

# Sample Syllabi – Subject to Change

## *FAIRY TALES AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF CHILDHOOD*

**INSTRUCTOR:** Christopher Wild

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In this course we will study fairy tales within the broader context of the history of childhood and practices of education and socialization. Today, fairy tales are commonly considered the stuff of children's literature and film. But as historians such as Philippe Aries remind us, before the (early) modern age were seen as little adults and childhood was therefore not considered as a distinctive period of life. When the brothers Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm published the first edition of their *Children and House Tales* they were animated by patriotism, aiming to preserve a product of the spirit of the Germanic people. In subsequent editions they refashioned their collection of fairy tales as a piece of children's literature that ultimately became the first bestseller in this new genre. Thus, the Grimm's fairy tales were shaped as much by the emergence of childhood as they contributed to its very construction. While we will concentrate on the German context and in particular on the work of the Brothers Grimm, we will also consider fairy tales drawn from a number of different national traditions and historical periods, including the American present. We will address issues such as the varying historical conceptions of the child, and the role of adults – parents and pedagogues – in the shaping of fairy tales for the instruction of children. In addition to our main focus on the socializing forces directed at children we will explore different interpretive approaches, including those that place fairy tales against the backdrop of folklore, of psychoanalysis, of the history of gender roles. We will investigate the evolution of specific tale types and trace their 'medial' history from oral traditions through print to film; as well as the potential strategies for the reinterpretation and adaptation of fairy tales.

This course is designed to give students a taste of what all UChicago first-year students experience in the Humanities Core, a foundational part of every student's education in the College, where students enter into conversation with great thinkers of the past and present about questions and issues that have preoccupied mankind for millennia. The Humanities Core teaches students to read closely, think critically, and communicate effectively. In small discussion-based seminars, students learn and practice the art of oral argument and dialogue. Through short assignments and longer papers, as well as group sessions that replicate writing seminars taken by University of Chicago undergraduates, students will work on constructing cogent arguments and refine their expository writing skills. In short, they will come away with an insider's view of what makes a UChicago education unique, and with training that will stand them in good stead wherever they undertake their undergraduate studies.

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

The course will help students...

- gain an understanding of the place of Grimm's fairy tales within the European context and their impact on cultural and artistic production from the nineteenth century to the present
- understand the aesthetic, social, political, and cultural process of retelling, adapting, and re-purposing of fairy tales across time, space, and media
- gain a cross-historical cultural and perception of historical depth
- broaden and hone their skills in cultural criticism
- develop and improve skills in close and critical reading
- practice deliberation and debate with a particular focus of engaging alternative viewpoints
- learn and practice college-level writing that is well-organized, coherent, nuanced, and compelling
- understand and utilize different modes and genres of writing depending on audience and medium
- last but not least have fun with learning and intellectual life more generally

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Attendance and active participation in the evening discussion sessions (20%): It is imperative that you watch the recorded lecture and come to the daily discussion sessions well prepared. You are expected to work through the texts thoroughly at home, equipped for our discussion with questions and observations.
- Writing Assignments (total: 60%): One of the main learning goals of this course is to help you improve your academic writing and produce more insightful, compelling, and lucid analytical essays. The carefully scaffolded writing assignments and experiences are designed to address various aspects of effective writing and to help you successfully complete the final analytical paper.
  - Attendance and active participation in the morning writing seminars (10%): As a key component of the course's focus on developing strong college-level academic writing technique, you will have the opportunity to work in small, intensive writing seminar of 6–7 students. You are not only expected to work and present your own writing but give constructive feedback to that of your peers.
  - How do I? (5%): Process essay that will allow you to write from a place of expertise, practice audience analysis and reading like a writer.
  - Tale Summary (5%): This assignment is designed to hone interpretative as well your expository writing skills
  - Article Summary (10%): A good way to learn to make effective claims/arguments is to practice summarizing the work of other scholars/scientists.
  - Draft of Analytical Paper (15%): You will proceed in a two-step process. First, you will write a draft that develops a close reading of a fairy tale or several fairy tales. You will then go through the process of revision, using techniques developed during the morning sessions. These techniques will help you re-frame your reading/argument to make it more compelling and clear for a reader who may have a different viewpoint.
  - Final Analytical Paper (25%): You will be graded on the quality of the final draft as well as on the work of revising and editing the preceding draft(s).
- Creative Assignment (20%): The group project will draw on the cultural force of fairy tales and exploit their impact on the popular imagination by using them to design an advertising campaign. On the final day of the course each project team will make their pitch to the whole course in a separate presentation session (time will be announced).

