Fall 2020 Course Description

Instructor: Elizabeth Robinson
Course: ENGL 343
Title: Fairy Tales in the English Tradition

Description: This course will explore the history of fairy tales, largely from Europe and the United States, from their oral (traditional) roots to modern re-tellings of traditional tales. Our study will include significant European publications of traditional tales such as those by Straparola & Basile (Italy), Perrault and d’Aulnoy (France), the Brothers Grimm (Germany), Andrew Lang, and Joseph Jacob (England). We will also read selected tales from other countries and cultures.

We will explore the way that these tales have been told in various cultures, how they are shaped by their cultures, and how they shape their cultures. We will also discuss the history of their reception through the centuries. We will explore significant historical events surrounding fairy tales, such as the “Frauds on Fairies” argument between Charles Dickens and George Cruikshank.

We will read re-tellings of traditional fairy tales through the past 200 years by authors such as Anne Thackeray Ritchie, Angela Carter, Tanith Lee, Roald Dahl, James Thurber, Anne Sexton, Sarah Henderson Hay, and others. We will also read one novel or graphic novel re-telling of a fairy tale (TBA).

We will explore how fairy tales have been used in film by film makers such as Disney and Pixar, and in musicals by composers such as Stephen Sondheim (Into the Woods), and how the tales appear in pop culture (music, advertising, etc.). In our exploration of re-tellings, we will be especially interested in how these re-tellings often appropriate fairy tales for specific purposes. Finally, we will contextualize our explorations of fairy tales within the critical conversation surrounding them. We will read critical pieces by Maria Tatar, Jack Zipes, Marina Warner, P. L. Travers, Bruno Bettelheim, Sandra Gilbert & Susan Gubar, and others.

Proposed Readings: