

SAMPLE INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROPOSAL: CREATIVE WRITING
SPRING 2009

Student: Serena Epstein. Advisor: Warren Rochelle.

Myth & Reality in Fiction Writing

Motivation and Preparation

I have always been fascinated with world mythology, folklore, and fairy tales. Especially interesting to me is their enduring connection to modern literature and relationship with the real world. Retellings are one of the most common ways that writers recontextualize these stories to emphasize their real-world applicability. I've studied this subject from many different angles (including fantasy literature, Norse mythology, Arthurian legend, Native American creation stories, and East Asian folklore) but have never had the opportunity to apply my knowledge in a comparable form, namely, a fictional piece of writing.

I intend to explore this further by reading scholarly analysis that discusses the basic themes of the root myths and stories, by studying retellings, and by further researching specific areas of global mythology. This research will guide and inspire a 15 to 20+ page fictional short story exploring the relationship between myth and reality, the relatability of retellings, and the relevance of storytelling in modern life.

Relevant Previous Coursework

ENGL 375Y: Fantasy

ENGL 302A: Introduction to Creative Writing

ENGL 306L: Literary Journal: Professional Practices in Publication

ENGL 375SS: Medieval Myth & Modern Narrative

MDFL201B: Germanic Epic Tradition

RELG 231H: Native American Religions

ENGL 353: Asian-American Literature

Course Structure

Biweekly readings, accompanied by one reflective blog post per two-week period. 15 to 20-page short story is to be worked on throughout the semester in progressive sections/installments, and due during finals week.

Course Materials

PRIMARY:

Favorite Folktales from Around the World (Jane Yolen)

Oxford Companion to World Mythology (David Leeming)

Sixty Folk-Tales from Exclusively Slavonic Sources (A. H. Wratislaw)

In Ghostly Japan (Lafcadio Hearn)

American Indian Myths and Legends (Richard Erdoes, Alfonzo Ortiz)

SECONDARY:

Black Heart, Ivory Bones (Ellen Datlow, Terri Windling)
Black Swan, White Raven (Ellen Datlow, Terri Windling)
The Penelopiad: The Myth of Penelope and Odysseus (Margaret Atwood)
Why Fairy Tales Stick: The Evolution and Relevance of a Genre (Jack Zipes)
From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and Their Tellers (Marina Warner)
The Triggering Town (Richard Hugo)

Timetable

WORK PERIOD	COURSEWORK
January 19 – February 8	<p>Selections from <i>Why Fairy Tales Stick</i> <i>From the Beast to the Blonde</i></p> <p>Due Feb. 9: -blog response 1 -story outline</p>
February 9 – February 22	<p>Selections from <i>Favorite Folktales from Around the World</i> <i>Oxford Companion to World Mythology</i></p> <p>Due Feb. 23: -blog response 2 -pages 1-4 of story</p>
February 23 – March 8	<p>Selections from <i>Black Heart, Ivory Bones</i> <i>Black Swan, White Raven</i></p> <p>Due March 9: -blog response 3 -pages 5-8 of story</p>
March 9 – March 22	<p>Selections from <i>Sixty Folk-Tales from Exclusively Slavonic Sources</i></p> <p>Due March 23: -blog response 4 -pages 9-12 of story</p>
March 23 – April 5	<p>Selections from <i>In Ghostly Japan</i> <i>American Indian Myths and Legends</i></p> <p>Due April 6: -blog response 5 -pages 13-16 of story</p>
April 6 – April 19	<i>The Triggering Town</i>

	Due April 20: -blog response 6 -pages 17-20 of story
April 20 – April 30	<i>The Penelopiad</i> revision work
May 1	Due: final draft