## COURSE MATERIALS

- I strongly urge you to purchase the following translation which is available at the Barnes & Noble Campus Bookstore: *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, edited & translated by Jack Zipes,

New York: Bantam 2003 (ISBN: 0553382160). It is also available in electronic format from Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and other vendors. This is the edition we will be using in class and is abbreviated as CFT in the Course Schedule. If you have trouble getting hold of it please let me know as soon as possible

- All other course readings and materials (marked with \* in the course schedule) are accessible as PDF, JPEG, etc. files through CANVAS.
- The films will be made available via Course Reserves.

### USEFUL RESOURCES

- Recommended websites:
  - Professor D.L. Ashliman’s webpage on the Grimms: <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/grimm.html>
  - Check out also his general site on folklore: <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/folktexts.html>; and <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/folklinks.html>
  - 49 annotated tale types: <http://www.surlalunefairytales.com>
- Recommended library resources:
  - [\*The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales\*, ed. Jack Zipes, Oxford: OUP 2015.](#)
  - [\*The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairy Tales\*, ed. Donald Haase, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press 2007.](#)

### MEETING PATTERNS

To accommodate students in distant time zones we have scheduled our meetings in the mornings and evenings. The morning meetings are reserved for writing instruction and the evening meetings for deliberation and discussion. The pre-recorded lectures will be available asynchronously. The morning sessions will be split up into two sections, A and B, depending on the time zone of the students. Section A is intended for students joining us from East Asia and Section B for students from American time zones. In the second half of the course we will offer write-ins during the mornings.

Note: Assignments will always be from one morning session to the next or one evening session to the next. We will be offering write-ins

### COURSE SCHEDULE

Writing	Discussion	Lectures
<b>Telling Tale Tales:</b>	<b>The Grimm’s Project Between</b>	<b>Orality and Literacy</b>
Introduction: Logistics	Introduction: Fairy Tales: Continuity and Change	
Writing in College and Life: How and Why?	Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm, Prefaces to the First and Second Edition* Jack Zipes, “Once There Were Two Brothers Named Grimm” (CFT xxiii–xxxvi) Robert Darnton, “Peasants Telling Tales” (sel.)* Marina Warner, “The Old Wives’ Tale”**	On fairy tales fairy tales between the oral and written traditions of narrative, and the Grimm’s project editorial project
<b>Inventing Childhood,</b>	<b>Socializing Children</b>	
How Do I Make PBJ? (in class)	Philippe Ariès, <i>Centuries of Childhood</i> (sel.) Family and childhood in European art*	On the Emergence of the Nuclear Family and the Invention of Childhood in the 18 <sup>th</sup> Century

