Course Description
The earliest works in our language are a melange of monster stories and mayhem, battlefield blunders, laments of the lost, road trip ribaldry, heroics and heartbreak. In this course students will explore the masterworks of early British literature through selected readings, engaged discussion, and experiential activity. Course material will be supplemented and enhanced by expert guest lectures and by field trips to important sites in London and nearby.

Course Objectives
- review the Roman and Anglo-Saxon history of Britain
- understand the Anglo-Saxon warrior code
- recognize the devices of Old English poetry
- examine the blending of Christian and pagan elements in OE poetry
- explore the idea of “estates satire” and its connection to modern social criticism
- study the concept of chivalry and its relationship to Arthurian legend
- explore English nationalism through Elizabethan drama

Texts
Norton Anthology of English Literature, 8th edition, Volume A (The Middle Ages)
This text is available from Amazon beginning at $.01 plus shipping. It contains all but one of our readings*. It is a slender volume, 6x9 and less than one-inch thick (easy to pack).

Henry V, Shakespeare (commonly available in paperback and online)

Tentative Reading List
- Beowulf, selections (Seamus Heaney translation)
- The Dream of the Rood
- The Wanderer
- The Battle of Maldon*
- Sir Gawain and the Green Knight
- The Canterbury Tales: General Prologue, Wife of Bath’s Prologue, Wife of Bath’s Tale
- Morte d’Arthur (selections)
- Henry V

Possible Guest Lectures
- Britain’s Ancient History
- Development of Arthurian Legend
- Medieval Chivalry

London Site Visits
- Museum of London
- British Museum
- British Library
- Tower of London
- Globe Theater
- Westminster Abbey

Day Trip Possibilities
Canterbury
Battle/Hastings
Warwick Castle
Stratford-Upon-Avon
Evaluation

25%  Participation and Preparation: mandatory attendance, promptness, and positive involvement at all class sessions, guest lectures and field trips; daily homework including writing prompts or creating class discussion questions

25%  Reflection: students will keep a journal recording their impressions of each site visit, not a “what we did” diary but a thoughtful monologue of expectation, reaction, and connection with our class discussions

20%  Final Exam: some identifications, but mostly comprehensive, with an emphasis on integration and evolution of common themes

30%  Research Project: students will pick an element from one of the major texts (Beowulf, SGGK, Canterbury Tales, Morte d’Arthur, Henry V) that we did not develop in detail in class and pursue a critical examination of it using appropriate scholarship. Grading of this project will be done in stages—annotated bibliography, rough draft, final copy

Class Requirements

- Per MSU summer program policy, attendance at all classes, field trips, and guest lectures is required.
- Out of respect for fellow students and the professor, cell phones are not to be used in class except for accessing course documents or a specified research need. Out of respect for our guest lecturers and site-visit hosts, cell phones are to be put away during talks and at field trip destinations. They may be used in camera mode when appropriate. Texting or reading messages, checking social media, or surfing the web during any class function is a serious breach of academic decorum and will negatively affect the participation grade.
- All class conversations should occur with respectful behavior and language, tolerance of other viewpoints, and a sense of collegiality.
- Cheating or plagiarism is a serious offense and will result in failure for the assignment, and possibly final grade consequences. Remember, plagiarism is a matter of fact, not intent, so take notes and cite sources responsibly.