

Reading the Past: the History of Written English (MLI325)

This module covers the history of the English language from the beginnings to the present day. It combines the study of language history with a specific focus on the written evidence, and on the social context of language change. We look at what texts were like in the past, who produced and read them, and how changes in language and literacy interact with social and technological change. We also address the question of present-day uses of the past: how much can we know about past languages, and how can we apply and communicate the findings of historical research? At the same time, the course provides a solid, practical introduction to earlier stages of English and addresses the major linguistic developments from Old to Present-Day English.

Course description for study year 2022-2023. Please note that changes may occur.

Facts

Course code

MLI325

Version

1

Credits (ECTS)

15

Semester tuition start

Spring

Number of semesters

1

Exam semester

Spring

Language of instruction

English

Offered by

[Faculty of Arts and Education,](#)
[Department of Cultural Studies and](#)
[Languages](#)

Time table

[View course schedule](#)

Content

The module provides an outline of the historical development of written English from the Anglo-Saxon period to the present day, with a particular focus on issues such as standardization and the use of written texts as linguistic evidence. The module relates the history of written English to the history of literacy and text production in the English-speaking world.

Learning outcome

Knowledge:

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The student will gain knowledge of:

The traditional periods of the history of the English language and the historical, cultural and technological developments that mark them

The main linguistic characteristics of Old, Middle, Early Modern and Late Modern English

The major linguistic and sociolinguistic changes in the history of English, with specific reference to the written evidence

The linguistic characteristics and historical context of specific texts chosen for study

Text production, major genres and literacy practices in the different periods

Skills:

By the end of the course, the student will be able to:

Explain the traditional periodization of English, with reference to social, cultural and technological change, and point out the major characteristics of English in the different periods

Translate and comment in detail on the language of selected texts representing Old, Middle and Early Modern English. Comment on the language of an unseen text in an informed way, placing it in the correct historical period

Describe major linguistic and sociolinguistic changes in the history of English and refer to well-known theories and controversies about them

Consider critically the written evidence for our knowledge of the history of English

Pursue a research topic dealing with historical texts

General competence:

Read historical English texts with better fluency and understanding
Understand better the complexities of present-day English language
Introduce a historical awareness into her/his own work (e.g. English teaching)

Required prerequisite knowledge

None

Exam

Written home assignment and written exam

Form of assessment	Weight	Duration	Marks	Aid
Written home assignment	1/3		Letter grades	All
Written exam	2/3	4 Hours	Letter grades	None permitted

Written assignment: 2500 words (+/- 500), not including reference list. In the assessment, English language and academic writing skills will be taken into consideration in addition to the course content.

Coursework requirements

Seminars, 75% attendance, Two short written assignments

Attendance at seminars is obligatory. Students who are absent from more than 25% of the seminar meetings will not be allowed to take part in the exam. The student has to be present for at least 2/3 of the duration of the individual seminar meeting for attendance to be

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The students are to submit three written assignments during the course, at the dates specified at the start of the semester for each submission. The first two are not graded, but students will receive feedback.

Students who get one or more assignment assessed as not approved at their first attempt, are given one opportunity to hand in a revised assignment.

Course teacher(s)

Course coordinator: [Oliver Martin Traxel](#)

Course teacher: [Sonya Louise Lundblad](#)

Programme coordinator: [Signe Ekenberg](#)

Method of work

Lectures and seminars

Overlapping courses

Course	Reduction (SP)
English Writing from Runes to SMS (MLI310_1)	5
Literacy from a Production Perspective (MLI100_1)	5
English Writing: Function, Form and Change (MLI315_1)	5

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Course assessment

The UiS quality system involves student evaluation of all courses.

Literature

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