

RUT 3514: Russian Fairy Tales



Prince Ivan and the Firebird (Ivan Bilibin, 1899)

**Prof. M. Gorham • UF Russian Studies • Dept. of Languages, Literatures and Cultures
Class #27007 | Section #35F4 • GenEd H & N • 3 credits**

**MWF 4
Fall 2021**

Be they manifested in stories, fiction, film, music, popular culture, or everyday life, folk tales and beliefs play an outsized role in shaping individual, social, and national identity. “Russian Fairy Tales” delves into the rich tradition of Slavic lore, employing a variety of critical tools and cross-cultural perspectives (the Grimms, Perrault, Disney, etc.) to better understand and appreciate the magic of their enduring impact.

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Zoom Office Hours location: <https://ufl.zoom.us/my/gorham> (Meeting ID: 523 004 7250)

Course Description

To grapple with the kinds of open-ended and complex intellectual challenges they will face as critical, creative, and self-reflective adults navigating a complex and interconnected world, students of “Russian Fairy Tales” will learn and apply methods and analytical tools from the humanities to a broad range of folkloric and fairy tale texts—primarily from the Russian canon, but also from relevant European and American traditions—in order to mine evidence, create arguments, articulate ideas, and question their own lived experiences and pre-established views about how folklore and fairy tales in particular—including cultural artifacts that make use of their genre, styles, motifs, and themes—help shape, project, maintain, legitimate, and potentially transform identity on multiple levels, including individual, community, gender, class and national.

The first 4 weeks of the course focus on folklore more broadly, using the rich Russian tradition to explore how and why popular stories about origins, creation, biblical personages, saints, devils, sorcerers, witches, and domestic and nature spirits persisted from pre-modern times through to the modern era, the ways they grappled with fundamental issues of good and evil, right and wrong, fate and agency, and the basic sense that as mere mortals we are frail and fallible, subject to forces in everyday life well beyond our control. The middle and largest section of the course uses the spectacularly dramatic canon of Russian fairy tales as a springboard into further explorations of the power of make-believe tales in giving shape, definition, legitimacy, and authority to common perceptions of who we are as individuals, siblings, parents, children, girls, boys, and citizens of a community or nation. To better unlock the secrets of these seemingly simple stories, students will acquire an analytical toolbox that includes stylistic, structural, psychological, feminist, social, historical, economic, and political approaches to understanding not only the Russian fairy tale tradition, but the more well-known stories by Perrault, the Grimms, and Disney, to name but a few. Indeed, a broader goal of the course is to equip students to better identify, analyze and question the influence and impact of popular cultural artifacts they encounter daily beyond the walls of the classroom. To this end, the final 3 weeks look at the issue of cultural adaptation and transference to better understand why and how the fairy tale genre has evolved so successfully across time and borders to persist as a potent tool for projecting models and explanations for who we are and why.

Brief Summary of Graded Work (see below for details)

- Participation: 10%
- Independent analysis: 10%
- In-class presentation: 10%
- 5–8 pop-quizzes: 10%
- Test 1: 20%
- Test 2: 20%
- Test 3: 20%

Course-specific Student Learning Objectives

At the end of “Russian Fairy Tales,” students will be able to...

1. Identify, describe, and explain the history, underlying theory and methodologies in humanistic study of the Russian fairy tale and folklore tradition, as well as European and American traditions relating to it. As these methodologies, works and ideas continue to be relevant in contemporary Russia, Europe, and America, students will also be able to identify, describe, and explain their position in historical, cultural, economic, political, and social experiences and processes that characterize the contemporary world. Given the central role folklore and fairy tales play as carriers of contemporary cultural identity, students will be able to identify, describe, and explain the history, theories, and methodologies used to examine essential questions about the human condition, especially the formation, maintenance, and transformation of identities.
2. Identify and analyze key elements, values, assumptions, biases and influences that shape thought in the Russian folklore and fairy tale tradition. Students will approach issues and problems from the perspectives of multiple genres, as well as multiple disciplinary and analytical positions, and will learn how perspectives of form, style, psychology, sociology, history, gender, and politics fundamentally inform the tales we tell and are told. In a learning environment that promotes students becoming more cognizant of their own lived experiences with folklore and fairy tales, the juxtaposition of these analytical lenses will foster the analysis and evaluation of essential questions about the human condition, especially with respect to identity.
3. Communicate—clearly and effectively—knowledge, thoughts, and reasoning, and develop and present clear and effective responses, about Russian fairy tale and folklore traditions, their relationship to European and American traditions more familiar to learners, their relevance to more contemporary issues and manifestations of identity, particularly in the context of popular cultural narratives where the genres continue to enjoy outsized presence and influence.
4. Analyze, evaluate, and critically reflect on connections between course content and their intellectual, personal, and professional development at UF and beyond as global citizens. The course introduces students to alternative approaches to personal, social, regional, and national identity, which will allow students to critically reflect on their own situation and connect to those outside of UF and the USA who may not understand their selfhood in the same fashion.

