Part II, Paper 7

Advanced medieval Welsh language and literature

CO-ORDINATOR: DR PAUL RUSSELL

This course continues ASNC part I, Paper 7. Welsh language and literature are studied from their beginnings to the end of the Middle Ages – Old, Middle and Early Modern Welsh texts are studied. Teaching is conducted in small classes. Texts are read, examined and discussed from literary and linguistic perspectives. Medieval Cornish and Breton are also studied. All students attend one weekly class reading and discussing Welsh texts. There is an additional weekly class studying texts in Cornish and Breton (one term devoted to Cornish, the other to Breton). The study of Cornish and Breton texts is primarily a linguistic exercise although some time will be devoted to the literary aspects. University text classes are supplemented by College teaching in the form of bi-weekly seminars in the Lent term. Students will be required to read for the seminars in advance and to give short presentations on aspects of the topic under discussion. They are encouraged to submit all presentations in writing for more detailed comment and to submit essays for comment throughout the year.

The examination consists of three questions. Questions 1 and 2 are compulsory: Question 1 (20% of the overall marks) is an unseen passage for translation; in Question 2 (45% of the overall marks) candidates must choose three (out of four) passages from the texts, set for translation and/or linguistic, contextual and literary comment. The third question is one essay (35% of the marks), chosen from a range of about six literary topics (some having a linguistic dimension).

Students are required to prepare for the classes (around ten hours per week), and to read widely on topics arising from the classes, as well as more generally in and about Medieval Welsh literature, and on Cornish and Breton literature.

To take this course, students should have done Part I, Paper 7; in addition, although it is not essential, a reading knowledge of Modern Welsh is a help (partly because some of the set texts are edited in Welsh), and students should consider going on a course in Modern Welsh in the Long Vacation before taking this course. The Cornish and Breton texts studied are available in editions in either Welsh or German; glossaries in English are provided.
By the end of the course, students should have acquired a thorough knowledge of medieval Welsh language and literature in their different phases and forms, and an understanding of the characteristic features of medieval Cornish and Breton.