

Spring 2020  
Professor Martha Helfer  
Office: AB 4125  
Office hours, MW 1:30-2:30 p.m. and by appointment  
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## Fairy Tales Then and Now



MW5, 2:50-4:10 pm, AB 2225

01:470:225:01 (index 09386)  
01: 470: 225: 02 (index 12235)  
01:470:225:03 (index 15726)  
01:470:225:04 (index 17612)  
01: 470: H1 (index 12234)  
01:195:246:01 (index 09444)

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**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, we also will consider fairy tales drawn from a number of different national traditions and historical periods, including the American present. 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. **This course has no prerequisites.**

**Core certification:**

Satisfies SAS Core Curriculum Requirements AHp, WCd

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.

**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.

**Required readings:**

The following texts are available for purchase at the Rutgers bookstore, and will be placed on reserve at Alexander Library:

*The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, tr. Jack Zipes, 3rd ed. (Bantam, 0553382160)

Spiegelman, *Maus I and Maus II* (Pantheon, 0679748407)

Grimm/Sendak, *Dear Mili* (Farrar Straus Giroux, 9781250035127)

All other required readings will be made available via Sakai

**Required films** (available through popular streaming platforms, or at your local public library):

*Snow White* (Disney)

*Beauty and the Beast* (Cocteau)

*Beauty and the Beast* (Disney 1991)

*The Little Mermaid* (Disney)

*Frozen* (Disney)

*Mulan* (Disney)

*The Lion King* (Disney)

*Into the Woods* (Sondheim musical, 1991 Broadway version)

**Course requirements and grading:**

Regular class attendance, careful preparation of assigned readings and viewings, active class participation, and successful completion of **all** assignments are required to receive a passing grade in this course. Periodic unannounced quizzes may be given on assigned readings or material covered in lecture. There will be one in-class midterm exam and one announced in-class quiz.

There will be three essay assignments designed to test course content and to develop critical reading and writing skills.

**Except in cases of verifiable illness, family emergency, or extenuating circumstances approved by Professor Helfer, no essays will be accepted more than 24 hours after the due date. Late essays will be penalized! Quizzes and exams MUST be completed at the assigned date and time. A minimum grade of 60% on all announced exams and quizzes is required to pass this course!**

**Final grades** will be based on the following formula:

|                        |     |
|------------------------|-----|
| Quizzes                | 15% |
| Midterm exam           | 20% |
| Essay I, II (20% each) | 40% |
| Essay III              | 25% |

**Notes: Students are required to complete all assignments to pass this course! A minimum grade of 60% on all announced exams and quizzes is required to pass this course! ATTENDANCE IS REQUIRED! SEE ATTENDANCE POLICY BELOW.**

Final grades will be calculated in conformance with the standard scale approved by the University Faculty Senate:

- A= Outstanding
- B+
- B=Good
- C+
- C=Satisfactory
- D=Poor
- F=Failing
- W=ASSIGNED BY REGISTRAR to students who officially withdraw from a course

**Attendance: Attendance is required! Attendance will be taken electronically, using a sign in and sign out system! All students must attend regularly, arrive prepared, and stay in class for the duration of the class period.** If you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. **Those who miss more than two class sessions without a compelling excuse should expect a one-step reduction in the course grade (i.e. an A becomes a B+, a B+ becomes a B). Every additional three absences may entail a further one-step grade-reduction.**

**Electronic devices in class:** Use of electronic devices in class other than for study of the class topic (e.g. taking notes or consulting an assigned text in pdf form) is strictly forbidden. Those seen using such devices for other purposes will be asked to leave immediately. Their dismissal will count as an absence and may result in a lowering of their overall grade.

**Need help?** Professor Helfer holds regular office hours (MW 1:30-2:30 pm and by appointment: mhelfer@rutgers.edu). For help understanding the course material or to discuss the course material, see a **peer mentor** (office hours will be announced in class). Note: peer mentors do **not** help with essay assignments! For essay assignment help, make an appointment with Professor Helfer or the course TA.

**Note:** The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus, including assignment due dates, when unforeseen circumstances occur (e.g., snow days). These changes will be announced as early as possible so that students can adjust their schedules. **Students are required to check their RU email on a regular basis for course-related announcements.**

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## Syllabus

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### Introducing Little Red (yes, that's Riding Hood!)

