

Advanced English: How the History of England formed the English Language

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This course is meant for students of the advanced C1 and C2 levels. Theme-based language classes aim at developing written and oral skills through the study of a specific topic.

Course Objectives

This is a 12-week course about how the English language and the English (and then British) people gradually became what they are today.

The main objectives of this course are:

- (by looking at key cultural-historical changes) to gain more understanding of why and how the English language developed over the centuries
- (in terms of language skills) to develop a deeper understanding of different expressions and discursive registers.

Background

England has always had a complex and vexed relationship with the rest of Britain and with Europe, being numerous times conquered and transformed by the cultures of its invaders. How have these various invaders influenced the English and **(the) English (language)**? And how has it resisted and remained quite different in other respects?

Similarly, we find that English has a lot in common with French and other continental languages, but it's also very different. How can we understand these differences and make sense of them historically?

Course Description

In each section we'll explore both history and language development:

- Sessions 1 and 2: The Romans invade and gradually **take over** Celtic Britain
- Sessions 3 and 4: Angles, Saxons and Augustinian missionaries take over from the Romans, making for England's 'Dark Ages' but also for the development of a new language: Old English
- Sessions 5 and 6: Waves of Vikings invade and leave a considerable cultural linguistic legacy
- Sessions 7, 8 and 9: King Alfred defeats the Vikings then the Normans take over and transform its language and politics and firmly link it to the continent (legal systems, architecture and infrastructure, trade, rule and social hierarchy)

- Sessions 10 and 11: Modernisation and the English enlightenment (philosophy and politics, painting and poetry)
- Session 12: English Romanticism (philosophy, painting and poetry).

Organization

The classes will be run as activities and projects with a lot of interactive learning and in-class group work.

In terms of assessment, we will deal with several key written and audio texts and do related in-class comprehension tests (CCs), as well as two (in-class) writing tasks.

In terms of homework, expect 2 occasions in the semester where each time you'll probably need to take 2-3 hours outside of class to prepare a presentation or project.