

Left: The opening of *Pwyll Penddeuic Dyuet* in the Red Book of Hergest (Oxford, Jesus College MS 111, 175r, from Digital Bodleian). Right: The opening of *Pwyll Penddeuic Dyuet* in the White Book of Rhydderch (NLW MS Peniarth 5)

### This course provides

- a solid introduction to the grammar of Middle Welsh, and to the orthography of both Middle and Modern Welsh. Modern Welsh is less different from Middle Welsh than Modern Irish is from Old or Middle Irish, or Modern English from Old English. The difference is more like that between Modern English and Chaucerian Middle English. Once you understand the differences in orthography, you will be in a good position after this course to start reading Modern 'literary' Welsh, that is, the Welsh of most journalism, academic prose, and much post-medieval literature. An excellent companion to this course is [Welsh 128: Introduction to Modern Welsh](#), which focuses on the spoken language;
- an introduction to The Four Branches of the Mabinogi, with a close reading of the Welsh text of the First Branch;
- a survey of the range of medieval Welsh prose literature in the context of Welsh literary culture and political history, and readings from texts other than the First Branch as time permits;
- an introduction to the most important resources for the study of Middle Welsh and its literature;
- discussion of the scholarship pertaining to the First Branch (*Pwyll*).

### This course is for:

- graduate students, primarily, who are interested in Celtic languages and their literatures, medieval languages and their literatures, and Welsh language, literature and culture generally. Interested undergraduates are welcome, but are advised to consult with the instructor before registering ([cmckenna@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:cmckenna@fas.harvard.edu)).

### Course Materials

- Students should acquire a copy of R.L. Thomson's edition of *Pwyll Penddeuic Dyuet*, vol. 1 in the Medieval and Modern Welsh Series published by the School of Celtic Studies, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies. It's best to order the book directly from DIAS, whose [online bookshop](#) provides prompt service with reasonable postage costs, whereas the Coop has never managed to acquire Institute publications. As of March 18, however, the volume is out of stock at DIAS. Amazon and other online book retailers (such as [AbeBooks](#)) are another option. Scans will be provided by the instructor as necessary.
- Students should also have Simon Evans' *Grammar of Middle Welsh*, a supplementary volume in the Medieval and Modern Welsh Series published by the School of Celtic Studies, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.
- Instructor will provide an extensive set of handouts outlining the grammar and providing a useful guide to Evans' *Grammar*, which can be difficult to navigate.
- Also useful is Brent Miles' *An Introduction to Middle Welsh*, available in the [course files](#) and at the [University of Toronto's T-space](#).
- The edition of *Pwyll* includes a fairly complete glossary, but students should familiarize themselves with [Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru](#), the University of Wales Dictionary, which is the standard historical dictionary for Welsh--the equivalent of the Oxford English Dictionary. GPC is an online resource, no longer updated in print; it is available as a handy smartphone app.

### Course requirements

- Preparation and classroom work are the principal basis of assessment: you're expected to attend regularly, to have done the translation assignment (if any) and to have read and be prepared to discuss any reading assignment. On occasion, a given student will be asked to lead the discussion of a secondary reading (45%)
- Mid-term exam, translation of sentences we have covered and some that we haven't, with brief analysis of some points of grammar in underlined phrases or clauses. (20%) **Tuesday, October 22**
- Half-hour quiz at final meeting (**Tuesday, December 3**), translating five sentences (out of eight) from *Pwyll* into idiomatic English; (10%)
- Take home assignment due no later than **Tuesday, December 10**, in which you will be asked to translate a paragraph from one of the other three Branches of the Mabinogi, and to parse some of its

words and phrases in detail (25%)

## **Resources**

[Digital resources](#)

[Bibliography of Old and Middle Welsh Language](#)

[The Laws of Court](#), trans. Dafydd Jenkins in *Hywel Dda: The Law*. Welsh Classics (Gwasg GOmer, 1986