

**Freshman Seminar**  
**The Russian and Soviet Fairy Tale**

draft

Prof. Angela Brintlinger  
422 Hagerty Hall  
1775 College Road  
292-6326  
brintlinger.3@osu.edu

**Course Description:**

This freshman seminar will look at the Russian fairytale - beloved of children in Russia and elsewhere - and its Soviet versions, from Socialist Realist fairytales in the service of the state to the critique of the Soviet Union in satiric attacks on totalitarian culture.

**Objectives:**

- to master the “morphology of a folktale” and learn to analyze fairytale narratives
- to consider the ramifications of state-sponsored literature and totalitarian culture
- to investigate sendups, both satiric and serious, of official culture through the genre of the fairytale
- to create a bank of our own readings in the fairytale genres (story or film)

**Requirements:**

The course will meet once weekly to discuss readings and projects. Students will be required to develop a presentation of a fairytale text to share with the class. It is recommended that students keep a journal of their own analyses of fairytales during the course of the quarter in order to be able contextualize their own text for the final write-up (see “project write-up”).

*Text:*

*Politicizing Magic: An Anthology of Russian and Soviet Fairy Tales*, ed. by Marina Balina, Helena Goscilo and Mark Lipovetsky (Northwestern UP 2005)  
ISBN 0-8101-2031-3

*Requirements:*

Attendance and Class Participation	– 50%
Project Presentation	– 20%
Project Write-Up	– 30%

See below for a description of the presentation and write-up.

NOTES:

### *Disabilities:*

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please contact the Office for Disability Services at 614-292-3307 in room 150 Pomerene Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

### *Absences:*

This course meets ten times, for a total of 10 academic hours in the classroom. This means that two class meetings equals 20% of the course. You are expected to come to class prepared and participate in class discussions, and a “grade” will be recorded for each day of class on a scale of 1 to 5. (1= physical presence in the classroom, 5= active participation with evidence of knowledge of material and individual insight). These daily grades will translate into the 50% participation grade which is a component of your final grade.

### *Plagiarism:*

Plagiarism is the representation of another's works or ideas as one's own: it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas. All cases of suspected plagiarism, in accordance with university rules, will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct.

## **Project**

Each student will choose a fairytale (story or film) to study and present to the class. The presentation must include a handout, an analysis, and an attempt to consider the political and/or cultural uses of the fairytale. For this assignment, students may range outside of Russian culture and offer a comparison of the ideological usage of the fairytale beyond the Soviet parameters which we have been investigating. A list of potential texts will be provided.

## **Project Write-Up**

In the 10<sup>th</sup> week you will submit a “project write-up” based on your presentation. The write-up will include 1) your handout(s) from the presentation; 2) a written version of your analysis (2+ pages); 3) a short essay placing your text in the context of the fairytales you have studied throughout the quarter (~2 pages).

*Syllabus:*

Week 1

Vladimir Propp and the Morphology of a Folktale  
Introduction to concepts of Russian culture and of Socialist Realism

Week 2 **Folkloric Fairy Tales I**

“The Frog Princess,” “Baba Yaga,” “Vasilisa the Beautiful”  
Reading in *Politicizing Magic* 23-27, 32-33, 34-41

Week 3 **Folkloric Fairy Tales II**

“Tale of Prince Ivan, the Firebird, and the Gray Wolf,” “The Feather of Finist the Bright Falcon,” “Ilya Muromets and the Dragon”  
Reading in *Politicizing Magic* 51-61, 62-68, 85-90

Week 4 **Fairy Tales of Socialist Realism I**

“Tale of the Military Secret, Malchish-Kibalchish and His Solemn Word” (Arkady Gaidar) **OR** “The Golden Key, or the Adventures of Buratino” (Alexey Tolstoy)  
Reading in *Politicizing Magic* 123-130 **OR** 132-164

Week 5 **Fairy Tales of Socialist Realism II**

“The Old Genie Khottabych: A Story of Make-Believe” (Lazar Lagin) **OR** “The Malachite Casket” (Pavel Bazhov)  
Reading in *Politicizing Magic* 165-196 **OR** 197-221

Week 6 **Fairy Tales of Socialist Realism III and Fairy Tales in Critique of Soviet Culture I**

“The Flower of Seven Colors” (Valentin Kataev) **AND** “Fairy Tales for Grown-Up Children” (Yevgeny Zamiatin)  
**OR**  
“The Dragon: A Satiric Fable in Three Acts” (Yevgeny Shvarts)  
Reading in *Politicizing Magic* 222-229 **AND** 251-266 **OR** 267-315

Week 7 **Fairy Tales in Critique of Soviet Culture II**

“Tale of the Troika” (Arkady and Boris Strugatsky) **AND** “That Very Munchausen”  
(Grigory Gorin)

**OR**

“Before the Cock Crows Thrice” (Vasily Shukshin)  
Reading in *Politicizing Magic* 316-344 **AND** 381-415; **OR** 345-380

Week 8 **Our Own Fairy Tales**  
Student Presentations

Week 9 **Our Own Fairy Tales**  
Student Presentations

Week 10 **Conclusions**  
**Project Write-Up Due**