

# **RUSS 0090 Russian Fairy Tales (CGS)**

Spring 2015

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Office Hours: Monday and Thursday 1:30-2:30

Online Office Hours by appointment

## **Required Course Materials**

*Russian Folk Belief* by Linda J. Ivanits

*Russian Fairy Tales* by Alexander Afanas'ev

*The Uses of Enchantment* by Bruno Bettelheim

Other readings will be posted online in links at the front of each module.

## **Course Description**

Folk beliefs are a rich and enduring component of Russian culture. This course introduces students to a wide selection of Russian fairy tales, and examines the aesthetic, social, and psychological values that they reflect. Students will develop or enhance their understanding of the continuing cultural influence of fairy tales and folk beliefs in literature, in orchestral music, opera, and ballet, in painting, posters, and folk art, as well as in film. The course also provides a general introduction to the study of folklore and fairy tales, presenting a broad spectrum of approaches to the interpretation of fairy tales, including psychoanalysis, Marxism, sociology, structuralism, and feminism. For both contextual and critical reasons, the course introduces and analyzes Russian fairy tales against a background of and in comparison with the Western fairy tale tradition.

This course is organized around three main tasks, which we will be engaging with over the course of the semester.

1. It aims to introduce you to the specific features of fairy tales as a literary genre.
2. We will use fairy tales as an opportunity to introduce you to Russian culture more generally.
3. We will use fairy tales as an opportunity to practice using a variety of theoretical methodologies (including those of psychoanalysis, feminism, and Marxism) to analyze cultural objects.

This course will take place largely online, with three in-person meetings over the course of the term. Readings will come in the form of books you purchase and readings I post in Courseweb. The shape of the course is generally as follows: modules run from Sunday to Saturday. Every week (except the first of the term) there will be a reading quiz. You will be graded on participation on a weekly basis, which means that to earn credit you must post on the discussion boards every week by Saturday at midnight. There will also be two essay exams.

## Quizzes

In general, you should begin each week by reading my introduction to the module. Then you should proceed to read the assigned material, and take the brief reading quiz. These quizzes are intended to make sure that you have read the assigned material carefully. To earn credit for the quizzes, you must take them before midnight on Tuesday of each week, after which they will no longer be available.

## Participation

Participation on the discussion boards is a large component of the course. To earn full credit for the week, you must make at least **FOUR (4)** different posts.

For each weekly forum, think about the reading and/or viewing assignments and compose **TWO (2) 80-100 word responses** to share with the class. Your responses should each **address one or more of the discussion questions** each week (see below). Make sure to answer different types of questions over the course of the semester, or you may lose points (if you answer the same question more than twice in a row, I will lower your participation score for that week by a letter grade). Please reply to my initial post when writing your contribution. **Do not create new threads.**

You must also **respond to at least TWO (2) posts made by other students** (aim for your responses to be about **40-80 words**).

In order to give students time to respond to your posts, you should post your first comment by **5:00 PM on Wednesday** and your second by **5:00 PM on Thursday**. You have until **11:59 PM on Saturday** to respond to each other's posts.

For the first few weeks I will be responding to each of you, offering feedback and helping to make sure you are on the right track. Later in the semester I will be responding selectively to your posts, but at the end of every week I will post a response to the discussion as a whole.

**Please make sure you carefully review and edit your comments PRIOR to posting on the discussion board.** Your writings will be the vehicle in which you interact with and present yourself to other students, so you want your writings to be clear, respectful and free of error.

I strongly suggest you write your comments **FIRST** in a word processing program that allows you to spell check, edit, and save your comments. **SECOND**, you should copy and post your comments to the discussion board. This also helps in the event that your computer breaks down, or you accidentally delete your comments and you have to start over from scratch.

We will be considering the following discussion questions continuously over the course of the semester, while other will be specific to a particular week's material.