	Charles Perrault, “Little Red Riding Hood,”* Brothers Grimm, “Little Red Cap” (CFT #26)	
How Do I? (in class & homework)	Brothers Grimm, “A Tale about the Boy Who Went Forth to Learn What Fear Was” (CFT # 4), “The White Snake” (CFT #17), “The Magic Table, the Golden Donkey, and the Club in the Sack” (CFT #36), “Bearskin” (CFT #101), “Iron Hans” (CFT #136) Vladimir Propp, <i>Morphology of the Folktale</i> (sel.)* Victor Turner, “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in <i>Rites de Passage</i> ”*	On fairy tales as tools of bourgeois socialization
Summarizing a Fairy Tale (in class & homework)	Brothers Grimm, “The Virgin Mary’s Child” (CFT #3), “Rapunzel” (CFT #12), “Mother Holle (CFT #24), “Little Red Cap” (CFT #26), “Mother Trudy” (CFT #43), “Fitcher’s Bird” (CFT #46), “Brier Rose” (CFT #50), “Snow White” (CFT # 53), “The Iron Stove” (CFT #127)	On patterns of female socialization and the construction of femininity
<b>Incest, Cannibalism, and</b>	<b>Other Acts of Violence</b>	
Who Are They? (in class)	Straparola, “Doralice,”* Basile, “The She-Bear;”* Charles Perrault, “Donkeyskin;”* Brothers Grimm, “Allfur” (CFT #65) Brothers Grimm, “Faithful Johannes” (CFT #6), “Hansel and Gretel” (CFT #15), “The Maiden without Hands” (CFT #31), “The Robber Bridegroom” (CFT #40), “The Juniper Tree” (CFT #47), “Foundling” (CFT #51), “How Some Children Played Slaughtering” (CFT #214) Maria Tatar, “Sex and Violence: The Hard Core of Fairy Tales”*	On the prevalence of taboo subjects in stories meant for children
<b>Adaptation and Critique:</b>	<b>Feminist Perspectives</b>	
Making Claims (in class)	Angela Carter, “The Company of Wolves”* Tanith Lee, “Wolfland”* Francesca Lia Block, “Wolf”* Cristina Bacchilega, “Fairy Tales and the Ideology of Gender”*	
<b>Fairy Tales as Literary Art</b>		
Summarizing a Scholarly Article I (in class & homework)	E.T.A. Hoffmann, “The Golden Pot” 14–52*	On the difference between tales stemming from oral culture and written by a known author

Summarizing a Scholarly Article II (in class)	E.T.A. Hoffmann, "The Golden Pot" 52–92*	No lecture!
Writing Analytic/Interpretative Essays I: Introductions and Problem Construction	Hans Christian Andersen, "The Little Mermaid," "The Steadfast Tin Soldier," and "The Little Match Girl"* Disney Studios, <i>The Little Mermaid</i> (video)	On Hans Christian Andersen's poetics of the fairy tale
<b>Walt Disney Presents</b>		
Writing Workshop	Disney Studios, <i>Snow White</i> (video) Jack Zipes, "Breaking the Disney Spell"*	On Disney's civilizing project
Writing Workshop	Disney Studios, <i>Cinderella</i> (video) Charles Perrault, "Cinderella"* Brothers Grimm, "Cinderella" (CFT # 21)	On cinematic wish producing and fulfillment
Writing Workshop	Disney Studios, <i>Lion King &amp; Mulan</i> (videos)	On Disney's representations of otherness

### ACADEMIC HONESTY AND PLAGIARISM

Please note that an important element of academic integrity is fully and correctly attributing any materials taken from the work of others. Feel free to consult with us before completing assignments if you have concerns about the correct way to reference the work of others. More generally, please familiarize yourself with the [University's policy on academic honesty](#), which applies to this course. Of course, we do not anticipate any problems with academic integrity. In the unlikely event that any concerns do arise regarding this matter, we will forward all related materials to the Summer Session Office for further review and action.

### ACCOMMODATION POLICY

We are committed to making this class as accessible and inclusive as possible. If you have a documented disability (or think you may have a disability) and need a reasonable accommodation to participate in this class, please contact [Student Disability Services](#) (SDS) as soon as possible. To receive reasonable accommodations, you must follow the SDS procedures and follow up with me to discuss your access needs in this course in a timely manner. SDS is located at 5501 S. Ellis. Contact information: phone: 773-702-6000 email: [disabilities@uchicago.edu](mailto:disabilities@uchicago.edu)