



## **Fairy Tales – Then and Now**

**(3 credits)**

*Spring 2015*

01:470:225:01, crosslisted 01:195:246:01  
MW 3:20pm – 4:40pm, Rutgers Cinema 1

Professor Nicola Behrmann  
German Department  
172 College Ave, Room 206  
[behrmann@rutgers.edu](mailto:behrmann@rutgers.edu)  
Office hours: Wednesdays 12-2pm

### **Course Description:**

This course analyzes the structure, meaning, and function of fairy tales and their enduring influence on literature and popular culture. While we will concentrate on the German context, and in particular the works of the Brothers Grimm, but will also consider fairy tales drawn from a number of different national traditions and historical periods, including contemporary American pop culture. Various strategies for interpreting fairy tales will be examined, including methodologies derived from structuralism, folklore studies, gender studies, and psychoanalysis. We will explore pedagogical and political uses and abuses of fairy tales. We will investigate the evolution of specific tale types and trace their transformations in various media from oral storytelling through print to film, television, and the stage. Finally, we will consider potential strategies for the reinterpretation and rewriting of fairy tales.

*Taught in English. No prerequisites.*

Satisfies SAS Core Curriculum Requirements **AHp** and **WCd** with the specific Core learning goals **p**, **p**, **s-1**, **t**, and **v**.

**Arts and Humanities Goal p:** Student is able to analyze arts and/or literature in themselves and in relation to specific histories, values, languages, cultures, and/or technologies.

**Writing and Communication Goal d:** Student is able to communicate effectively in modes appropriate to a discipline or area of inquiry.



## Required readings:

The following texts are available for purchases at the Rutgers bookstore:

- *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, tr. Jack Zipes, 3rd ed. (Bantam, 2003) **ISBN-13:** 978-0553382167
- Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Puffin Classics, 2008) **ISBN-13:** 978-0-141-321073
- Carlo Collodi, *The Adventures of Pinocchio* (Puffin Classics, 2011) **ISBN-13:** 978-0141331645
- Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (Vintage, [1976]2010) **ISBN-13:** 978-0307739636

All other required readings will be made available via Sakai.

Recommended readings: Maria Tatar, *Off With Their Heads! Fairy Tales and the Culture of Childhood*; Marina Warner, *Once Upon a Time: A Short History of the Fairy Tale*; Jack Zipes, *The Irresistible Fairy Tale*.

## Required movies:

We will be watching many clips from other movies but discussing the following movies in class:

- *An Andalusian Dog* (Bunuel, 1929)\*†
- *The Wizard of Oz* (Taurog/Vidor/Fleming/Cukor, 1939)\*
- *Pinocchio* (Disney, 1940)
- *Beauty and the Beast* (Cocteau, 1946)\*
- *The Red Shoes* (Powell/Pressburger, 1948)\*
- *Cinderella* (Disney, 1950)†
- *The Little Mermaid* (Disney, 1989)
- *Frozen* (Disney, 2013)

\* Available for purchase/rent as Instant Video on Amazon or for free on Youtube.

† In class screening.

All other movies will be made available on Movie Reserve.

## Course requirements and grading:

Regular class attendance, careful preparation of assigned readings and viewings, active class participation, and completion of all assignments are required to receive a passing grade in this course. Regular participation in weekly discussion board post is an essential part of the participation grade.

**Midterm:** There will be an in-class midterm exam. Choose 4 out of 6 questions and write a short essay on each. Questions will be related to the lectures in class; in addition you will be asked to read and respond to one fairy tale that we have not studied in class.



**Discussion Blogs:** In five different discussion blog posts you are asked to respond to the question in what way the assigned readings of a traditional fairy tale resonate in contemporary culture, i.e. in regard to content, characters, gender issues, moral values, etc. 250 words/post.

**Short Essays:** Essay assignments are designed to test course content and to develop critical reading and writing skills. There will be three 5-pages essays, the first one is due on February 16, the second is due on March 9, and the third one is due on April 13. Each of your essays needs to respond to a different theme (comparative analysis, topical analysis, creative writing), but you are free to choose the order. For pointer on essay writing see 02\_guidelines\_short essay on the Sakai resources page.

**Comparative analysis.** Compare a first published version of a fairy tale with two or more later versions of the same tale. Using the techniques and critical lens learned in class, students are to examine and evaluate an element in the stories and come to a conclusion through the examination. Students may use material on the syllabus or other materials upon instructor's approval. You must locate and apply to your argument at least one secondary, scholarly source (*not* popular sources or reference works). For a list of scholarly sources please see the document 04\_bibliography on the Sakai resources page. (5 pages).