To what degree do fairy tales raise timeless and universal issues and to what extent are they specific to a single time and place? We'll consider the special place of fairy tales between the oral and written traditions of narrative, and the differences between fairy tales and related genres such as myths and folktales. We'll also study the origins and development of the Grimms' *Tales*. A comparison of the Grimms' version of "Little Red Riding Hood" with Angela Carter's "The Company of Wolves" and Tanith Lee's "Wolfland" will serve to introduce many of the themes of the course.

1/22 "Little Red Cap" (Grimm, #26)

1/27 Charles Perrault, "Little Red Riding Hood"

Recommended readings:

Robert Darnton, "Peasants Tell Tales"  
Rudolf Schenda, "Telling Tales – Spreading Tales"  
Ruth Bottigheimer, "The Ultimate Fairy Tale"  
Marina Warner, "The Old Wives' Tale"

1/29 Grimm, Prefaces I and II  
Jack Zipes, "Once There Were Two Brothers Named Grimm"

2/3 Angela Carter, "The Company of Wolves"  
Tanith Lee, "Wolfland"

Karen Rowe, "Feminism and Fairy Tales"

2/5 Review, writing workshop

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**Praising Boys, Punishing Girls: Framing *Snow White***

We'll consider 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. We'll then analyze how and why the Grimm tale and the Disney film "frame" Snow White.

2/10 Grimm, "Frau Trude" (#43), "The Virgin Mary's Child" (#3), "The White Snake" (#17), "The Table, the Ass, and the Stick" (#36), "Iron Hans" (#136), "King Thrushbeard" (#52), "The Golden Bird" (#57), "The Boy Who Went Forth to Learn Fear" (#4), "Brier Rose" (#50), "Brother and Sister" (#11)

    Maria Tatar, "'Teaching Them a Lesson': The Pedagogy of Fear in Fairy Tales" (*Off with their Heads!*, pp. 22–50)

2/12 Framing *Snow*: "Snow White" (Grimm #53) and *Snow White* (Disney)

**2/13 ESSAY ONE DUE!**

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**Grimm-ly Violent: Domesticating *Bluebeard***

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? After considering the role of violence in some of the most famous Grimm tales, we'll turn our attention to the Bluebeard complex and analyze Margaret Atwood's programmatically problematic tale.

2/17 Grimm, "Rapunzel" (#12), "The Juniper Tree" (#47), "Allerleirauh" (All Fur, #65), "The Maiden without Hands" (#31), "Hansel and Gretel" (#15), "Cinderella" (#21)

    Recommended reading: Maria Tatar, "Sex and Violence: The Hard Core of Fairy Tales" (*Hard Facts*, pp. 3–38)

2/19 Grimm "Fitcher's Bird" (#46), "Robber Bridegroom" (#40)  
Perrault, "Bluebeard"  
Margaret Atwood, "Bluebeard's Egg"

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**Animal Spirits: *Beauty and the Beast***

We'll analyze ways in which fairy tales explore the demarcation between humans and animals. Many tales use animals and anthropomorphized creatures to give voice to existential experiences like sexuality, violence, injustice, and death. After examining several Grimm tales, we'll consider the transformation of a single tale type by tracing the evolution of the "Beauty and the Beast" topos in literature and film. Our goal is to understand something of the process by which tales both persist and change across different times and cultures. We also will continue our discussion of the ways in which curiosity, disobedience, and violence figure in the tales, and the lessons conveyed about appropriate gender behavior.

2/24 Grimm, "The Frog-King" (#1), "Rumpelstiltskin" (#55), "The Six Swans" (#49)  
"The Seven Ravens" (#25), "Snow White and Rose Red" (#161), "The Bremen  
Town Musicians" (#27)

2/26 Apuleius, "Cupid and Psyche"

3/2 Madame de Beaumont, "Beauty and the Beast"  
*Beauty and the Beast* (Cocteau)

Recommended reading:  
Maria Tatar, "Beauties and Beasts: From Blind Obedience to Love at First Sight"

3/4 *Beauty and the Beast* (Disney version, 1991)

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**3/9 MIDTERM EXAM (in class)**

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**The Uses of Enchantment I**

We'll consider several widely influential approaches to the interpretation of fairy tales, with a special focus on psychoanalysis. Our examination of the role of magic in fairy tales and fantasy will include a not-to-be missed discussion of *Harry Potter*! Finally, we will explore psychoanalytic themes and structures in Ludwig Tieck's Romantic tales, *The Fair-Haired Eckbert* and *Rune Mountain*.

