

GMAN S207/LITR S180
Winter is Coming: Heroic Legends of Northern Europe
Syllabus

Session B, Yale Summer Session, 2018 (2 July – 3 August)

Instructor: William Whobrey

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Office hours: TBD

Meeting times and place: MWF 1.00-3.15; TBD

Course Description: This course examines the Northern European epic literature of the Middle Ages to draw conclusions both to the use of anachronistic heroic types in an elite culture of developing courtly norms as well as the apparent timelessness of certain narratives that extoll individual honor and collective loyalty. The Old English *Beowulf* and Old Norse *Saga of the Volsungs* give us insight into previous oral forms of epic, while the Middle High German adaptation in the *Nibelungenlied* reveals a final shift to a book culture within a fully christianized context. Lastly we will compare and contrast this literature with contemporary forms of “medieval” epic, notably the work of J.R.R. Tolkien and Martin’s *Game of Thrones*, which use the themes and characters of a past northern culture in their own examination of the present.

Required texts:

Beowulf: An Illustrated Edition, trans. Seamus Heaney, New York/London: Norton, 2008. ISBN: 978-0393330106

The Nibelungenlied, with the Klage, trans. William Whobrey, Cambridge, Mass: Hackett, 2018. ISBN: 978-1-62466-675-9

The Saga of the Volsungs, with the Saga of Ragnar Lothbrok, trans. Jackson Crawford, Cambridge, Mass: Hackett, 2017. ISBN: 978-1624666339

More information can be found at: <https://tinyurl.com/GMAN-207-1-B18>

Films: HBO series *Game of Thrones*, Season One; based on George R. R. Martin, *The Game of Thrones*. London: Harper, 1996. [provided]

Note: The HBO *Game of Thrones* series is rated TV-MA (Mature Audiences). This rating states that “Some content may be unsuitable for children under 17.”

Course Requirements: Final paper (10-12 pp.), to be handed in at the end of the session (40%); reading preparations and participation (20%); short (15 minute) oral report (20%); in-class mid-term exam (20%).

Weekly Reading and Assignments Schedule:

Week One

Monday, 2 July: *Beowulf*, vv. 1-1007 (pp. 3-67)

Wednesday, 4 July: *Beowulf*, vv. 1007-2199 (pp. 67-147)

Friday, 6 July: *Beowulf*, vv. 2200-3182 (pp. 147-209)

Week Two

Monday, 9 July: *The Saga of the Volsungs*, chs. 1-21 (pp. 1-41)

Wednesday, 11 July: *The Saga of the Volsungs*, chs. 22-42 (pp. 41-83)

Friday, 13 July: *The Saga of Ragnar Lothbrok* (pp. 85-133)

Week Three

Monday, 16 July: Mid-term exam in class

Wednesday, 18 July: *The Older Lay of Hildebrand* (text provided), vv. 1-68

Friday, 20 July: *The Epic of the Nibelungen (Nibelungenlied)*, chs. 1-10 (pp. 1-58)

Week Four

Monday, 23 July: *Nibelungenlied*, chs. 11-19 (pp. 58-94)

Wednesday, 25 July: *Nibelungenlied*, chs. 20-27 (pp. 95-140)

Friday, 27 July: *Nibelungenlied*, chs. 28-38 (pp. 140-190)

Week Five

Monday, 30 July: *Game of Thrones*, episodes 1-3

Wednesday, 1 August: *Game of Thrones*, episodes 4-7

Friday, 3 August: *Game of Thrones*, episodes 8-10 ; Final paper due, NLT 5.00 p.m.

Please note: cell phones must be powered off during class time and wireless connections on laptops and tablets must be disabled.

Current as of 3/29/18