**Course-long Discussion Questions (also posted on the forums):**

1. Identify the messages or morals found in this group of tales. Are there conflicting messages embedded in the same tale(s)? If so, what are they? How might you explain this occurrence?
2. For whom do you think a certain tale or group of tales was intended? (Think about gender, class, age, religion, region, etc.) How do you know? Use evidence from the tales to support your answer.
3. What do these folktales suggest about times past and the tellers of these oral tales? Can we learn anything about how the folk lived (i.e. their beliefs, fears, interests, daily life, worldview)?
4. Which interpretive framework would you use to interpret one or more of these tales? Why? Which details in the tales would be important in your interpretation? How could we gain a greater understanding of the tale(s) and folk culture through such an interpretation?
5. If we read similar tales from different cultures in this unit, compare and contrast these tales. What are some of the main differences and why are they significant?
6. If these folktales have been adapted by popular culture, how have they been transformed? Can you identify shifts in the intended audience, morals, meaning, function, or form of the tales? Are there advantages or disadvantages of these adaptations? Explain your answer.
7. What might be possible psychological benefits for listeners/readers of folktales, past or present? Could these tales provide fantasy escape, address concerns and fears, etc.? Explain your answer with evidence from the tales.
8. What surprised you about these tales? What might your reaction say about our society today (i.e. cultural norms, values, beliefs, expectations, societal roles)?

### Discussion Board Grading:

I will grade your forum contributions using the check plus/check/check minus system outlined below.

Check System	Percentage	Requirements
check plus	100%	Student posts at least the minimum number of contributions required on the forum. Questions and/or comments are relevant and insightful. When appropriate, the student tries to support his or her claims with evidence from the tales or essays.
check	85%	Student posts the minimum number of contributions required on the forum. Questions and/or comments are relevant but show some difficulties in understanding the material. The student makes little effort to support his or her claims with evidence from the tales or essays.
check minus	75%	Student does not post the minimum number of contributions required on the forum. Questions and/or comments posted show limited engagement with or understanding of the material. The student states his or her opinions, but makes no effort to support claims with textual evidence.
0	0	No contributions.

While you are only required to make four posts a week, it is important to remember that the more active and engaged you are in these discussions, the more you will get out of this class.

\* **Note on Discussion Board Etiquette:** Please show respect for your fellow students in all course communications. Offensive or disrespectful comments will be removed from Discussion Board and earn you no credit.

### In-person Meetings

The three meetings for the course will happen on Saturdays, on January 24<sup>th</sup>, February 21<sup>st</sup>, and March 28<sup>th</sup> in at 1:00 PM CL 313. We will use these meetings to watch and discuss films based on Russian fairy tale.

### Exams

There will be two exams, composed of 3-4 essay questions, one during the eighth week of the course, and one at the end of the term. No learning module will run during the weeks of the exams. I will post the essay questions on Saturday of that week and you will have until midnight Saturday to complete them and send them to me by email. Your answers should not exceed 10 pages total. You must specifically reference our assigned texts when answering your exam questions, completely citing our authors in MLA format; you may also, if you wish, draw on outside sources, using appropriate citation. The one caveat is

that you must do your own work: you may NOT collaborate with your classmates on the exams.

Each exam will be worth 25% of your grade. Participation will be graded each week, the total grade for which will make 30% of your final grade in the class. Participation during our in-person meetings will be worth 10% of your grade. The quizzes will be worth 10% of your final grade.

**Grading Scale:**

100-98	A+	79-78	C+
93-97	A	77-73	C
92-90	A-	72-70	C-
89-88	B+	69-68	D+
87-83	B	67-63	D
82-80	B-	62-60	D-
		0-59	F

## Schedule of Readings:

### WEEK 1 Introduction to Russian Fairy Tales

- From *Russian Fairy Tales*
  1. "Koshchey the Deathless" pp. 485-493
  2. "Baba Yaga" pp. 194-195
  3. "Baba Yaga and the Brave Youth" pp. 76-79
  4. "Ivanushko the Little Fool" pp. 62-66
  5. "Emelya the Simpleton" pp. 46-48

### WEEK 2 Russian Folk Belief

- *Russian Folk Belief* by Linda J. Ivanits  
pp. 3-18, 51-82, and 169-189

### WEEK 3 The Style of Folk Tales

- "Folklore as a Special Form of Creativity" by Roman Jakobson and Peter Bogatyrev
- Reading from *The European Folktale: Form and Nature* by Max Luthi, pp. 1-36
- "The Snow Maiden" By Alexander Ostrovsky
  
- From *Russian Fairy Tales*
  1. "Ivan the Peasant and the Thumb-sized Man" pp. 262-268
  2. "Vasilisa the Beautiful" pp. 439-447
  3. "Maria Morevna" pp. 553-562
  4. "Prince Ivan, the Firebird, and the Grey Wolf" pp. 612-624

