English 351:

Topics in Contemporary Literature: Fairy Tale Adaptations

Spring 2015

**Instructor** Kate Lechler

Office: Leavell 423 (12:00pm-2pm M/W/F)

Classroom: S Res College 113 M/W/F 11:00-11:50

e-mail: katelechler@gmail.com

## Texts[[1]](#footnote-1) *My Mother She Killed Me, My Father He Ate Me*, ed. Kate Bernheimer (B)

## ISBN: 9780143117841

## *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition*, ed. Jack Zipes (Z1)

ISBN: 9780393976366

## *The Irresistible Fairy Tale,* by Jack Zipes (Z2)

## ISBN: 9780691159553

## 

### Description and Goals

Welcome, students, to ENG 351: Topics in Contemporary Literature: Fairy Tale Adaptations. This course aims to introduce students to some of the most iconic fairy tales in the European tradition and some of their non-Western relations. Although fairy tales are often disregarded as merely for kids, the purview of unreality (as in “that’s just a fairy tale!”), my opinion is that fairy tales are about as real as it gets. They can be read as a map for life; they have warnings and suggestions for us in our journeys toward self-knowledge, in our relationships with strangers, friends, and family, and in our personal quests for fulfillment and joy. The current fairy tale boom (seen in TV shows like *Grimm* and *Once Upon a Time;* the musical *Into the Woods*; and countless novel adaptations and film reboots such as *Maleficent* and this year’s *Cinderella*) is not only a product of Disney’s aggressive marketing, but also a product of our deeply-felt need for both meaning *and* ambiguity.

We shall read and discuss classic fairy tales such as “Sleeping Beauty,” “Snow White,” and “Jack and the Beanstalk,” while also encountering texts you might not be as familiar with, such as tales of Baba Yaga and the medieval incarnation of the dangerous fairy in “La Belle Dame Sans Merci.” In doing this, we shall learn about: fairy and folk tale structure, specifically through the theories of such early morphologists as Propp, Aarne, and Thompson and the comparative mythologist Joseph Campbell; common archetypes found in fairy and folk tales, such as “The Trickster” or “The Benefactor”; how fairy tales (both past and present) reflect cultural beliefs and anxieties about power, sex, family, and death; and how modern-day adaptations of fairy tales bend and reshape these tales for new genres, audiences, and rhetorical purposes.

Weekly lectures will involve the analysis of one or more literary texts (often in relation to each other), in combination with student presentations on other historical, artistic, and popular culture materials linked to those texts. Class time will include space for discussion and workshop-style analysis and will always seek to place the literary works in their social and historical context. Students will also learn how to use major research tools to assist their reading, how to formulate research questions in relation to literary texts, and how to evaluate texts through close reading.

## Objectives

After successfully completing this course, the student should be able to:

1. read original fairy tales and fairy tale adaptations with sensitivity and nuance;
2. comment effectively on the major themes and authorial techniques of particular passages of the selected literary works;
3. locate and evaluate source materials in relation to the relevant social, historical and cultural frameworks
4. Respond to literary texts with writing that analyzes, synthesizes, interprets, and assesses meaning and significance.
5. Produce finished papers which conform to the guidelines of a documentation style manual (MLA) and which conform to standard written American English.

Feedback designed to foster students’ writing proficiency will be provided.

## Grading

Quizzes (at least one every week): 20%

Class/Group Participation: 15%

Final Portfolio: 40%

Final Exam: 25%

## Class/Group Participation (And Attendance): 15%

Your success in this class depends on your own participation and engagement. If you want an A, you should do the assigned reading; this will be graded based on frequent pop quizzes, always at the beginning of class; these cannot be made up. Plan to be on time to class, with paper, pencil, and the required reading in hand. Refrain from distracting others or yourself by using digital devices such as phones, mp3 players, tablets, or laptops. Add something meaningful to the class discussion each day.

Furthermore, you are allowed **2 weeks** worth of class (**6** M/W/F classes) to be absent for any reason you like. After you have used your absences, I reserve the right to drop your final grade 5% for each subsequent absence. Excessive absences will receive a failing grade. Because walking in late disrupts learning, if you are more than ten minutes late to class three times, I reserve the right to assign you an absence due to excessive tardiness. Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.

