## Capstone Seminar: Into the Woods (ENGL 4670.01, UNCP 5541.01)

Bonnie Rudner

Office: Stokes 371S, Office hours TBD

Stokes Hall 286 S M 10:00AM-12:20PM

<https://bccte.zoom.us/j/6809556032>

[rudner@bc.edu](mailto:rudner@bc.edu)



Bruno Bettelheim claims, in his landmark study of fairy tales, The Uses of Enchantment, that as human beings seek to find meaning in their lives, there is no better source of enrichment and enlightenment than the fairy tale. In fact, the German poet Schiller wrote, “Deeper meaning resides in the fairy tales taught to me in my childhood than in the truth taught by life.” Fairy tales are a unique art form, and their deepest meanings are as varied as their readers. But all readers, young, old and in between, share the experience of wonder when confronted with them.

The splendor of the fairy tale is its ability to speak to both our pleasure in the fantastic, and to our concerns about the real world. The dimension of wonder creates a huge theater of possibility: anything can happen in the world. This very boundlessness serves the moral purpose of the tale: it enables a person to consider the nature of boundaries and responsibilities. Dreaming, of course, gives pleasure in its own right. It addition, it allows us an arena in which to experiment, and to learn from our mistakes.

Fairy tales entertain and teach by their use of metaphor. Little Red Riding Hood journeys into the woods in order to visit her grandmother. She leaves behind her indulgent mother; she dawdles and she takes risks along the way. There are many dangers in the woods, but Little Red Riding Hood learns quite a bit about life, and wolves, during her journey. In most of the versions, her knowledge enables her to free her grandmother and herself ( without the help of the hunter) and she is then ready to embark upon the rest of her life. Fairy tales do not bring about total closure. Instead, they suggest possibilities. The characters, one always imagines, return to ordinary life. The genre is characterized by a “heroic optimism.”

Wallace Stevens believed that fantasy worlds help us to visualize actual worlds. The metaphor of the journey into the woods seems like an ideal one for our students to consider as they prepare to leave Boston College. In order for each student to evaluate their experience in the “woods,” they will have to look backwards, as well as forwards.

Looking backwards we will ask, Who was I before I came to Boston College? What place did I come from? What does "place" even mean?

What was my connection with place?

What were my expectations in coming to Boston College? Why did I choose this place for my journey? Have I been connected to the Boston College community, or is my sense of place connected to the larger city of Boston?

How have I participated in shaping my education? What does my transcript reflect about my experience here?

The metaphor of the journey through the woods is also a helpful one in our assessments of our relationships:

How have my relationships changed since coming to Boston College? How do I envision these relationships in the future?

What do I think about the idea of "going home" now? How has my sense of that place changed?

The hero of the fairy tale leaves the woods with a renewed commitment to their community. We will ask our students how they plan to negotiate their transitions from the Boston College community into society, as well as to consider the way in which faith, or spiritual understanding is essential to negotiating any journey through the woods.

These areas will be addressed in a variety of ways:

Lecture, class discussions and essays

Every other week, a 3 page paper will be due (responses to reading, personal fairy tales, definitions, point of view papers) they will be assigned in class and on Canvas

Final portfolio- this will include everything you have written, revised to the best of your ability, and a final five page evaluation of your experience in the woods

The **texts** will include a wide range of fairy tale materials:

**Folk and Fairy Tales-fifth edition**

**Don't Bet on the Prince**

**The Alchemist**

Traditional fairy tales: The Brothers Grimm, Charles Perrault,

Contemporary fairy tales: Carter, Donoghue, Lee,

Coelho

Shakespeare’s versions of the “woods”:

**Midsummer Night’s Dream**

and

**Into the Woods**, by James Lapine and Stephen Sondheim

**Kissing the Witch**, Emma Donaghue

The basic premise for this Capstone seminar will be for all of us to explore the nature of the journey “Into the Woods,” and to figure out exactly how we hope to live “happily ever after.”

**Into the woods-you have to grope,**

**But that’s the way you learn to cope.**

**Into the woods to find there’s hope**

**Of getting through the journey.**

**Into the woods, each time you go,**

**There’s more to learn of what you know.**

**Into the woods, but not too slow-**

# Into the woods it’s nearing midnight-

**Into the woods**

**To mind the wolf,**

**To heed the witch,**

**To honor the giant,**

**To mind,**

**To heed,**

**To find,**

**To think,**

**To teach,**

**To join,**

**To go to the Festival!**

**Into the woods,**

**Into the woods,**

**Into the woods,**

**Then out of the woods-**

**And happy ever after!**

James Lapine

**Grades**

There will be no examinations in this course. Your grade will be based on your commitment, your progress, your active participation in class discussions, and the success of your pieces.