IN-PERSON MEETING #1: Ivan Ivanov-Vano's *The Snow Maiden*

### WEEK 4 Alexander Pushkin and Fairy Tales

- "The Tale of Tsar Saltan" by Alexander Pushkin
- "The Golden Cockerel" by Alexander Pushkin

### WEEK 5 The Structure of Fairy Tales

- "The Method and Material" and "The Functions of Dramatis Personae" from *Morphology of the Folktale* by Vladimir Propp
  
- From *Russian Fairy Tales*
  1. "The Magic Swan Geese" pp. 349-351
  2. "The Crystal Mountain" pp. 482-485

## **WEEK 6 The Uses of Enchantment pt. 1**

- *The Uses of Enchantment* by Bruno Bettelheim
  1. Introduction 3-19
  2. Two-sibling Tales, pp. 78-83, 90-96
  3. Youngest Child Tales, pp. 102-111
- *Russian Fairy Tales*
  1. "The Three Kingdoms" pp. 49-53
  2. "The Armless Maiden" pp. 294-299
  3. "The Magic Swan Geese" pp. 349-351
  4. "Shemiaka the Judge" pp. 625-627
  5. "Misery" pp. 20-24
  6. "Two Ivans, Soldier's Sons" pp. 463- 475

## **WEEK 7 The Uses of Enchantment pt. 2**

- *The Uses of Enchantment* by Bruno Bettelheim
  1. Stepmother Tales, pp. 66-73
  2. Sleeping Beauty Tales, pp. 225-236
  3. Animal Spouse Tales, pp. 282-291, 303-310
- "The Little Scarlet Flower" by Sergei Aksakov
- *Russian Fairy Tales*
  1. "Prince Ivan and Princess Martha" pp.79-86
  2. "The Enchanted Princess" pp. 600-611
  3. "The Frog Princess" pp.119-123
  4. "The Snotty Goat" pp. 200-202

IN PERSON MEETING #2 Aleksander Rou's *Morozko*

## **WEEK 8 EXAM 1**

### **WEEK 9 Feminism and Fairy Tales pt. 1**

- "Someday My Prince Will Come: Female Acculturation Through the Fairy Tale" by Marcia K. Lieberman, from *Don't Bet on the Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairy Tales in North America and England*
- *Russian Fairy Tales*
  1. "The Wondrous Wonder, the Marvelous Marvel" pp. 13-15
  2. "The Bad Wife" pp. 56-57
  3. "The Wise Little Girl" pp. 252-255
  4. "The Wise Maiden and the Seven Robbers" pp. 134-140
  5. "The Indiscreet Wife" pp. 226-227
  6. "The Goldfish" pp. 528-532

## **WEEK 10 SPRING BREAK**

### **WEEK 11 Feminism and Fairy Tales pt. 2**

- "Wicked Stepmothers" by Marina Warner, from *From the Beast to the Blonde*
- "The Queen's Looking Glass" by Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, from *Don't Bet on the Prince*
- "The Magic Mirror" By Aleksandr Afanas'ev
  
- *Russian Fairy Tales*
  1. "Burenushka the Little Red Cow" pp. 146-150
  2. "Jack Frost" pp. 366-369
  3. "The Maiden Tsar" pp. 229-234

### **WEEK 12 Marxism and Fairy Tales**

- "Introduction" and "Breaking the Disney Spell" from *Fairy Tale as Myth* by Jack Zipes
  
- *Russian Fairy Tales*
  1. "Salt" pp. 40-44

IN PERSON MEETING #3: Anna Melikian's *The Mermaid*

### **WEEK 13 Soviet Fairy Tales pt. 1**

- Selections from *The Soviet Novel* by Katerina Clark
- "The Tale of the Military Secret" by Arkady Gaidar
- "The Flower of Seven Colors" by Valentin Kataev
- "The Old Genie Khottabych" by Lazar Lagin

### **WEEK 14 Soviet Fairy Tales pt. 2**

- *The Dragon* by Evgeny Shvarts

### **WEEK 15 Contemporary Fairy Tales**

- "The Cute Little Redhead" and "Silky Hair" by Nina Sadur
- "Revenge" and "The Cabbage Patch Mother" by Lyudmila Petrushevskaya

## **WEEK 16 EXAM 2**