Description of Graded Work

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. Moreover, if you miss a class meeting in which one of the 5–8 pop-quizzes is administered, you will receive a failing grade for that quiz. Class will begin and end promptly, so please be on time. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>.

Participation (10%)

Rationale. 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 will also have the chance to earn participation points through written contributions, usually in the form of discussion questions and threads posted in Canvas.

Assessment. I will do my best to know every student's name by the end of the second week of classes and, in the interim, will ask that students introduce themselves before contributing to class discussion. At midterm and the end of the semester, I will tally all points, establish a reasonable grading scale (excluding outliers and extra-credit participation points), and assign and post preliminary grades accordingly. If your preliminary grade is lower than 70% or you have any questions concerning your participation performance, feel free to schedule a consultation to discuss strategies for improvement. See Canvas for grading rubric.

Independent analysis (10%)

Independent analysis 1 gives you the opportunity to select, independently, an example of folklore or a fairytale from contemporary everyday life and analyze and comment on it using tools and issues relevant to the course. The source can be a book, a story, a movie, a television series, a news story, or other episode or artifact. See Canvas for assignment details and grading rubric.

In-class Presentation (10%)

Each student will have the opportunity to prepare and deliver one 3-minute oral presentation 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. Grading rubric and detailed guidelines on “What makes a good presentation” will be available for viewing on Canvas.

Quizzes (10%)

5–8 pop-quizzes spread across the semester will serve as a means of assessing your familiarity and ability to absorb weekly assignments.

Tests 1, 2 & 3 (20% + 20% + 20%)

Three 50-minute in-class tests will measure your mastery of the material covered, including primary source content, historical background, and the methods, analytical tools, and other interpretive lenses used in the course to make sense of assigned material.

Grading Scale

For information on how UF assigns grade points, visit: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

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

Required & Recommended Course Materials

Required in full:

- Afanasiev, Aleksandr. 1973. *Russian Fairy Tales*. New York: Pantheon.
- Ivanits, Linda J. 1992. *Russian Folk Belief*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe. (Also available as e-book through Library West)

Required and recommended readings available online or through Course Reserves:

- Bettelheim, Bruno. 1976. *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. [excerpts]
- Gogol, Nikolai. 1998. “Viy,” in *The Collected Works of Nikolai Gogol*, 155–93.
- Lieberman, Marcia K. 1986. “‘Someday My Prince Will Come’: Female Acculturation through the Fairy Tale,” in *Don’t Bet on the Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairy Tales in North American and England*, ed. Jack Zipes, 185–200. New York: Methuen.
- Sadur, Nina. 1995. “Witch’s Tears,” in *Half a Revolution: Contemporary Fiction by Russian Women*, ed. Masha Gessen, 264–69.
- Tolstaya, Tatiana. 1992. “The Poet and the Muse,” in *Sleepwalker in a Fog*, trans. Jamey Gambrell, 117–31. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Warner, Marina. 1994. “Wicked Stepmothers: The Sleeping Beauty,” in *From the Beast to the Blond: On Fairy Tales and Their Tellers*, 61–83. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Zipes, Jack. 1999. “Breaking the Disney Spell,” in *The Classic Fairy Tales*, ed. Maria Tatar, 332–52. New York: W. W. Norton & Co.

All other assigned material will be available through Canvas.

Weekly Topics & Assignments

See link at Canvas homepage (<https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/440242/pages/weekly-themes-and-assignments>)

Required UF Policies

Students Requiring Accommodation

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

UF Evaluations Process

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Counseling and Wellness Center

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

The Writing Studio

The writing studio is committed to helping University of Florida students meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. Visit the writing studio online at <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> or in 2215 Turlington Hall for one-on-one consultations and workshops.

General Education Learning Objectives

Note: This final section of the syllabus provides fine-grained details on how the course addresses the spirit and goals of the General Education program. If you're interested in the meta-picture, read on...

Humanities (H) Objectives: Humanities courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general. Students will learn to identify and to analyze the key elements, biases and influences that shape thought. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives.

Humanities SLOs: At the end of an "H" class, students will be able to...

- Identify, describe, and explain the history, underlying theory and methodologies used in the course (Content).
- Identify and analyze key elements, biases and influences that shape thought within the subject area. Approach issues and problems within the discipline from multiple perspectives (Critical Thinking).
- Communicate knowledge, thoughts and reasoning clearly and effectively (Communication).

International (N) Objectives: International courses promote the development of students' global and intercultural awareness. Students examine the cultural, economic, geographic, historical, political, and/or social experiences and processes that characterize the contemporary world, and thereby comprehend the trends, challenges, and opportunities that affect communities around the world. Students analyze and reflect on the ways in which cultural, economic, political, and/or social systems and beliefs mediate their own and other people's understanding of an increasingly connected world.

International SLOs: At the end of an "N" class, students will be able to...

- Identify, describe, and explain the historical, cultural, economic, political, and/or social experiences and processes that characterize the contemporary world (Content).
- Analyze and reflect on the ways in which cultural, economic, political, and/or social systems and beliefs mediate understandings of an increasingly connected contemporary world (Critical Thinking).