

## SENSORVEILEDNING

### Course

ENG2156 – History of the English Language

### Course content

The course offers an introduction to English language history, paying attention to language changes, language contact, and the development into a modern national language in particular. An introduction is also given to the main characteristics of Old English and Middle English.

### Learning outcome

Upon completion of this course, students will:

- have a fair knowledge of the main lines of development of written English from approximately 700 AD to modern times.
- know the most important changes in the fields of phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics.
- know the basic structure of Old English, Middle English and Early Modern English grammar; to this end, students will have studied the most central characteristics of the language of the syllabus texts.
- be able to describe and date linguistic changes.

### Examination

Oral examination for about 30 minutes per candidate.

### Textbook

Richard Hogg & David Denison, eds. *A History of the English Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

A compendium containing notes on OE and ME, as well as select texts with glossaries, compiled by G.F. Stenbrenden.

### Spring 2021

In the instalment of the course that has run in the spring term of 2021, classes have covered chapters 1–5 of the Hogg & Denison volume and every Compendium text. The chapters address phonology, morphology, syntax, vocabulary, and standardisation. The focus has been on reading the Compendium primary texts, rather than on reading the chapters. The students have used the textbook as a reference work.

The students have written two papers. Both papers have consisted of two parts. Part 1 has asked for a description of a major development in the history of the English language and part 2 has asked the students to date two shorter, previously unseen, passages on linguistic grounds. For the first paper, the Part 1 development was the levelling of the inflectional marking of subjunctive mood and the concomitant rise of the modals; for the second paper, the Part 1 development was the Great Vowel Shift. For Part 2, the short texts were respectively, late Old English, early Middle English and two times Early Modern English (early seventeenth century).

The examination format will be an oral exam (20–25 mins of examination plus 5 mins for the committee to agree on a mark and give the student feedback). The student will be presented with one or more random sentences, representing Early West Saxon through till seventeenth-century English. The sentences will be thoroughly glossed. The student will be given a short time to prepare and will then be asked to date the sentences and give a linguistic justification for their chosen date. The students have been encouraged first to perform a crude identification of the period based on such simple features as the presence/absence of (editorially inserted) macrons to mark vowel length, dots for palatalised g and c, thorn, and edh, before giving a more detailed commentary. Doing so will constitute a minimum requirement. The student who fully masters the syllabus will be able to recognise an adequate selection of the sentences' linguistic features and situate them in the context of the history of the English language in a general way. Such a student may, however, not be expected to elaborate on causality as the course has had descriptive focus.