In addition, we have a canvas site with readings, as well as discussion questions. I view these discussion questions as part of the community that is our class. Each one has a beginning and an end time; **warning: the end on canvas is at 12:01 AM on the final day listed, so if you wait until the last minute (as if?) then you won’t make it.** There is NO point in emailing me your response- because that does not count on canvas, and I cannot add it under your name. No one ever gets an A from me without completing the discussion questions because they reflect your commitment to our class.

According to the BC Policy on Academic Integrity, “Plagiarism is the deliberate act of taking the words, ideas, data, illustrations, or statements of another person or source, and presenting them as one's own. Each student is responsible for learning and using proper methods of paraphrasing and footnoting, quotation, and other forms of citation, to ensure that the original author, speaker, illustrator, or source of the material used is clearly acknowledged.” In this course, my job is to teach you the proper methods for citation and attribution of sources. Your job is not to plagiarize or cheat. Any breaches of academic integrity will result in serious repercussions, such as failing the course. (For the university policy on academic integrity see: [www.bc.edu/integrity](http://www.bc.edu/integrity) . FYI: submission of the same written work in more than one course without prior written approval from the instructors involved is viewed as a form of cheating

under the university policies.

**The Use of AI:**As college students, you do need to learn how to choose when to use AI and how to do so appropriately, effectively, and ethically.  You are about to graduate into a world where these tools are ubiquitous in the workplace.  At the same time, BC’s distinctive commitment to a formative, humanizing liberal arts education that strives to integrate intellectual rigor with character formation requires each of us to think carefully about *when* and *how* we use AI tools so that doing so doesn't undermine the formative education that we hope to be offering you. The CTE website provides robust resources on the topic of Artificial Intelligence in Teaching and Learning, including Instructional Responses to ChatGPT, which can be found [here](https://cteresources.bc.edu/documentation/artificial-intelligence-in-teaching-and-learning/).

NO ONE and NO MACHINE can do that better than you! **I ask that you trust yourself and this process of gathering the courage to become your best self - a process that requires all of you**

**and no short cuts.**

**Request for Accommodations**

If you have a disability and will be requesting accommodations for this course, please contact the Dean in the Office Student Services. Advance notice and appropriate documentation are required for accommodations.

**Campus Resources Available to You**

**Connors Family Learning Center (CFLC)**: Located in 200 O’Neill Library, this is a place where you can go for one-on-one writing tutoring. A tutor won’t “fix” a paper, but can be a great resource if you’re feeling stuck or if you’d just like the feedback of another reader. Most professional writers would dream for such a ready resource, and it’s available to BC students free. To schedule an appointment call **2-0611**.

**Campus Technology Resource Center (CTRC)**: Located in 250 O’Neill Library, this is a place to access a computer and print documents like the PDF readings from WebCT site.

**Counseling Services**: (108 Gasson Hall). If things seem tough for you or if you’d just like someone to talk to (about feeling homesick, having trouble fitting in, or feeling depressed or overwhelmed), there are lots of great people available to listen and help through the University Counseling Services. Call (617) 552-3310 to set up an appointment or stop in any of their offices at Gasson 108, Fulton 254, or Campion 301.It’s free to all students.

Tentative Weekly Schedule

January 13 Introduction- Stopping by Woods…..

Questions: interview/survey-

What is a fairy tale?

Who are we?

What do those things have to do with each other?

Personal Narrative Assigned

27 Folk and Fairy Tales: Introduction, Sleeping Beauty section, Cinderella section, Growing up is hard to do- Personal Narrative Assigned

February 3 Goose Girl-Grimm ( handout), Goose Girl- Tim Wynn Jones(handout) The Tale of the Handkerchief

10 Little Red Riding Hood and Company of Wolves" F and Ft – Fairy tale revision due

17 “COMPANY OF WOLVES- FILM- Into the Woods paper due

24 Don't Bet on the Prince p.39, 62,81,95,101,121

SPRING BREAK

March 10 Into the Woods Act I and !!

17 “Into the Woods” film

24 The Alchemist

31 Midsummer Night's Dream

April 7 Kissing the Witch

14 Nightmares- handouts

21 Easter- Class 24

28 LAST CLASS/PARTY!

Survey/Interview

Read Stopping by Woods and Perrault’s LR4

1. What do you think " the woods" mean?
2. Think of an example of a time when you have gone into the "woods" and returned
3. What is poetic justice?
4. Cite an example of one time when you think poetic justice was achieved.
5. Cite an example of one time when you think poetic justice was not achieved.

6.What does it mean to have an epiphany?

7.Explain one epiphany that you have had.