- **Topical analysis.** Bring together two or three different fairy tales and examine a common element. Students may examine any version of the fairy tales presented in syllabus or other materials upon instructor's approval. You must locate and apply to your argument at least *one* secondary, scholarly source (*not* popular sources or reference works). For a list of scholarly sources please see the document 04\_bibliography on the Sakai resources page. (5 pages).
- **Creative writing.** Try your hand at continuing the fairy tale tradition. You may choose to write three poems, a short story, or one or two chapters of a fairy tale novel. You may also (but are not limited to this approach) use the first-person narrative and re-write a fairy tale from the viewpoint of other characters (i.e. the wolf in *Little Red Riding Hood*). In addition to your creative works you must also write a one-page essay examining how your rewrite is similar to and/or departs from the tale used as inspiration. You will not be graded on creative work, but on the critical examination of how your rewrite fits into the tradition of retelling fairy tales. 3-5 pp.

**Online Presentation Group (5 students).** Select a particular fairy tale that has been illustrated by a number of artists and examine *either* at least ten different visual interpretations of that work *or* two different filmic adaptations. Go back to the earliest version of the story you can find so you will be able to see changes over time. For more detailed instructions see 04\_guidelines\_group project on the Sakai resources page.



### **Course learning goals:**

Students will acquire an understanding of the structure, meaning, and function of fairy tales and their enduring influence on literature and culture; ground this understanding in historical, cultural, and theoretical contexts; hone analytical skills in written interpretation; be able to propose an argumentative thesis and support it with appropriate evidence. Assessment will be based on evaluation of assigned written work.

### **Grades will be based on the following formula:**

Class participation and blog posts	25%
Online Presentation (group project)	15%
Midterm	15%
3 short essays (5 pages each; 10% each)	30%
Final exam	15%

### **Grade distribution:**

A=90-100%; B+=85-89; B=80-84; C+=75-79; C=70-74; D=65-69; F-64 and below.

## **Course Overview**

Week 1

Wed Jan 21

### **Introduction**

Week 2

Mon Jan 26 ♦ Wed Jan 28

### **Fairy Tale, Fable & Myth**

To what degree do fairy tales raise timeless and universal issues and to what extent are they specific to a single time and place? During the first week we will study the origins and development of the Grimms' Tales and consider the special place of fairy tales between the oral and written traditions of narrative. We will also discuss the differences between fairy tales and related genres such as myths, legends, and folktales, and the ways in which 20<sup>th</sup> century movie industry has adapted and transformed fairy tales.

**Fairy Tales:** Grimm Brothers, "Little Red Cap"; Angela Carter, "The Company of Wolves"; "The Fisherman and the Jinny" (in *Arabian Nights*).



**Secondary readings:** Bruno Bettelheim, "The Fisherman and the Jinny: Fairy Tale Compared to Fable" and "Fairy Tale versus Myth: Optimism versus Pessimism" (*Uses of Enchantment*, pp. 28-40); Erich Fromm, "The Nature of Symbolic Language," (*The Forgotten Language*, pp. 11-23); Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller" (*Illuminations*, pp. 83-110)

Week 3

Mon Feb 1 ♦ Wed Feb 4

### **The Fairy Tale Heroine**

The typical fairy tale heroine is known as beautiful, vulnerable, helpless, and thoroughly kind, always waiting to be rescued. During this week we will look more closely at some of the most famous (and most passive) fairy tales heroines such as Cinderella and Snow White trying to find out why they continue to enthrall generations of young readers. We will also look at some lesser known fairy tale heroines: "Donkey-Skin" as a story of excessive abuse and limitless goodness, and "The Six Swans" as an example of an active female heroine that comes to the rescue of her six brothers.

**Fairy Tales:** Grimm Brothers, "Cinderella," "Snow White," "Rapunzel," "Rumpelstiltskin," "The Maiden Without Hands," "The Six Swans"

**Movie (in class):** Disney, *Cinderella* (1950)

**Secondary Reading:** Ruth L. Bottigheimer, "Fertility Control and the Birth of the Modern Fairy Tale Heroine"

Week 4

Mon Feb 9 ♦ Wed Feb 11

### **Oh, Mother, Where Art Thou?**

Innocent female heroines are often accompanied by wicked stepmothers, evil witches, or other figures of female evil. Why is it that older women and mother figures are so often depicted as strong, ruthless, and malevolent in fairy tales? What does the frequent occurrence of the witch mean in fairy tales? In this week we will study the figure of the inaccessible lady as a necessary counterpart to the naïve fairy tale heroine and the absence of the (good) mother.

