England in Europe: From *Beowulf* to the *Roman d’Eneas*

**Course description:**
This module looks at the literary culture of England from the late tenth to the late twelfth century; that is from Anglo-Saxon England to the ‘Twelfth-Century Renaissance’. We will situate the study of secular literature within the context of the dynamic exchange between the monastic, clerical and lay worlds which characterized the high medieval period in England. This period was marked by church reform, conquests (Danish and Norman), and ‘Renaissance’; its literary production was distinctly multilingual involving a rich interplay of English, Latin, and French, as well as Old Norse. Over the course of the term, we will consider the relationship between key Anglo-Saxon literary texts and the French and Latin literature of twelfth-century Anglo-Norman England.


We will approach these texts by tracing a number of themes, including: the relationship between epic, romance and history-writing; the idea of ‘fiction’; the literary, political and religious consequences of England’s radical use of the written vernacular (including the emergence of French as a written language); competing English, Welsh, Danish and Norman origin legends; female literary patronage; court and cloister; and England’s place in the emergence of a European literary culture. Throughout we will be concerned with the ways in which politics from the nineteenth century to the present day have shaped the study of Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman literature.

All texts studied will be available in translation as well as the original, and the module can be taken by students with no prior knowledge of Old English, Old French or Latin.

**Learning outcomes:**
- a good knowledge of Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman literature across English, Latin and French
- an awareness of the cultural contexts of literary production in high medieval England
- an understanding of the politics of the major trends in the literary criticism of the period

**Preliminary reading:**