Old Saxon was the language spoken and written in northwestern Germany and parts of Denmark between the 9th and 12th centuries. The language has a number of similarities with Old English, Old Frisian, and Old High German.

In this course, students will learn to read and translate Old Saxon while familiarizing themselves with previous scholarship on the language and literature of this period. In addition to translation and linguistic analysis of the texts, the course will examine cultural and literary topics relevant to the readings. Assignments will consist of daily translation, oral presentations, a midterm examination, and a seminar paper.

There are various short textual fragments from this period, but most of our understanding of the Old Saxon language and culture comes from the long epic poem—the Hêliand—from ca. 825. The Hêliand is a translation of the gospel written in Germanic long-line form. It is a unique text which synthesizes Christian and early Germanic religious tradition by retelling the gospel story through the perspective of the contemporary Germanic value system. We will primarily concentrate on the Hêliand in this course, although some attention will be paid to the short Genesis fragment.

This course is ideal for students in linguistics or medieval studies.

Goals for the course:
1. Students will become familiar with various aspects of Old Saxon grammar and vocabulary.
2. Students will become familiar with scholarship on the Old Saxon language and literature and earlier Germanic culture.
3. Knowledge of the Old Saxon language and scholarship will help serve as a foundation or compliment to subsequent or previous studies in the areas of medieval literature and culture.

Note: knowledge of German or another early Germanic language (e.g., Old English) is useful but not required.

For any questions, feel free to contact: jsundqui@purdue.edu