**Fairy Tales:** Grimm Brothers, "Cinderella," "Sleeping Beauty," "Hansel and Gretel," "Rapunzel," "Little Brother and Little Sister"

**Movie clips (in class):** Walt Disney, *Snow White* (1937) and *Sleeping Beauty* (1959); Disney Pictures, *Maleficent* (2014)

**Secondary readings:** Bettelheim, "The Fantasy of the Wicked Stepmother" (*Uses of Enchantment*, pp. 66-73); Marina Warner, "Absent Mothers: Cinderella" (*From the Beast to the Blonde*, pp. 201-217)



Week 5

Mon Feb 16 ♦ Wed Feb 18

### **Transformations I: Beauty and the Beast**

This week's reading considers the transformation of a single tale type. While tracing the evolution of the theme of "Beauty and the Beast" and trying to understand something of the process by which tales both persist and change across different times and cultures, we will also continue our discussion of the ways in which curiosity, disobedience, and violence figure in the tales, and the lessons conveyed about appropriate gender behavior.

***1<sup>st</sup> Paper due on Feb 16.***

**Fairy Tales:** Apuleius, "Cupid and Psyche" (2<sup>nd</sup> century AD); Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont, "Beauty and the Beast" (1757); Grimm Brothers, "The Frog Prince, or Iron Heinrich"; Angela Carter, "The Courtship of Mr. Lyon" (1979)

**Movies:** Jean Cocteau, *Beauty and the Beast* (1946), movie clips: Disney, *Beauty and the Beast* (1991)

**Secondary readings:** Marina Warner, "Reluctant Brides: Beauty and the Beast I" and "Go! Be a Beast: Beauty and the Beast II" (*From the Beast to the Blonde*, pp. 273-318)

Week 6

Mon Feb 23 ♦ Wed Feb 25

### **Transformations II: Mermaids and Puppets**

In this week we will explore to different ways of becoming human: In Hans Christian Andersen famous story "The Little Mermaid" a water creature—half fish half human—falls in love with a prince longs to become human. In Carlo Collodi's *Pinocchio* a wooden puppet with the ability to speak and move longs to become a real little boy. We will read and compare both stories with a focus on gender norms that direct the respective fate, the limitations and possibilities, and the desire of the characters. Since both tales have been turned into major feature movie adaptations, we will also look how the Disney version changed its source material.

**Fairy Tales:** Hans Christian Andersen, "The Little Mermaid" (1836) and Carlo Collodi, *Pinocchio* (1881)

**Movies:** Walt Disney, *Pinocchio* (1940), and Disney Animation Features, *The Little Mermaid* (1989)

**Secondary Readings:** Jack Zipes, "Toward a Theory of the Fairy-Tale Film: The Case of Pinocchio" (*Happily Ever After: Fairy Tales, Children, and the Culture Industry*, pp. 61-88); Harold Bloom, "Trust the Tale, Not the Teller: Hans Christian Andersen"

Week 7

Mon March 2 ♦ Wed March 4

### **Crimes, Rewards, and Punishments**



These weeks' readings will concentrate on the disciplinary edge to many fairy tales, especially with regard to the inculcation of gender expectations for girls and boys. The focus will be on fairy tales depicting transgressive behavior and the different consequences of disobeying commands for male and female protagonists.

**Group Projects #1-10 due on March 2**

**Fairy Tales:** Grimm Brothers, "Iron Hans," "Thrushebeard," "Mother Holle," "The Star Talers"; "Jack and the Beanstalk"

**Secondary readings:** Victor Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage"; Maria Tatar, "'Teaching Them a Lesson': The Pedagogy of Fear in Fairy Tales" (*Off with their Heads!*, pp. 22-50)

Week 8  
Mon March 9 ♦ Wed March 11  
**Fairy Tales and Dreams**

According to Sigmund Freud, dreams and fairy tales are coming from the same place: they both provide access to the unconscious. In this week we will compare the narrative structure of fairy tales to dreams as manifestations of unconscious, repressed, condensed, and often contradictory desires and anxieties. We will also study in what way fairy tale (and dreams) reconcile the antagonism between "pleasure principle" and "reality principle".

**2<sup>nd</sup> Paper due on March 9**

**Group Projects #11-20 due on March 11**

**Fairy Tales:** Grimm Brothers, "Robber Bridegroom"; Andersen, "The Emperor's New Clothes"

**Movie (in class):** Luis Bunuel, *Un Chien Andalusien* (1929)

**Secondary readings:** Erich Fromm, "The Nature of Dreams" (*The Forgotten Language*, pp. 24-46); Sigmund Freud, "The Occurrence in Dreams of Material from Fairy Tales"

**Spring Break**

Week 9  
Mon March 23 ♦ Wed March 25  
**Animal Spirits**

In this week we will explore the way in which fairy tales explore the demarcation between the human and animals. Many fairy tales use animals or anthropomorphized creatures to give voice to existential experiences such as sexuality and violence and injustice.