Keep in mind that it is always your responsibility to let me know if you will be absent or late. I am very good about checking my e-mail; that is my preferred method of communication if we can’t meet face-to-face. Students who show initiative and who communicate well are much more likely to receive help from me if classes must be missed.

**Quizzes: 20%**

Every week of the semester, I will give a quiz. These will be unannounced and will usually consist of two questions in the form of a short writing prompt. One will be about the previous lecture or presentation, and the other about the day’s reading. If you skip class, you cannot make up a quiz. If you skip the previous class, you are still responsible for getting notes on the lecture from a classmate so that you can take the next day’s quiz.

**Final Portfolio Description and Format: 40%**

The Final Portfolio (due Friday, April 24) will be a multi-stage collaborative writing project taken on by our entire class. For it, you will write one piece (1500-2000 words) in response to a writing prompt I give you; this first assignment will be due at the end of Spring Break. The writing prompts will range from asking you to research the background of a particular fairy tale; to find and compare different variants of a story across cultures; to writing a short literary analysis of a modern fairy-tale adaptation (film or text); to writing your own fairy tale. You will be allowed to sign up for the type of prompt you are the most interested in.

Your second assignment will be to revise your first piece into a visual, digital form such as a webpage, a digital presentation, a photo or GIF essay, etc. Each of these revisions will be incorporated into a web journal that our class publishes online at the end of the semester. Finally, you will write a short (700-1000 word) reflective essay on the process, talking about how you developed and researched your idea, what changes you made along the way, and how your piece fits into the larger journal we create.

Along the way, there will be shorter assignments to provide scaffolding for you as you work towards finishing these larger writing assignments. Some of these will be in-class writing prompts; others will be short assignments you take home. Each individual will receive one final grade on their participation in the entire project; I will, however, give you lots of feedback along the way, along with tentative grades to let you know how you are doing in the class.

One aspect of this project will be workshopping your piece and revision with your peers in class; this is part of your class/group participation grade.

## Exam: 25%

The final exam will consist of a quote identification section; a short answer section; and a short essay section asking for sustained analysis, interpretations, and application of major themes and literary critical viewpoints we cover during the semester.

**Grading Rubric**

|  |
| --- |
| **CRITERIA** |
| **THESIS and CONTENT (Development)**  The essay has a thesis—a single, central point that is interesting, original, striking and substantial.  The central idea is developed in the essay through well-chosen, appropriate, concrete details that show originality and freshness.  Author shows rather than merely tells. Generalizations and assertions are defended. Arguments are logical. |
| **ORGANIZATION**  The essay is organized and well structured (there is a beginning, a body, and a conclusion).  The essay exhibits a clear strategy for persuasion and development. The organization works with the thesis so that the thesis and the organization serve the purpose of the essay.  Essay does not digress from central point.  Transitions help the paper flow smoothly.  Introductory paragraph(s) is (are) interesting and appropriate.  Concluding paragraph is clear and convincing. |
| **PARAGRAPHS**  Paragraphs are organized, unified and coherent.  Each supporting paragraph has a controlling idea. In supporting paragraphs, topic idea helps further the thesis. |
| **STYLE**  Sentences are well constructed.  Writer avoids modifier problems.  Sentences show variety of pattern and are rhetorically effective.  The essay is written in a style and tone appropriate to the audience, topic and purpose.  Words are appropriate and well chosen.  Writer avoids jargon and sexist language. |
| **GRAMMAR, SPELLING, MECHANICS**  Writer avoids errors in grammar, spelling, and mechanics. |

**Academic Honor Policy**

No academic dishonesty of any kind will be tolerated in this course. All cases of cheating on quizzes or exams, or plagiarism on any written assignment (turning in anything other than your own work, written specifically for the assignments in this class) will result in an immediate grade of zero for the course and a notation on your permanent academic record, and you will be referred to the University’s Academic Discipline Committee for further penalty, including potential removal from the university. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the University of Mississippi’s policies on academic dishonesty and act accordingly.

**Americans with Disabilities Act**

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Office of Student Disability Services; and (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class.

This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request.

