

Folklore 241-Great Story Collections Spring 2011

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Compared with the reality which comes from being seen and heard, even the greatest forces of intimate life—the passions of the heart, the thoughts of the mind, the delights of the senses—lead to an uncertain, shadowy kind of existence unless and until they are transformed, deprivatized and deindividualized, as it were, into a shape to fit them for public appearance. The most current of such transformations occurs in storytelling....

Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition

This course is intended for those with no prior background in folklore or the literatures of the various cultures in the reading list. The texts range in age from the first century to the twentieth, and geographically from the Middle East to Europe and the United States. Each collection displays various techniques for collecting folk materials and making them concrete. Each in its own way also raises different issues of genre, legitimacy, canon formation, cultural values and context.

Students will be responsible for reading the collections themselves. Class discussions will focus on the historical context of each collection and the specific issues that have been important to scholars who have looked at them. Six short papers are required each taking a particular analytic perspective and applying it to one of the collections. Ten questions are offered as the subjects of the papers. No two papers can be written on the same book. Often, library research will be necessary. Each paper should be between 4-6 pages. The first one is due at the end of week 4; it may be revised. The first 3 will be due in the middle of the semester, then returned for changes, if necessary. Thus, it is possible to improve the papers before the final grade is given. All 6 are due a week after the final class meeting. Depending on the size of the class, everyone will be expected to tell a story every week. A different student will be assigned to record the stories. In one of the last classes, we will compare the different methods of recording and what we can deduce from them. Since the basis for the assignments will be presented in class, attendance is mandatory and will be considered in the final grade. There will also be a mid-term and a final.

There is also a short collecting project. Students are expected to collect 5 stories around a single theme and use a standard template to record them. The first half will consist of the stories. The second part will be a 5 page paper discussing them using concepts introduced in class.

The grades will be determined, roughly, in the following proportions:
 25% attendance/participation
 25% mid-term/final
 50% papers

Aesop. Aesop's Fables. Trans. by Laura Gibbs. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Attar, Farid Al-Din. Conference of the Birds. New York: Penguin, 1984

Boccaccio, Giovanni. The Decameron. Translated and edited by G.H. McWilliam. New York: Penguin, 1996

Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm. Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm. Trans. by Jack Zipes. 3rd edition. New York: Bantam, 2003

Hurston, Zora Neale. Of Mules and Men. New York: Harper Perennial, 1990.

Kalevala: or Poems of the Kaleva District. Comp. Elias Lonnrot, trans. by Francis Peabody Magoun. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963.

Randolph, Vance. Pissing in the Snow. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1976.

January 18/25: introduction. Requirements, basic concepts. Definitions.

February 1/8: Aesop. Aesop's Fables.

Texts, inclusion, exclusion, origin, and tradition

Read fables numbered 3, 5, 12, 22, 29, 33, 46, 54, 57, 70, 73, 79, 97, 104, 108, 112, 115, 117, 126, 129, 131, 136-137, 141, 151, 163, 166, 195, 254-256, 261, 263, 283, 350, 355, 365-367, 398, 408, 451, 462, 468, 483, 517, 528, 541, 573-578, 594

AND an additional 50 fables of your own choosing.

RESOURCES:

Carnes, Pack. Fable Scholarship: an Annotated Bibliography. New York: Garland, 1985
 Van Pelt Library Reference Stacks. Call Number: PN980 .C37 1985

Snodgrass, Mary Ellen. Encyclopedia of Fable. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 1998.
 Van Pelt Library Reference Stacks: Call Number: PN980 .S66 1998

<http://mythfolklore.net/aesopica/oxford/index.htm>

Paper 1 due February 8

February 15: library research

Attar, Farid Al-Din. Conference of the Birds

Does belief influence how narrative is told and what forms it might take? How is belief manifest in stories? What can we learn about people's beliefs from the stories they

tell? We will also watch a documentary on Islam and discuss the relationship of Attar to the faith.

