

## German and Its Closest Relatives: The Origins of the Germanic Languages

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Denny 330

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MW 12:30 - 13:30pm  
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### Course Description

The legend goes that only one vote prevented German from becoming the official language of the colonies that predated the USA. Despite being opponents in this case, German and English share common features and a linguistic genealogy. This class offers an introduction to the origins of these two languages and their closest relatives with a special focus on the sociolinguistic context. Over the course of the quarter, students will familiarize themselves with Old High German, Old English, Gothic, Old Norse, Old Saxon, and Old Low Franconian regarding their linguistic features, the people who spoke it, and the literature they produced. Students will acquire an understanding of the origins of these Germanic languages starting with Proto-Indo-European. In addition, over the course of the quarter, students will gain familiarity with patterns of language and language changes, and will be able to reconstruct the relationship of some modern languages, such as English and German. As part of their projects, students will bring diverse historic voices into dialogue within the framework of digital media and create an online exhibition about objects of significance for the history of these Germanic languages.

### Learning Goals

By the end of the quarter students will have encountered six predecessors of contemporary Germanic languages and, in the process, will have gained a better understanding of their interconnectedness and language change. They will have explored these languages regarding their morphology and speakers. These overall objectives encompass many particular goals as well. Students will have developed a better understanding of language change and written language systems. As a result of this class, students should be able to understand similarities in modern Germanic languages, such as English and German, work in teams, translate their knowledge through group work and individual research by applying questions of language change to a variety of cultural contexts.

### Readings available at UW bookstore:

Robinson, Orrin W. *Old English and Its Closest Relatives: A Survey of the Earliest Germanic Languages*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford UP, 1992.

### Material available on Canvas (as PDF or via direct link)

- Crystal, David. "The End of Old English?" In *Beowulf and Other Stories*, 520-529.
- Kriston, Capps. "Word Up! D.C. Will Get a Museum of Linguistics." (Citylab, 01/26/2017).
- McKenzie, Steven. "Face of Orkney's St. Magnus reconstructed." (BBC, 02/08/2017).
- O'Connell, Jonathan. "Philanthropist Ann Friedman picked to turn D.C.'s Franklin School into 'Planet Word.'" (Washington Post, 01/25/2017).
- Otfried of Weissenburg. "Introduction." *Gospel Harmony*.
- Sanders, Ruth. "Germanic Beginnings." In *German. Biography of a Language*, 9-42.
- Tolley, Clive. "Old English Influence on *The Lord of the Rings*." In *Beowulf and Other Stories: A New Introduction to Old English, Old Icelandic*, ed. By Joe Allard, Richard North, 38-62.
- Young, Robert J. C. "That Which Is Casually Called a Language." In *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* (October 2016), 1207-1221.

### Team Learning

This class is taught in the team learning approach. Students will join groups of 5-6 members and work together as a cohesive learning team throughout the quarter. We will use a variety of interactive formats in class including lecture, team discussions, and presentation of team projects. Students are expected to attend each class period with all assignments completed by the beginning of class and ready to engage with the topic of the day. On a regular basis, students will undergo a thorough readiness assurance process to ensure that they are accountable as individuals. The Readiness Assurance Test (RAT) consists of questions about a set of pre-assigned readings. Students will take this test twice, once as individuals, and again as teams. Both tests will be scored as soon as possible for immediate feedback. A large amount of class time will be devoted to the discussion of the readings and to task-based assignments that apply the critical concepts from the readings and discussions to projects. Team members will evaluate each other's contributions to the team in a peer-assessment process.

### Requirements and Grading

In addition to reading and preparing all materials before class, each student is expected to:

- participate in class discussions and group activities
- complete all the assignments described below

Your course grade will be calculated in the following way:

- Readiness Assurance Test: **20%**
  - 3 individual RATs (50%)
  - 3 group RATs (50%)
- Adopted Language Presentation: **25%**
- Curated Exhibition: **25%**
- Social Media Project: **20%**
- Participation: **10%**

Because each assignment builds upon the previous one, *no late work will be accepted*.

### Participation and Class Room Environment

The success of this class depends on you sharing your thoughts and questions. Don't be shy and share your insights with all – this classroom serves as a space to discuss and learn together. To ensure the success and provide a safe environment for everybody, all discussions are expected to be conducted in a respectful manner and in a professional behavior. Diverse experiences and perspectives have an important place in our classroom. We intent to present material in a respectful way regarding gender, sexuality, disability, socioeconomic status, age, culture, ethnicity, race, and disability. Let's create a welcoming and respectful learning environment together. By participating in this class you are committing to establishing this classroom as a safe environment for everybody. No discriminatory and disrespectful behavior will be tolerated.

### Accommodations

UW is committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. If you have documented physical, psychological, or learning disability on file with UW, you may be eligible for reasonable academic accommodations to help you succeed in this course. If you have a documented disability that requires accommodation, please notify us within the first two weeks of the semester so that we may make appropriate arrangements early in the semester. (Additionally, if you have not done so, please register with DRS <http://depts.washington.edu/uwdrs>)

### Communication and Office Hours

- Communication that is related to class should happen via the Canvas conversation tool (use the link on the side on your Canvas link called "Inbox"). The instructors will try to respond to your messages within 24 hours of receipt during the week. If you email the instructors on Friday after 5pm, you may

not get any response until Monday.

