EXPO E-25, Section 8 (14637)
ACADEMIC WRITING AND CRITICAL READING:
FAIRY TALES AND THE LIFE OF IMAGINATION
Harvard Extension School
Fall 2015

Instructor: Dr. Elisabeth Sharp McKetta | mcketta.harvard@gmail.com
Classroom & time: Online classroom | Tues. 7:40-9:40pm EST

Overview: Even before the Brothers Grimm penned the fairy tales of their childhood, these folktales carried widespread cultural messages about survival, morality, growing up, and about how humans ought to make meaning in an uncertain world. This course examines fairy tales both vertically (how they originated and evolved) and horizontally (how they spread and keep spreading and to what extent they have roots in our unconscious minds). We will look closely at the constructions of both types of evaluation in EXPO E-25, using fairy tales as the focus for our analysis and critical writing. We will read modern adaptations of old stories, asking why, in this historical time when so many more realistic stories demand our attention, would a cultural obsession with myth, legends, and fairy tales arise? Unit I considers the classic fairy tales as building blocks for the stories we tell about our lives, asking students to pick a single fairy tale to analyze and become an expert on. Unit II focuses on contemporary authors who adapt fairy tale motifs, and it culminates in a comparison essay that looks at the source fairy tale’s roots in the adaptive text. Unit III surveys major voices in fairy tale criticism and builds upon each student’s writing thus far to engage one or more critics in discussing how this fairy tale functions in our culture today. In this course you will write a three essays and three short response papers. Over the semester, you will gain improved reading and writing skills and emerge from the course able to perform sophisticated upper-level literary analyses of many types of texts.

Reading: Required: Coursepack on class website
Recommended: Hacker and Sommers, The Bedford Handbook (8th ed.)

Grading: 10% — 3 Exercises + Peer Review
25% — Essay 1
30% — Essay 2
35% — Essay 3

Writing: You’ll write three double-spaced essays, each with one draft and one revision. To get the most out of the course, you need to make each draft a complete, full-length essay with a controlling idea, organization, and supporting evidence, and conclusion. You’ll receive feedback on your draft from your peers and me, and after substantial re-working of that draft, you’ll submit a revision. We will begin many classes with a short writing exercise dedicated
to responding to a question about the reading. These “pre-draft” exercises both generate ideas to further develop in class discussion, and they also provide valuable seed material or building blocks for your essays.

**Online Courses:** Harvard Extension School’s website Division of Continuing Educations offers an overview of online courses which you may access here: [http://people.dce.harvard.edu/~jjackson/NewUsers.html](http://people.dce.harvard.edu/~jjackson/NewUsers.html). Because this class is taught in a participatory seminar format, there will be no lecture videos, rather recordings of each class will be available to registered students. Students will benefit from the classes conducted in Blackboard Collaborate as well as from the resources on our course website. Before registering and attending our first class, students are expected to be familiar with Harvard Extension School’s distance education policies, which you may access here: [http://www.extension.harvard.edu/distance-education/how-distance-education-works](http://www.extension.harvard.edu/distance-education/how-distance-education-works). If you have questions about the technical aspects of the course, need help with downloading the appropriate software or accessing our classroom website link, please go to this website: [http://www.extension.harvard.edu/distance-education/how-distance-education-works/online-video-courses](http://www.extension.harvard.edu/distance-education/how-distance-education-works/online-video-courses). For answers to Harvard Extension School’s FAQs, please go here: [http://www.extension.harvard.edu/distance-education/frequently-asked-questions](http://www.extension.harvard.edu/distance-education/frequently-asked-questions).

**Peer Review:** Each essay is preceded by one peer review. You will have a peer review group of 3-4 students throughout the semester, and before each essay you are responsible for closely reading all of the essays in your group and giving each other written comments for improvement. The point of peer reviews is to work together to locate what these papers are working to say and then give informed, respectful suggestions to help the writer say it more effectively. Indeed, responding to your peers’ work will help you become a sharper critic of your own writing; the more you give, the more you get. Using the peer review worksheet to guide your comments, use the Microsoft comment function to make observations and notes on your peers’ essays. Please cc- me in the email when sending comments to your peers’ essays.

