**Course description**

In this course we will use Peter S. Baker’s (unpublished) translation into Old English of the first chapters of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* as a fun way to access the fundamentals of Old English, i.e. English language in the Anglo-Saxon period, before it was drastically altered by Romance influence from c.1100 onwards.

Apart from more profound knowledge about the roots of the English language than that provided by the survey course at 200-level, the study of Old English will also offer increased awareness about general linguistics principles and mechanisms of linguistic change.

Parts of the *Hærrig Pottere* text will be studied more closely; others you will have to examine on your own or they will merely serve as sources for additional examples of specific grammatical or lexical phenomena.

An apparent drawback of using a translation of a modern text is that potentially, it may not always represent ‘genuine’, idiomatic Old English. However, from a pedagogical point of view, there may also be considerable advantages – also apart from the fact that with a Present-Day English version available, understanding the content should generally present few problems. For one thing, the sentence structure of the source text is far less complex than that found in many of the preserved Old English records. Also, it can be expected that the language of the translation is more standardised and consistent than what is typically the case for texts produced in Anglo-Saxon times, which typically exhibit a fair amount of variation in spelling, morphology and syntax.

To examine this last claim, we will compare certain aspects of the translation (e.g. spelling and word order) with those found in a text originally composed in Old English, the so-called Oththere episode, and with descriptions of Old English as found in the linguistic literature.

The original Harry Potter books are well-known for their linguistic creativity, which offers a challenge for any translation. However, a translation into Old English faces the additional trial of rendering also familiar modern concepts that were not part of the Anglo-Saxon universe (*cars?* *traffic jam?* *telephone?* *chocolate frogs?* or even *tea*?). Baker’s
proposed translations here will serve to highlight the word formation processes of Old English – a stage when the language was more prone to exploit the resources of existing vocabulary than to adopt loans from other languages.

Though current translation theory will not be specifically addressed, the text should also provide abundant food for thought for those interested in translation and translation studies.

Students are expected to participate actively, both in class – including individual or group presentations – and by self-study of the primary text, using secondary sources as reference works.

Some prior knowledge of Old English, e.g. from the History of English component of ENG211/251 is a definite advantage, but not an absolutely necessary prerequisite. However, in the latter case you must be prepared to make an extra effort.

The assessment at the end of term will be in the form of a one week paper (“take-home exam”) of 3,000 ord (±10%) words.

Reading list
For those who want to prepare in advance (and who wouldn’t?), I suggest starting with the basic text book for the course, Baker 2012. You will probably find that it is rather too simple for you in terms of basic grammatical analysis (you can safely skip the sections with examples from Present-Day English, including the whole of chapter 3), but it is a very good basic introduction to Old English.

Most sources are available at UiB library. Sources prefixed by \( ^L \) will also be available electronically in the Literature Kiosk at MittUiB, and those prefixed by \(^O\) can be downloaded via oria.no; sources marked with an asterisk will be made available under Files at MittUiB.

1. Obligatory reading

Primary text
Please note: This is an unpublished work, made available for the use of the ENG343 course by the kind permission of the translator, who has the copyright. Thus no part of this text should be diffused outside the context of this course, electronically or otherwise, without the author’s permission.
Electronic versions of the Present-Day English source text can be found online, e.g. at http://www2.sdfi.edu.cn/netclass/jiaoan/englit/download/Harry%20Potter%20and%20the%20Sorcerer's%20Stone.pdf

Basic text book
We will only be using the phonology and grammar chapters of this book, but you may find other sections useful too, e.g. the glossary at the end of the Anthology.
You may also want to acquire a password for access to the Old English Aerobics website, with texts and exercises: http://www.oldenglishaerobics.net/anthology.html.
Additional Old English text

*From the *Voyages of Ohthere*. In Haugland, Kari E. & Kurt Rydland (eds). 2015. Early English texts. Department of foreign languages, University of Bergen, pp. 2–8. [The text is also available at Peter Baker’s *Old English Aerobics* web site.]

This text will not be examined in detail, but certain aspects of it will serve as a basis for comparison with the *Hærrig Potere* translation.

**Brief overview**


**Grammar (for reference)**


**Phonology**

In addition to chapter 2 in Baker 2012 (see *Basic text book* above):


**Vocabulary and word formation**


**Syntax/word order**


2. Suggested reference works

**Dictionaries**


**General**


**Grammar/syntax**


**Morphology**


**Phonology**