

The Don Difference Series
Damian Fleming

0:00-0:28 I am the medievalist, so I teach medieval literature in classes and Latin language classes. I am an Anglo-Saxonist specifically, so I study the literature and culture of Anglo-Saxon England, which is Anglo-Saxon England from around the year 700 to around 1100 A.D.

0:29-1:13 I guess I have two main streams of my research. One of them is closely reading texts from Anglo-Saxon England, which are either written in Old English, as well as lots and lots of texts written in Latin, which was the language of the church at the time. And so I read them closely looking for discussions of the Hebrew language and interest in the Hebrew language, because people in medieval Europe were always aware that Hebrew was the original language of the Bible even though people in medieval Europe did not generally read Hebrew. In Anglo-Saxon England there were no Jews that ever lived there. There was never a Jewish population, so everything they knew about Hebrew and everything they knew about Judaism came through texts.

1:14-1:46 The other thing that I do is look at manuscripts which are the books from the middle ages, the literal thousand-year-old books that often the material in them has not been edited fully. For this realm of my research, I need to travel primarily to England and go to these libraries, go to Oxford and go to London—the British Library in London—and actually look through these books, whole thousand-year-old books, and look and see the types of things, the evidence for interest in Hebrew and interactions with Hebrew.

1:47-2:06 In the last six years, I've completely fallen in love with Fort Wayne and IPFW for a whole bunch of reasons—both the community and the school that allows me to do what I do, allows me to research my research interests as well as teach a great body of students.

2:07-2:46 So the topics I teach tend to be difficult, so learning how to read Chaucer's Canterbury Tales in Middle English is difficult, and slow-going, and not immediately rewarding. Or, learning how to read Beowulf in Old English is even more difficult, and learning to read Latin is extremely difficult. But I like to think that the enthusiasm I bring to my classes inspires my students to work, to do the work, the difficult work to then begin to break through the language barriers of these tests. To then appreciate them firsthand so that by the end of the semester we become, you know, this team of colleagues.

2:47-3:03 I call my students my junior medievalists, or my junior Anglo-Saxonists, and my junior Latinists because that's what I like to think I'm doing is creating the next generation. Even if they don't take this for the rest of their lives, they will have this memory of reading Beowulf and reading Chaucer.

3:04-3:07 (Music)

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