**Schedule:** Writing courses at Harvard are rigorous and move along at a quick and steady pace; we must make the most of the time we have together each week. You are expected to be logged on and to be fully prepared to participate when class begins—that is, to have done all the required reading and writing assigned for that class. Be sure your technology is in good working order, that you keep your work backed up, and that you know where you can turn for help if your technology fails. No late exercises are accepted. Late essays lose a letter grade for each day late. All assignments must be emailed to mcketta.harvard@gmail.com by MIDNIGHT (12am EST) on the date listed.

**Attendance:** Because Writing Program courses proceed by sequential writing activities, your consistent attendance is essential even in an online class. If you are absent without medical excuse more than once, you are eligible to be officially excluded and failed. On your first unexcused absence, you will
receive a letter from me warning you of your situation. Any student who is more than 10 minutes late in joining class will be counted as absent. If you must miss a class, please notify me by email in advance, and consult our class website for recorded classes and any missed materials. This is a seminar class in which everyone’s active participation is not only encouraged, but expected. Sharing ideas—especially those you may feel tentative about—is a mark of intellectual generosity. Registered students should come to the first class familiar with our online classroom; you should also have a microphone so that you can participate in class discussions.

Completion of Work: Because this course is a planned sequence of writing, you must write all of the assignments to pass the course. If you fail to submit work when it is due, you will receive a letter from me reminding you of these requirements. The letter will specify the new due date by which you must submit the late work. If you fail to submit a substantial draft of the piece of writing by this new due date, you are eligible to be excluded from the course and failed.

Conferences: Before each essay is due, you are responsible for scheduling a conference with me during mutually convenient times. These conferences will be devoted to discussing how to revise your essay to make it express more effectively what you want to say. Please prepare for these conferences by rereading your draft and making some notes for yourself regarding the possible ways you might revise it. A missed conference counts as an absence.

Writing Center: Take advantage of the resources available to you through the Extension School’s Writing Center in Grossman Library. Students enrolled in online courses may schedule appointments up to one week in advance, but are limited to two tutorials per week totaling no more than 7 tutorials per semester. To request a tutorial, send an email detailing the course you are enrolled in, an explanation of the assignment and due date to writing_center@dcemail.harvard.edu. Attach your assignment in Word (.doc or .docx) or Google Docs. As always when seeking feedback, ask specific questions and explain your concerns about your writing. You should receive a response within 72 hours. If you are a local student, the Writing Center asks that you come for an in-person tutorial. Their website is: www.extension.harvard.edu/resources/writing-center.

Submitting Work: All exercises, drafts, and final versions of essays must be titled, word-processed (in Microsoft Word), double-spaced, paginated, and with one-inch margins left, right, top, and bottom. Your name must appear on the first page. Every essay submission (drafts and final versions) should be accompanied by a short letter to me explaining the idea of the essay, its thesis argument, the challenges in its composition, and its strengths and weaknesses as you see them. These cover letters are not needed for the exercises. Always proofread your work before you submit it. Error-ridden essays—whether due to mechanical or formatting errors—will be marked down. For this course,
please use the MLA in-text citation style. Refer to the Harvard Guide to Using Sources: http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do.

When submitting final drafts of the essays, you are expected to have read and learned from all comments on earlier exercises. I will grade only the final version of each essay, but I will comment on each first draft that is submitted on time. In grading your revised essays, I will check to see that you’ve addressed comments that your peers and I have made. In grading, “A” means exceptional, “B” means good, “C” means adequate, “D” means deficient, and “E” means unacceptable. You must complete all written assignments to pass the course. Unlike your essays, your writing exercises will be evaluated only with a check plus (✓+), check (✓), or check minus (✓-). Please be advised that final grades are indeed final.

Students with Disabilities: The Extension School is committed to providing an accessible academic community. The Disability Services Office offers a variety of accommodations and services to students with documented disabilities. See: www.extension.harvard.edu/resources-policies/resources/disability-services-accessibility.

Academic Integrity: You are responsible for understanding Harvard Extension School policies on academic integrity (www.extension.harvard.edu/resources-policies/student-conduct/academic-integrity) and how to use sources responsibly. Not knowing the rules, misunderstanding the rules, running out of time, submitting “the wrong draft”, or being overwhelmed with multiple demands are not acceptable excuses. There are no excuses for failure to uphold academic integrity. To support your learning about academic citation rules, please visit the Harvard Extension School Tips to Avoid Plagiarism (www.extension.harvard.edu/resources-policies/resources/tips-avoid-plagiarism), where you’ll find links to the Harvard Guide to Using Sources and two, free, online 15-minute tutorials to test your knowledge of academic citation policy. The tutorials are anonymous open-learning tools.

