

# HL2046 Old Norse Language and Literature

Semester 2, 2022/23  
Thursday, 2:30pm-5:30pm

**Week 1: The historical background to Old Norse language and literature**

(No primary reading)

**Week 2: Overview of Old Norse literature**

(No primary reading)

**Week 3: Lunar New Year holiday**

**Week 4: Mythological texts**

Snorri Sturluson, *Gylfaginning*

**Week 5: Mythological texts and skaldic poetry**

Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*

**Week 6: Mythological poetry**

Selected poems from the Poetic *Edda*

**Week 7: Heroic poetry**

Selected poems from the Poetic *Edda*

**Recess**

**Week 8: Traditional legendary sagas (*fornaldarsögur I*)**

*The Saga of the Volsungs*

**Week 9: Sagas of kings (*konungasögur*)**

*The Saga of the Ynglings*

*Fagrskinna* [Fair Parchment]

**Week 10: Sagas of Icelanders; or family sagas (*Íslendingasögur*)**

*The Saga of Grettir the Strong*

*The Saga of the People of Laxardal*

**Week 11: Younger legendary romances (*fornaldarsögur II*)**

*The Saga of Bosi and Herraud*

*The Saga of Egil the One-Handed and Asmund, Berserks' Slayer*

**Week 12: Chivalric romances (*riddarasögur*)**

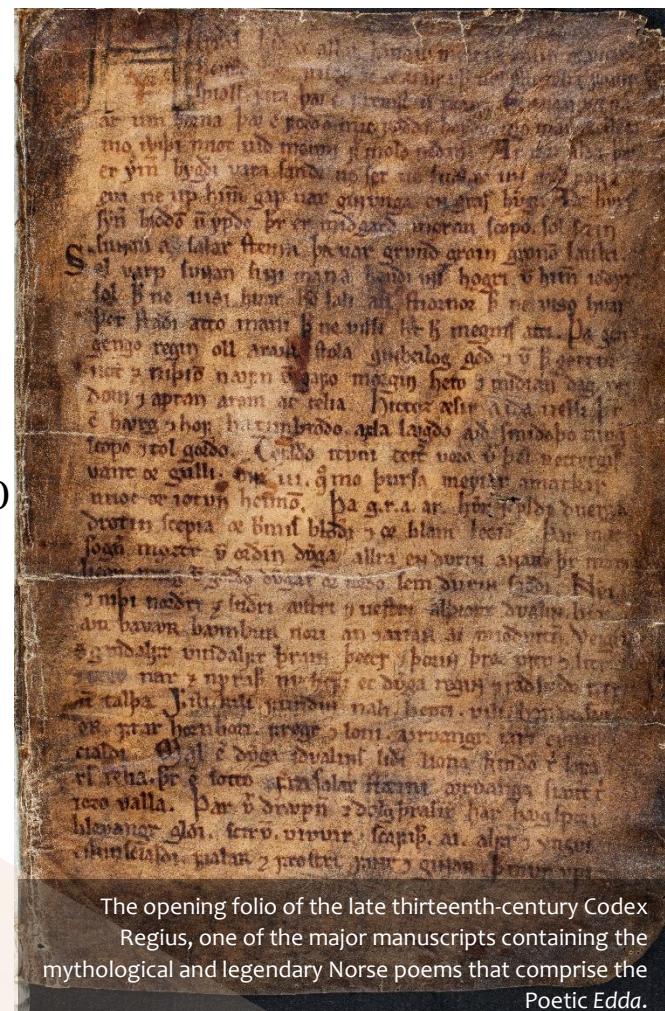
*The Saga of Nitida*

**Week 13: Norse medievalism**

(No primary reading)



The Tjängvide image stone, from Gotland, Sweden, whose images include what is commonly interpreted to be Óðinn riding to Valhöll on his eight-legged steed.



The opening folio of the late thirteenth-century Codex Regius, one of the major manuscripts containing the mythological and legendary Norse poems that comprise the Poetic *Edda*.

The preliminary syllabus may be subject to change.

Texts will mostly be read in excerpts set ahead of the class.