**Fairy Tales:** Grimm Brothers, "Bremen Town Musicians," "Puss-in-Boots," "Hans-My-Hedgehog," "Water of Life"; Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*



## **MIDTERM in class on March 25**

Week 10

Mon March 30 ♦ Wed April 1

### **Dwarves, Sorcerers, and Dragons**

In this week we will explore magic and witchcraft in many fairy tales which became popular in 20<sup>th</sup> century fantasy fiction: We will look more closely at the origins of Tolkien's *Hobbit*, L. Frank Baum's *Wizard of Oz*, or Joanne Rowling's *Harry Potter*. How do fantasies and fairy tales animate enjoyment and help us to both escape and manage reality?

**Fairy Tales:** Grimm Brothers, "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," "The Brave Little Tailor," "Riffruff"

**Movies:** *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), movie clips: *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* (2012), *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (2001)

**Secondary Reading:** J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy Stories"

Week 11

Mon April 6 ♦ Wed April 8

### **"Head, Shoulder, Knees, and Toes..."**

Why is violence such a prevalent ingredient in the stories read to children, and what effect do violent stories have on children? What forms of violence are most likely to pervade fairy tales, and to what purpose is violence put: retaliation, demeaning cruelty, cathartic pleasure?

### **Group Projects #21-32 due on April 6**

**Fairy Tales:** Perrault, "Bluebeard"; Grimm Brothers, "The Juniper's Tree," "The Robber's Bride," "The Maiden without Hands"; Andersen, "The Red Shoes"

**Movies:** Powell/Pressburger, *The Red Shoes* (1948), film clip (in class): Melies, *Bluebeard* (1912)

**Secondary readings:** Maria Tatar, "Telling Differences: Parents vs. Children in 'The Juniper Tree'" (*Off with their Heads! Fairy Tales and Culture of Childhood*, pp. 212-228); Maria Tatar, "Sex and Violence: The Hard Core of Fairy Tales" (*Hard Facts*, pp. 3-38)

Week 12

Mon April 13 ♦ Wed April 15

### **Eating Well**

In this week we will discuss unrestrained oral greed in many fairy tales as well as the motif of cannibalism in some of the more disturbing tales. We will discuss the fantasies of endless





supplies of food that never runs out, the extraordinary appetite of some fairy tale heroes but also the experience of starvation and deprivation that many fairy tales speak of. Food stands in for social relationships, depicts very realistic experiences but is also related to the fantasy of incorporation.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Paper due on April 13**

**Fairy Tales:** Grimm Brothers, "Hansel and Gretel," "Little Red Cap," "The Juniper Tree"; "The Gingerbread Boy"; Maurice Sendak, *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6cOEFnppm\\_A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6cOEFnppm_A))  
**Secondary Readings:** Maria Tatar, "Table Matter: Cannibalism and Oral Greed"; Bettelheim, "Hansel and Gretel"

Week 13

Mon April 20 ♦ Wed April 22

### **Expressionist and Surrealist Fairy Tales**

While fairy tales are generally characterized by a "spirit of optimism" (J.R.R. Tolkien), the literary fairy tales that have been published around 1900 offer us no such assurances. Expressionist and Surrealist fairy tales are anti-tales that appropriate, re-imagine, subvert, invert, deconstruct or satirize elements of the fairy tale form (and its equivalent genres) to present an alternate narrative interpretation, outcome or morality.

**Fairy Tales:** Rainer Maria Rilke, "The Tale of God's Hands" (1904); Hermann Hesse, "The Fairy Tale About the Wicker Chair" (1918); Hugo Ball, "Mr. and Mrs. Goldkopf" (1916); Franz Kafka, "The Cares of a Family Man" (1920)

**Movie clips (in class):** Charles Laughton, *The Night of the Hunter* (1955)

**Secondary Reading:** Ernst Bloch, "The Fairy Tale Moves On in Its Own Time"

Week 14

Mon April 27 ♦ Wed April 29

### **"I'm Not Afraid"**

The last session will be devoted to the perhaps most foundational motif that underlies fairy and fantasy tales: Overcoming fear and finding stability in reality through fantasy. We will discuss a few of the most courageous fairy tale heroines and heroes, and we will consider the role of simpletons and tricksters and the enormous advantages to be gained from confidence and cunning and fearless disguise that enables these characters to reverse the positions of master and servant. Overcoming fear is also an important motif in many recent Disney movie and we will conclude the semester with a comparison of Andersen's "The Snow Queen" and the Disney movie *Frozen*.

**Fairy Tales:** Grimm Brothers, "The Youth Who Went Forth to Learn About Fear"; Hans Christian Andersen, "The Snow Queen" (1845)

**Movies:** Disney Pictures, *Frozen* (2013); *The Wizard of Oz* (1939)



Week 15

Mon May 4

**They All Died Horribly, or: Happily Ever After?**

Writing Workshop