Proofreading: To have his or her content be taken seriously, a writer must understand:
- Semicolons vs. colons vs. commas
- Comma use in general (how to avoid comma splices and run-ons)
- Complete sentences vs. incomplete sentences
- Its vs. It’s, Their vs. There vs. They’re, Who’s vs. Whose, Lie vs. Lay
- How to use clear, specific language (not vague terms or clichés)
- Active vs. passive verbs (“The dog bit me” vs. “I was bitten by the dog”)

Essay 1: Interpretation of a single fairy tale (4-5pp). Choose a fairy tale that you wish to focus on for the semester. It should be a story that interests you both intellectually and personally. Reread one classic version of the story, marking passages that perplex and interest you; jot down in the margins any questions or ideas you have about what this story might mean. Summarize the story in a sentence or two and say what issue or issues it engages. Pose a question about what the story means. It should be a real question to which there is no single, easy answer, and it should tap into what you find genuinely intriguing
about the fairy tale. Pick 5-6 passages that feel significant in addressing your question. Quote each passage and cite it. Aiming for about a paragraph per passage, describe how each passage works (or doesn’t work) to support your interpretation. What do you make of the action unfolding? What is being lost or learned? Notice the language: which words are noteworthy or puzzling? Lengthen your findings and fill in their gaps, turning them in a short essay on what overall themes or lessons do you think this fairy tale is offering? Guide us through the story as if you are a tour-guide taking visitors through a city, showing us your version of it. Craft an argument with a defensible thesis: an opinion, hunch, or claim of your own that uses close-reading of your chosen passages to uphold an interpretation of this fairy tale.

Exercise 1: Turn in your question + an analysis of 4 passages.

Essay 2: Comparison of a classic fairy tale with an adaptation (6-7pp): Broaden your findings from Essay 1 in order to compare your chosen fairy tale with a modern adaptation of it. Your adaptation can be a course text or an outside text (film, book, song, painting etc.) Follow the steps from Essay 1 to annotate, close-read, and form a question and an interpretation of the adaptation you’ve chosen. State an arguable claim about this interpretation and use passages or examples from the text to support and complicate your claim. How does this adaptation draw from the original tale in question? How and why does it deviate? What do you make of the balance of faithfulness and creative license that the adaptation takes from the original? What differing perspectives do these two stories offer on the qualities of character it takes to survive in an uncertain world? Compare your classic fairy tale to this adaptation, paying close attention to how the author of the adaptive text (or director/singer/artist) uses fairy tale motifs, how the images or language works, and how the adaptation as a whole brings its audience to a place of growth, revelation, or wisdom.

Exercise 2: Turn in your question + an analysis of 4 adaptive passages.

Essay 3: Engagement with a fairy tale critic (7-9pp). Building upon your first two essays, invite a critical text into your discussion, bringing the critic’s perspective into account as you engage at an even deeper level your questions about what these fairy tales and adaptations seem to be saying about growth, wisdom, survival, or a topic of your choice. Engage this critic as you analyze your fairy tale, putting forth your own compelling idea as a response. To begin, summarize the criticism briefly; neutral summary is the best way to ensure that you have understood the critical debate before entering it. What argument is this critic making? What are the main points? How are these points supported? Next, consider what truth the critic has to offer you. How does the evidence of your personal experience, your observations, or your writing in this course affirm or disaffirm the author’s ideas? Finally, take a position in relation to one of the critic’s ideas: you may agree, disagree, partly agree contest, expand, or find another way to respond to or build upon the critic’s argument. Make sure your response contains a thesis of your own, expressing what point you have to make within the conversation, and why it should it be heard.

Exercise 3: Turn in your question + an analysis of 4 critical passages.
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<th>Write (due midnight)</th>
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<td><strong>Films:</strong> Disney’s “Sleeping Beauty” (1959) + Maleficent’</td>
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<td><strong>CFT:</strong> “Beauty &amp; Beast”</td>
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<td><strong>CFT:</strong> “Hansel &amp; Gretel”; CP: “Snow Queen,” film “Frozen”</td>
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