- We will communicate with you via Canvas. Please set your notifications on your account accordingly to get notified about important messages!
- If you message us a question that might concern the whole class, we will post it on Canvas.
- Sign up for office hours with Prof. Oehme with the reason for your visit here: <https://oehme.youcanbook.me>. For office hours with John Kretzer, send a brief email. This allows us to serve you best.

### Readings and Homework

Always bring your book or text (printed) to class. Please prepare readings on Canvas by printing them and reading them actively (make notes, summaries, marks on the paper).

### Assignments

- Adopted Language Presentation: In a small group, students will give a ten-minute presentation on a modern language that developed out of one of the six historic languages explored in the course. This presentation will help the individual students and the whole class to understand the connections to contemporary languages. The presentation will be accompanied by sound samples and a handout for the class.
- Social Media Project: Working in their assigned team, students will create an imaginary interaction between Wufila and Otfried of Weissenburg within the framework of a social media platform of their choice. This project will help students to comprehend the consequences and choices of textualization of formerly oral vernacular languages. The projects will be submitted on Canvas and presented to peers in a fair style.
- Curated Exhibition: As a final project, the teams will conceptualize an exhibit for a linguistic museum. This project will make students rethink the relevance of studying historic stages of languages for a modern audience. The project will be submitted on Canvas and presented in the final class session of this quarter.

### Academic Integrity

In a case of plagiarism or cheating, the instructors will follow UW's procedures and report the case.

### Schedule

Mon, March 27:	<b>Introduction</b>
Wed, March 29:	<b>Modern and Premodern Language Conceptions</b> Read: Young, Robert J. C. "That Which Is Casually Called a Language."
Fri, March 31:	<b>Proto-Indo-European</b> Read: Sanders, Ruth. "Germanic Beginnings."
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Mon, April 3:	<b>From Proto-Indo-European to Germanic</b>
Wed, April 5:	<b>Germanic</b> Read: Robinson, 1-42
Fri, April 7:	<b>Germanic</b>
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Mon, April 10:	<b>Gothic</b> Read: Robinson, 43-68
Wed, April 12:	<b>Gothic</b>
Fri, April 14:	<b>Old High German</b> Read: Robinson, 222-246 <u>Quiz</u>

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Mon, April 17:	<b>Old High German</b>
Wed, April 19:	<b>Old High German</b> Read: Otfried of Weissenburg. "Introduction."
Fri, April 21:	<b>Old High German</b> (Presentations: <a href="#">German</a> , <a href="#">Yiddish</a> )

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Mon, April 24:	<b>Old Norse</b> Read: Robinson, 67-99
Wed, April 26:	<b>Old Norse</b> Read: McKenzie, Steven. "Face of Orkney's St. Magnus reconstructed." (Presentations: <a href="#">Norwegian</a> , <a href="#">Danish</a> .)
Fri, April 28:	<b>Old Norse</b> (Presentations: <a href="#">Swedish</a> , <a href="#">Icelandic</a> , <a href="#">Faroese</a> )

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Mon, May 01:	<b>Old Saxon</b> Read: Robinson, 100-135
Wed, May 03:	<b>Old Saxon</b> (Presentations: <a href="#">Afrikaans</a> , ( <a href="#">Low German</a> ))
Fri, May 05:	<b>Team Project 1 Presentation: Otfrid &amp; Wulfila</b>

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Mon, May 08:	<b>Team Project 2: A Museum of Linguistics</b> Read: Kriston, Capps. "Word Up!"; O'Connell, Jonathan. "Philanthropist Friedman picked to turn D.C.'s Franklin School into 'Planet Word.'"
Wed, May 10:	<b>Old English</b> Read: Robinson, 136-175
Fri, May 12:	<b>Old English</b> Read: Tolley, Clive. "Old English Influence on <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> ." <a href="#">Quiz</a>

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Mon, May 15:	<b>Old English</b> Read: Crystal, David. "The End of Old English?"
Wed, May 17:	<b>Old Frisian</b> Read: Robinson, 176-198
Fri, May 19:	<b>Old Frisian</b> (Presentation: <a href="#">Frisian</a> )

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Mon, May 22:	<b>Old Low Franconian</b> Read: Robinson, 199-221
Wed, May 24:	<b>Old Low Franconian</b> (Presentation: <a href="#">Dutch</a> )
Fri, May 26:	<b>Wrap-Up Session</b> <a href="#">Quiz</a>

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<del>Mon, May 29:</del>	Memorial Day
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Wed, May 31:           **Team Project 2 Presentation**

Fri, June 2:           **Team Project 2 Presentation**

**A note about respectfulness**

Please arrive on time for class. If you fear that you will be consistently late, due to your preceding class's distance from ours, let us know this as soon as possible.

Please don't call us by our first name; use Dr. or Prof. Oehme and Mr. Kretzer.

Finally, it is really rude to text and email in class or check social media, and it's distracting to the people around you. Please don't.

**Disclaimer**

"A class is a process, an independent organism with its own goals and dynamics. It is always something more than even the most imaginative lesson plan can predict." (Thomas P. Kasulis)

Your learning is our principal concern. As a class we may discover that we want to spend more time on certain topics and less time on others. We will consider changing the schedule if such a change would benefit most students' learning in the course. Therefore, this syllabus is subject to change.