

Russian Fairy Tales
RUT 3514
(Section 027B)
(3 credits + GenEd H & N)
MWF 7 (207 Leigh Hall)

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Dept. of Languages, Literatures,
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(or by appointment)



Course Description and Goals

Folk beliefs are a rich and enduring component of Russian culture. This course will introduce you to a wide selection of Russian folklore and fairy tales, and will examine the aesthetic, social, historical, and psychological values that they reflect. You will develop or enhance your understanding of the continuing influence of fairy tales and folk beliefs in Russian literature, music, film, popular culture, and everyday life. The course also provides a general introduction to the study of folklore and fairy tales from a variety of theoretical and comparative perspectives including the Western fairy tale tradition (the Grimms, Perrault, Disney, etc.).

Upon successful completion of the course, you should be able to discuss several approaches to the study of fairy tales, especially as they apply to the body of texts contained in Afanasiev's *Russian Fairy Tales*. In particular, you will be able to:

- Interpret the symbolic meaning of Russian pagan and Christian customs and rituals;
- Classify Russian fairy tale narratives according to thematic cycles;
- Identify the main stylistic and structural components of Russian fairy tale narratives;
- Explain the function of fairy tales in a child's psychological development and the means by which this function is fulfilled;
- Explain the treatment of traditional gender roles in fairy tale narratives and judge the extent to which these narratives may reflect or influence the acculturation of men and women;
- Explain the role of fairy tale texts in economic, social, and political contexts;
- Explain the means by which fairy tale and folk motifs are transferred to other artistic media, such as the visual arts and music;
- Recognize similarities and differences between Russian and Western fairy tale texts.

Credit and Prerequisites

This course carries three credits and, once approved (with a grade of “C” or higher), will satisfy General Education requirements for Humanities (H) and International (N) courses. There are no prerequisites and no knowledge of Russian language is required.

Course Requirements and Grading

You will be required to:

- Complete the assignments scheduled for each class meeting (which may range from 10-50 pages per class) and be prepared to discuss them formally and informally in class;
- Participate actively and intelligently in class discussions, exercises, and quizzes;
- Take the three scheduled tests.

Your course grade will be determined initially by your performance on tests and in class attendance and discussions, as follows:

- 3 Tests: 70% (weighted evenly)
- Class participation: 10%
- Presentations: 10%
- Quizzes: 10%

Tests

Each of the tests will consist of 4 parts: multiple-choice and true-false questions; short-answer identification questions; 2–3 page essay question; 1–2 page critical analysis of an unfamiliar text. Each section will be weighted approximately the same (~25%). Test and final grades will be based on the following scale:

A = 93 – 100%	C- = 70 – 72%
A- = 90 – 92%	D+ = 67 – 69%
B+ = 87 – 89%	D = 63 – 66%
B = 83 – 86%	D- = 60 – 62%
B- = 80 – 82%	E = less than 60%
C+ = 77 – 79%	
C = 73 – 76%	

Tests are not cumulative by design, but will likely require cumulative knowledge, as you will constantly be building on your knowledge base and skill set over the course of the semester. **There will be no final exam in this course.** Grades will be posted in the gradebook portion of the Canvas e-Learning tool.

Tentative test schedule (dates subject to change with fair advanced warning):

- Test 1 – Friday, January 29
- Test 2 – Friday, March 18
- Test 3 – Wednesday, April 20

Make-up test policy: Make-up tests will be offered only in the case of legitimate conflicts well-documented in advance. Please contact me as early as possible if you think you have a scheduling conflict. If needed, make-up tests will be administered at 7:30 AM on the Monday immediately following the regularly scheduled test. Make-up test structure will by necessity differ from the primary tests and consist primarily of a series of short essays. Make-up tests will be fair, but certainly no easier than the regular tests.

Attendance. Although not built into the course requirements, regular attendance is strongly recommended and the best guarantee of succeeding in the class. Regular attendance will better ensure that you engage in and properly absorb readings and lecture material. Much of the test material will come from lectures and discussions not fully represented by posted lecture slides. **If you do attend a class meeting, it will be assumed you are prepared to participate.** If you miss a class meeting, you will still be responsible for all course content and logistical information covered during the class. Class will begin and end promptly, so please be on time.

Film screenings. The course will likely feature two evening film screenings (tentatively scheduled for Friday, Jan. 22nd and Friday, April 1st), both around 7:30 p.m. If you are unable to attend a screening, you must find an alternative means of watching the film prior to the class meeting during which it will be discussed. Both films will be available on reserve at Smathers Library West.