This module will provide an introductory overview to the language and literature of medieval Iceland, also known as Old Norse-Icelandic literature, one of the richest vernacular literatures of medieval Europe, spanning poetry and prose works covering a multitude of modes and genres: mythological; historiographical; religious; panegyric; legendary; fictional; realistic. Old Norse literature also has a special relationship with Anglophone literature and culture, having had an outsized influence on it from the Victorian era to the present day, and proving to be singularly powerful inspiration for such varied authors such as Walter Scott, William Morris, J. R. R. Tolkien, W. H. Auden and Seamus Heaney, as well as the entire genre of fantasy literature, and, to a lesser extent, historical fiction. Today its influence stretches to other media forms beyond the written word, from music to films to video games. Classes will consist of a short lecture on historical and literary context, discussion of the set reading, grammar instruction and translation practice.

**Assessment:**

Participation:	10%
In-class grammar test ( <b>Week 11; 30 March</b> ):	20%
In-class translation exercise ( <b>Week 13; 13 April</b> ):	20%
Literary essay (due end of <b>Thursday, 20 April</b> ):	50%

Late essays received within twenty-four hours of the deadline will be given a reduced grade; submissions received thereafter will not be accepted without a documented reason.

For any enquiries, please contact: **Jonathan Hui ([jonathan.hui@ntu.edu.sg](mailto:jonathan.hui@ntu.edu.sg))**  
**HSS #03-79**

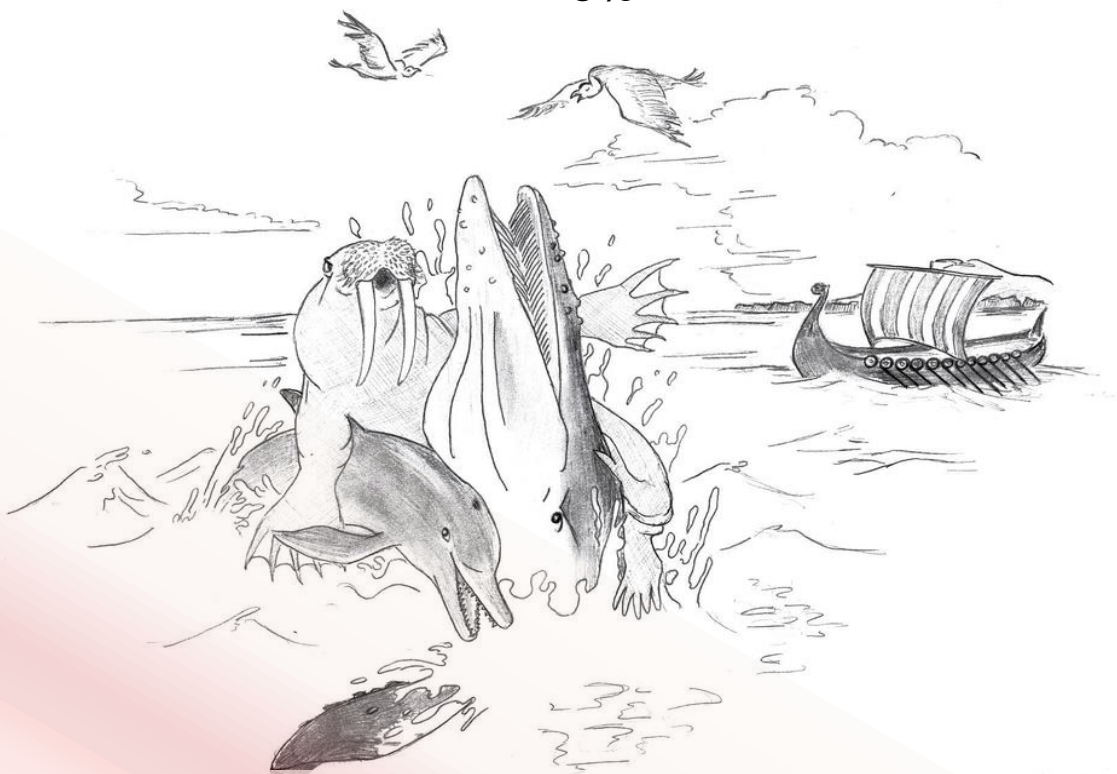


Illustration by Dr Ben Allport of a naval battle in *The Saga of Hjalmther and Olvis*, a younger legendary romance composed in the fifteenth century, fought between a shapeshifting villain in the form of a walrus and two protagonistic shapeshifters in the form of a whale and a dolphin, while two of their shapeshifting allies arrive overhead in the form of vultures.