Once upon a time, fairy tales were not the Disneyfied children’s stories we know and love. To be sure, the original tales as published in the 19th century by German siblings Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm do not always end so happily ever after. Set in a world of torture, mutilation, and abandonment, the grim reality of our favorite tales would disturb small children and parents alike. This course delves into the darker side of fairy tales as we re-discover their roots in the German folklore tradition and compare the Grimm classics to contemporary adaptations on stage, screen, and television. Doing so will also allow us to uncover the hidden cultural messages that shape our behavior, gender roles, and desires.

We will seek answers to seemingly superficial questions, such as:

- Why is the stepmother always evil? Why does the prince never have a name?
- And why do things (much like these questions) always come in threes?

At the same time, we will ask ourselves probing questions like:

- What are fairy tales? How have their functions evolved over time and across cultures?
- How do they teach and perpetuate cultural norms and stereotypes?

As we critically re-examine our common traditions, we will also learn how to interpret these conventional tales in unconventional ways using approaches developed by folklorists, Freudians, and feminists. Our class projects involve finding fairy tales in our everyday lives, evaluating fairy tales told through a different medium, and making one’s own modern-day fractured fairy tale that may or may not end happily ever after.

GERMAN 177
MW 3:00-4:15

DR. ANDREA MEYERTHOLEN

KU GERMANIC LANGUAGES & LITERATURES