Saxons from c. 886 to 899.
- Spent several years fighting Viking invasions. He won a decisive victory in the Battle of Edington in 878 and made an agreement with them.
- He believed Viking raids were a divine punishment for the people's sins, and he attributed these to the decline of learning, for only through learning could men acquire wisdom and live in accordance with God's will
- → He promoted literacy among his people

# Among King Alfred's translations

- *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, by the English historian Bede (also known as Venerable Bede or St. Bede, ca 673–735)
- The *Pastoral Care* of St. Gregory I
- the *Soliloquies* of the 5th-century theologian St. Augustine of Hippo.
- Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*.
- Though not Alfred's work, he supported the birth of *the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, one of the greatest sources of information about Saxon England, which began to be circulated about 890.

# Abbreviations

- A. D. = Anno Domini
- b. C. = before Christ
- c. or ca. = circa = about
- i. e. = id est= cioè
- e.g. = exempli gratia = ad esempio

# Beowulf

- Scandinavian Epic **set in the 5<sup>th</sup>** century
- Oral literature
- When was it **written down?**
- **After 6th century** – St. Augustine of Canterbury (597)
- introduction of the Latin alphabet and abandonment of the Runic alphabet by the Anglo-Saxons
- **It was written down between 7<sup>th</sup> century and 10<sup>th</sup> century**
- from the 9th to the 11th centuries many manuscripts were translated from Latin into Old English (clerks, King Alfred)
- Latin and Greek gave Old English a wide range of Gospel words related to religion and spirituality

# Words connected to the Anglo-Saxon world and Beowulf

- Scop = Anglo-Saxon bard, poet.
- Mead-hall (mead = idromele, a drink made of honey): it was the centre of the village.
- The pagan world exalted:
  - Loyalty to one's family, kin or leader (family honour and bond between the lord and his people)
  - Obligation to lord and guests
  - Physical courage
  - Importance of fate
  - Search of glory in this life

# Good videos on Beowulf

- 60sec Recap (Overview; Part 1: The Cast; Part 2: Characters; Theme 1; Theme 2; Beowulf motifs)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xgK\\_sunbD6E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xgK_sunbD6E)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yMZvBjDDs9w>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JXYU1j-Lzgw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Z--xTd1ZSA>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7nX5l8vrBXw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bQ9o6TBPBv8>



# Poetic Devices in Anglo-Saxon Poetry

- **Kenning**: A formulaic phrase that is used in place of a name or noun (swan road=sea), similar to an epithet
- **No rhyme**
- **Alliteration**: the repetition of consonant sounds especially at the beginning of several words or syllables that are close together: e.g. "Round the rugged rocks the ragged rascal ran"
- **Assonance**: the repetition of vowel sounds in several words or parts of word: e.g. back / hat
- **Stress**
- Each line was divided into two halves by a break or caesura and had 4 stresses
- **Litotes** /'laɪtəʊˌtiːz/ : an understatement in which an affirmative is stated by negating its opposite.
- For example: the food is not bad; they aren't the happiest couple around.
- **Metonymy**: the act of referring to something using a word that describes one of its qualities or features (the wood/bark for the ship).

# Kennings

***“The hoard-guardian”***

(the guardian of the treasure = the monster)

**“the bent-necked wood” and “the ringed prow”**

(The ship)

**“the swan-road” and “the whale-road”**

(The sea)

**“The storm of swords”**

(the battle)

# Anglo-Saxon literary genres

- Epic (*Beowulf*)
- Elegiac /ɛlɪ'dʒaɪək/ (“The Wanderer”, “The Seafarer”)
- Religious (Caedmon’s poems /'kædmən/, Cynewulf’s poems /kɪnɪ,wʊlf/, *The Dream of the Rood*)
- The Riddle
- Prose Work:
- King Alfred’s translations from Latin (St Augustine’s *Soliloquies*, St Gregory’s *Rules for Pastors*, Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History*)
- *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*
- (it was continued up to 1154)
- King Alfred of Wessex’s reign from 871 to 899

# Epic vs Elegy

- Epic deals with the recollection of a glorious past in the national history of a country, the praise of the brave deeds of heroes, the lament at their death.
- It is a heroic and military society.
- Supernatural folktales and mythological events.
- Didactic aim (celebration of the heroic ethic)

- A lyrical poem, generally in the form of a dramatic monologue. An isolated speaker laments his loss of friendship or favour or past splendour. Man = metaphor of humankind
- An individual's loss rather than a collective story
- Anglo-Saxon imagination is haunted by the possible dissolution of the clan due to internal conflict or external attack. Vulnerability
- Melancholic mood

# Beowulf (ca. 8th cent.)

- Beowulf is athane (nobleman) of the Geats /gei:ts/ or /gi:ts/ (Geatland = southern Sweden, ruled by King Hygelac /hiəlk/). Beowulf leaves his country to help a kindred population, the Danes. A terrible monster, called Grendel, frightens them making raids and ransacking the mead-hall.
- Beowulf confronts and kills the monster and his mother. Later on he becomes king of the Geats. His final deed is the killing of a fire-breathing dragon but he is mortally wounded, too.

# Christian elements added later

- References to Old Testament
- Grendel belongs to the race of Cain
- Beowulf prays the creator of all things, the ruler of the heavens
- God's will replaces fate