Guidelines for Class Participation, Presentations and Quizzes

- Participation. Under the assumption that long-term learning and personal development depend primarily on one's active engagement in the subject matter at hand, our class meetings will often take the form of group discussions of the assigned readings and broader issues relating to them. Background cultural, historical, social, political, and theoretical information will be provided in the form of short lectures. For this reason it is essential not only that you complete assignments promptly and thoughtfully but also that you **come to class prepared to share one or two coherent and articulate ideas, questions, or opinions.** Study questions for readings slated for discussion will be made available at the course website and should be consulted prior to class. If you need help speaking out, let me know and I'll make sure to include you in on the discussion. I reserve the right to call on students who haven't been participating and will occasionally use the "Socratic method" (randomly calling on students to answer/comment) to mix things up. You may also earn participation points by commenting on posted items in the "Discussion" section of the Canvas e-learning platform.

- Presentations
 - *In-class commentary and analysis.* All students will have the opportunity to **prepare and deliver 2-3 minute oral presentations** on assigned readings as a means of initiating class discussion over the course of the semester. In-class presentations should not exceed 3 minutes in length, should be delivered without reading (though notes may be used), and based on the assigned reading. **A good presentation will have the following features:**
 - It will be articulate -- well thought out in advance (but not read), well organized, well delivered, engaging, and cogent (brief and to the point);
 - It will begin with a brief summary of some of the more important parts of the reading, then turn to an aspect or aspects that you view as particularly noteworthy;
 - It will include specific examples from the course readings;
 - It will have a discernible beginning, middle, and end.

Presentation sign-up sheets will be made available in class and/or online.
 - *Independent commentary and analysis.* Students will likewise have the chance to select, independently, 2 examples of folklore or fairytales from contemporary everyday life and analyze and comment on them using tools and issues relevant to the course. These can be books, stories, movies, television series, news stories, or other episodes or artifacts from everyday life. Commentaries should be posted to the Discussion section of the Canvas e-learning platform and should contain the following elements:
 - The title and a brief description of the source, including a link, if available.
 - A paragraph commenting on how course issues and analytical tools help better understand and appreciate the source.
 - A paragraph of commentary on broader issues or questions the source raises—about the author, the genre, the culture from which the source comes, or anything else deemed interest and relevant to the student.
 - Deadlines for independent commentaries: #1: Friday, Feb. 26 (midnight); #2: Monday, Apr. 25 (midnight). (Feel free to complete these assignments anytime prior to the posted deadlines!)
 - All presentations will be graded using a 10-point scale. Grades will be based relatively equally on both style and content as outlined in the bullet points above. Grades will be posted in the “Gradebook” section of the Canvas e-Learning tool.
- Quizzes. These will be administered—both in-class, and online—over the course of the semester to assess your basic comprehension of the reading assignments. Some will be announced in advance, others will not. Quizzes will be short,

factually oriented, and based on the readings due the day on which the quiz is given. If you miss class on the day of an in-class quiz, you will receive a failing grade for that quiz. Grades will be posted in the "Gradebook" section of the Canvas e-Learning tool. (Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped prior to the calculation of final grades.)

- The easiest way to qualify for the highest grade on this portion of the course, is to do the assigned readings, volunteer for at least one prepared presentation during the term, and contribute occasionally to informal discussions.

Course Etiquette, Communication and Technology

- Please be on time and refrain from gathering up materials until I indicate that class is over.
- Outside of class and office hours, feel free to reach me by email (mgorham@ufl.edu) with inquiries or issues that are not clarified in class meetings, the course syllabus, the online "Weekly Assignments" page, or posted handouts. If you do send email, practice your informal, but official, communication skills by including a proper form of address. "Dear Professor Gorham" or even "Hi Dr. Gorham" are fine, but "Hey" or omitting a greeting altogether are not. Also be sure to clearly identify yourself somewhere in the message with first-name + last-name – at least in the opening message of a communication string. If you abide by these simple rules of email etiquette, you can expect an answer within one working day, but not immediately.
- All phones must be turned off and left off during class meetings. Laptops may be used during class for course-related activities only. Students found in violation of this policy may be asked to leave class and/or have their participation grade reduced.

Extra-Credit Option

You may take advantage of an optional extra-credit assignment, which will be worth up to four percentage points added onto your final course average:

- Submit a 4-6 page (double-spaced) paper in the form of an original fairy tale written in imitation of the genre as we will study it.

Extra-credit assignments will be due by 5 PM on Monday, April 25th. See "Extra-credit Assignments" handout for details.

Course Materials

Required Texts (available for purchase through local textbook vendors)

- Afanasiev, Aleksandr. *Russian Fairy Tales*. New York: Pantheon. 1973.
- Ivanits, Linda J. *Russian Folk Belief*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe. 1992.

Please note: The two textbooks and assigned films will be available for 2-hour, in-library reserve at Smathers Library West.

Students with Disabilities

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to me when requesting accommodation.

Academic Honesty

All students must be familiar with and will be held accountable to the University's "Student Conduct & Honor Code" explained in full at: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>. Please review these guidelines and contact me with any questions or concerns.