For more information about services available to University of Mississippi students with disabilities, contact the: Office of Student Disability Services, Phone: (662) 915-7128; TTY: (662) 915-7907; Fax: (662) 915-5972; e-mail: [sds@olemiss.edu](mailto:sds@olemiss.edu); website: <http://sds.olemiss.edu/>

**Writing Assistance/Conferencing**

I look forward to getting to know each of you this term; I am always glad to discuss planning and drafting for any of the assignments. Please feel free to stop by during my office hours or make an appointment to see me. I'll happily go over a draft or discuss a paper idea with you; I also love to just chat about how the readings intersect with your own interests.

The Reading/Writing Center offers one-on-one help for students with their reading, writing, and computer skills, whether they need help with reading comprehension, writing problems, understanding what their teachers want, learning how to use various software programs to create digital projects, or just want to do better on their writing assignments. The Center is staffed by teaching assistants who are trained in writing and teaching. Make an appointment by e-mailing: [cwrcw@go.olemiss.edu](mailto:cwrcw@go.olemiss.edu), visiting their website here, <http://rhetoric.olemiss.edu/writing-centers/>, or stopping by in person at Lamar Hall Suite C.

**Syllabus Change Policy**

Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.*Schedule of Readings and Assignments:*

*\* indicates online material hosted on Bb; Z1 indicates collection of tales; Z2 indicates criticism; B indicates modern collection*

W 1/21 Syllabus, \*Neil Gaiman’s “Instructions”

F 1/23 “Meaning of Fairy Tale within the Evolution of Culture” (Z2)

**Tricksters**

M 1/26 Cagliuso/Fortunato (Z1); Rumplestilzkin (Z1); \*Jack and the Beanstalk

W 1/28

F 1/30 \*Angela Carter “Puss in Boots”

M 2/2 “With Hair of Hand-Spun Gold” (B); “A Day in the Life of Half of Rumplestiltskin” (B)

W 2/4

F 2/6 “A Bucket of Warm Spit” (B)

**Witches**

M 2/9 “Witch as Fairy/Fairy as Witch: Unfathomable Baba Yagas” (Z2)

W 2/11 \*Vasilisa the Beautiful; Rapunzel (Z1)

F 2/13 “Baba Yaga & the Pelican Child” (B)

M 2/16

W 2/18

F 2/20

**Parents and Children**

M 2/23 “Tales of Innocent Persecuted Heroines . . .” (Z2)

W 2/25 Juniper Tree (Z1); Hansel and Gretel (Z1); \*Snow White

F 2/27 \*“Snow, Glass, Apples” Neil Gaiman

M 3/2 “Snow White and the 7 Dwarfs” (B); \*“The Snow Child” Angela Carter

W 3/4 “The Brother and the Bird” (B)

F 3/6 FIRST ESSAY DUE

**Spring Break**

**Sibling Rivalry/Sibling Love**

M 3/16 \*Snow Queen; Seven Swans (Zipes 1)

W 3/18

F 3/20

M 3/23 Three Brothers (Z1); Diamonds and Toads

W 3/25

F 3/27

**Love and Transformation**

M 3/30; \*“Show and Tell: Sleeping Beauty as Verbal Icon ...” Maria Tatar

W 4/1 Sleeping Beauty (Z1); Beauty and the Beast (Z1); Little Mermaid (Z1)

F 4/3

M 4/6

W 4/8

\*F 4/10 REVISION DUE

**Dangerous Love**

\*M 4/13 Bluebeard (Z1); \*La Belle Dame Sans Merci; Little Red Riding Hood (Z1)

W 4/15

F 4/17

M 4/20

W 4/22

F 4/24 FINAL PORTFOLIO DUE

**Into the Woods**

M 4/27 “Fairy-Tale Collisions or the Explosion of a Genre” (Zipes2)

W 4/29

F 5/1

Exam: Monday May 4 @ noon

1. Note on the texts: You must get the editions I specify here, unless they are absolutely unavailable to you by any means. I have chosen the paperback editions and, in most cases, you can find used copies easily. They should also be available through the university bookstore and through Square Books, Oxford’s indie bookstore (which charges no tax on school books). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)