3/11 Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment*: "The Struggle for Meaning"  
Freud, "The Occurrence in Dreams of Material from Fairy Tales"  
J.K. Rowling, "The Tale of the Three Brothers"  
Grimm, "Godfather Death" (#44)  
Hans Christian Andersen, "The Emperor's New Clothes"

Recommended reading: Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* (excerpt)

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**SPRING BREAK !!**

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## The Uses of Enchantment II

- 3/23 Ludwig Tieck, *The Fair-Haired Eckbert*
- 3/25 Ludwig Tieck, *Rune Mountain*
- 3/30 Ludwig Tieck, *The Fair-Haired Eckbert*, *Rune Mountain* (review)
- 4/1 Writing Workshop

### 4/4 **ESSAY TWO DUE**

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## Water Worlds: *The Little Mermaid*, *Frozen* (The Literary Fairy Tale)

We'll consider the differences between fairy tales deriving from an anonymous oral culture and literary fairy tales written by a known author, with a more general focus on the boundaries separating and joining the realms of folklore and literature. We'll then trace the transformation of two literary fairy tales into blockbuster Disney films, paying special attention to the notion of "fluidity."

- 4/6 Hans Christian Andersen, "The Little Mermaid"  
Disney Studios, *The Little Mermaid*
- 4/8 Disney Studios, *The Little Mermaid*, *Frozen*

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## Fairy Tales and the Transmission of Prejudice; the Anti-Fairy Tale

We'll first analyze Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's great Enlightenment drama about religious tolerance, *Nathan the Wise*, with its famous "ring parable" (introduced as a "fairy tale"). Using Lessing's play as a backdrop, we'll consider three Grimm tales about Jews and explore how they contribute to the construction of the rhetoric of anti-Semitism in 19th-century German culture. We'll then interpret Art Spiegelman's graphic Holocaust narrative *Maus*, with its ironic "Happy, Happy Ever After" ending, as an anti-fairy tale. We'll conclude by considering Maurice Sendak's hauntingly beautiful illustrations for the Grimm tale *Dear Mili*.

- 4/13 Lessing, "ring parable"; Grimm, "The Good Bargain" (#7), "The Clear Sun Will Bring It to Light" (#115), "The Jew in Thorns" (#110)
- 4/15 Spiegelman, *Maus I*, *Maus II*
- 4/20 Spiegelman, *Maus I*, *Maus II*
- 4/22 Sendak/Grimm, *Dear Mili*

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**Disney’s “Others”; Other Than Disney (Fairy Tales on Stage and on the Screen)**

We’ll use the critical skills honed in this course to conclude our analysis of the most dominant form of fairy tale production in contemporary American culture, Disney Studios animated films, with a focus on depictions of “otherness.” We’ll also consider Stephen Sondheim’s dark musical *Into the Woods* as a counter to the “happily ever after” optimism exemplified in Disney Studio productions.

4/27            Disney Studios, *The Lion King, Mulan*

4/29            Stephen Sondheim, *Into the Woods*

**5/2            ESSAY 3 DUE**

**5/4            IN-CLASS QUIZ**

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**Departmental policies**

**Attendance:** All students must attend regularly and arrive prepared; if you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me. Note: It is the responsibility of students who have been absent (for any reason) to find out what they have missed and obtain materials that may have been handed out.

**Disability Support Services:** Students who may be requesting accommodations due to disabilities are encouraged to familiarize themselves with procedures and policies regarding disability support services at the following website: <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/>. It is recommended that students seeking accommodations begin filing paperwork as soon as possible as the documentation review process may take up to 30 business days. Students are encouraged to speak with instructors about these issues at the beginning of the term. All such conversations will be kept strictly confidential.

**Academic Integrity:** Violations of academic integrity are an extremely serious matter, and can lead to a student’s failing the course and being referred to the University’s Office of Student Conduct for disciplinary action. When referring to ideas other than your own, always acknowledge your sources clearly and completely, whether you are quoting or paraphrasing. Note also that use of online translation services is not permitted as a tool for generating work that you submit for course credit. Please see the University’s policies on academic integrity at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>, and discuss with your instructor any questions you may have about this and related issues.

## **Student-Wellness Services:**

### **Just In Case Web App**

<http://codu.co/cee05e>

Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.

### **Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)**

**(848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901/ [www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/](http://www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/)**

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

### **Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)**

**(848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / [www.vpva.rutgers.edu/](http://www.vpva.rutgers.edu/)**

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

### **Disability Services**

**(848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 / <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>**

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

### **Scarlet Listeners**

**(732) 247-5555 / <http://www.scarletlisteners.com/>**

Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space.