RESOURCES:

Encyclopaedia of Islam. Leiden: Brill, 1954- . Copies in Van Pelt Reference Stacks, Van Pelt Middle East Seminar (Room 523) and University Museum
Library Reference: DS37 .E523

Index Islamicus: <http://hdl.library.upenn.edu/1017/9993>

Part 1 of collecting project due

February 22: Attar (cont.)

March 1/15: Boccaccio, Giovanni. The Decameron. **First set of papers due March 15.**

The world in and of the Decameron; framing devices as boundaries. Questions of gender. We will also begin to examine how stories have been transformed into other media beginning with Passolini's film of some stories from The Decameron.

RESOURCES:

Consoli, Joseph P. Giovanni Boccaccio : an annotated bibliography. New York: Garland, 1992. Van Pelt Library Call Number: PQ4277 .C66 1992

http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/dweb.shtml

First day Intro, nos. 1, 2

2nd day nos. 5, 7

3rd day Intro., no. 1, 10

4th day nos. 1, 5

5th day nos. 4, 5, 9, 10

6th day no. 5

7th day nos. 2, 10

9th day no. 2

10th day, no. 10

Conclusion

March 22/29: Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm. Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm.

Read the following stories:

1, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 28, 31, 32, 34, 35, 37, 38, 47, 49, 53, 54, 55, 60, 63, 64, 67, 81, 92, 96, 108, 114, 117, 126, 130, 136, 146, 148, 161, 176, 177, 204, 208, 209, 216, 217, 220, 234, 237, 269, 273, 274

Comparing: when is the story the same story and when is it different? Questions of nation and identity.

RESOURCES:

The Brothers Grimm and folktale / edited by James M. McGlathery, with Larry W. Danielson, Ruth E. Lorbe, and Selma K. Richardson. Urbana : University of Illinois Press, c1988. Van Pelt: PT 921 .B76 1988

<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/folklinks.html>

April 5/12: Kalevala: an Epic after Oral Tradition. Comp. Elias Lonnrot.

Tradition: authentic, real, fake, constructed? Nationality revisited and a riff on the Kalevala from Finnish television.

April 19: Randolph, Vance. Pissing in the Snow

Tales told in context: meaning and the sociology of texts.

Comparison of methods of recording.

April 26: Hurston, Zora Neale. Of Mules and Men

Questions of ethnicity and folklore in the American experience.

May 3: all six papers due. Collecting project due.

Questions for short essays:

1. What are some examples of ways in which these stories have been transformed for hearers other than the ones for which they were initially intended? To what extent does changing the medium of transmission change the message? How important is the medium as a means of conveying the message?
2. What beliefs are suggested by the stories? What is the perspective of the teller and who is the intended audience? Do they suggest a belief in a higher power and what its role might be? What kind of higher power? What are the values reflected in the stories?
3. How are gender roles played out? What are the means by which maleness and females are conveyed? Is age of the actors a factor in expressing gender? How so?
4. Is there any way in which the structure of the stories is similar? What common features do they have?
5. How traditional are the stories? What is their origin and how did they come to be important apart from their original context?
6. Write an example of the kind of story in one of the readings. Write a fable, for example. How did you go about writing in the genre? What factors did you take into consideration with it such as textual style, language complexity, poetic considerations, and audience. What characteristics make yours a good example of this genre? If you decide to use fables or jokes as your models, write 3 or 4 of them since they are genres which are typically very short. For fairy tales the suggestions at http://clover.slavic.pitt.edu/~tales/fairytale_guidelines.html are very helpful.

7. Find other examples of one of the stories. Are the 2 (or more) examples the same story? How are differences in culture manifest?
8. You have read 7 books compiled for different motives and methods. Compare five.
9. Compare fable 14 with Grimm tale no. 133 and Kalevala poem no. 42. (just kidding)
10. Recommend one of these books to someone who is 15 years old. Why did you choose it? Do the same for someone who is 40 and someone who is 70.