Grimm fiction
Instructor: Kate Bernheimer

2012 marks the 200th anniversary of the publication of the Grimm Brothers’ Kinder und Hausmarchen (Children’s and Household Tales)—a book not intended for children, in that first inception. One of the Grimm Brothers was a poet; the other a scholar; as this hybrid being, together they perfected a form. (They collaborated for more than forty years on seven obsessively rewritten editions.) This class is dedicated to investigating their art and its aesthetic and ethical influence—and to creating new lines of flight for you as thinkers and artists, wherever you see yourselves along the fabled spectrum of realism to fabulism. Much is made of the interpretation of fairy tales, but their incredible techniques remain little discussed. An easily recognizable (yet little recognized) Grimm style has influenced and infused art all over the globe. This class will focus, via literary examples—along with some examples from visual art, film, and music—on Grimm techniques from around the globe in diverse variations. We will also consider fairy tales as a minoritarian art form.

For this class you will write brief critical and creative responses to scholarship and fiction; be guided through exercises based on very short traditional tales to produce new very short works of fiction; and select a tale from any tradition that means something to you, in order to work on one longer project. Our goal is that you will discover the rabbit hole already there for you in your work, and leave with some new directions to take under the influence of technical wonder.
We will read fiction (novels and short stories) from around the centuries, likely by Horace McCoy, Gaetan Soucy, Cesar Aira, Michel Houellebecq, Alissa Nutting, Vanessa Veselka, Michael Lee, Dubravka Ugresic, Thomas Bernhard, Willy Vlautin, Italo Calvino, John Cheever, Kelly Link, Katherine Mansfield, Raymond Carver, Kevin Brockmeier, Jorge Luis Borges, Edgar Allen Poe, Deborah Eisenberg, E. T. A. Hoffmann, Naoko Awa, Lucy Corin, Robert Coover, and others; scholarship by Max Luthi, Maria Tatar, Jack Zipes, Vladimir Propp, and Marina Warner, among others; philosophy by Gilles Deleuze; selections from edited collections of including The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm, Mexican Folktales, Arab Folktales, Russian Fairy Tales, Chinese Fairy Tales and Ghost Stories, and others

The Interior Journey
Instructor: Fenton Johnson
This course will look at fiction and creative nonfiction (with poetry making guest appearances) in the rich mode of interior journey: spiritual, philosophical, metaphorical. Students will be encouraged to work on using reading and writing as a means to shaping and interacting with their particular understanding of the great existential questions: What is the relationship between destiny and free will? Does life inherently have meaning or must we create it, and if the latter, what are our means to that end? How does reading and writing figure in your relationship with God / Goddess / the gods and goddesses, concepts and words – with ample time and space given to atheists and agnostics?

As a literary form, the memoir began with an interior journey – St. Augustine’s Confessions, with which we will open the course. We’ll then travel through history, reading excerpts from the following reading list. We’ll pay particular attention to comparing / contrasting Walt Whitman (Democratic Vistas – the exterior / masculine journey?) and Emily Dickinson (selected poems – the interior / feminine journey?). This is a craft course, so our emphasis will consistently be on how we can apply lessons from the craft of these writers to our own work.

The reading list is too long, but I will whittle it down to a reasonable length well before the holiday break so that you may do some advance reading.

From the Hebrew Bible: The Book of Job, The Book of Daniel
Selections from the New Testament, including selected Letters of Paul and the Book of Revelations
Augustine, Confessions
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations
Boethius’s Consolations of Philosophy (prior to Gutenberg’s press, more copies in manuscript than any other book; the favorite book of Elizabeth I, who took it everywhere she went);

The Cloud of Unknowing, anonymous
Julian of Norwich, Showings
Hildegard of Bingen
Theresa of Avila’s The Story of Theresa of Avila by Herself (excerpt)
Pascal’s Pensees
Voltaire’s Candide (a wry entry from our best atheist writer)
Thoreau, Walden
Emerson, selected essays
Emily Dickinson, selected poems
Walt Whitman, Democratic Vistas
Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil
Geronimo, His Own Story
Kirkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*


Thich Nhat Hanh, *Selected Writings,* Robert Ellsberg, ed.

Martin Buber, *I and Thou*

Kathleen Norris, *Dakota: A Spiritual Journey*

Suzuki Roshi, *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind*

Robert Pirzegn, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*

Larry Evers, *Yaqui Deer Songs* (excerpt)

Anne Lamott, *Traveling Mercies*

Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony*

N. Scott Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain*

Annie Dillard, *Teaching a Stone to Talk*

Mark Twain, *Letters from the Earth* (excerpts)

Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*


Steven Weinberg, *The First Three Minutes* (excerpt)

Brother David Steindl-Rast, *The Music of Silence*

Dag Hammarskjold, *Markings*

Rabbi Abraham Heschel (excerpts)

Albert Camus, *The Plague* and several short stories

Barry Lopez, *Desert Notes*

Jim Corbett, *Goatwalking*

John Steinbeck/Ed Ricketts, *The Log of the Sea of Cortez*

Students will be asked to write ten 2-page response papers across the course of the semester. Students will also be required to meet with the instructor to devise, discuss, and put into practice an ongoing project through which they aspire to enrich their interior lives.

“Study War No More”: 21st Century poetry and poetics

Instructor: Jane Miller (retired)

Our course borrows its title from Robert Hass’ essay on violence and literature in his 2012 essay collection *What Light Can Do.* In another essay in the collection, on poetry in translation, Hass writes, “We are going to be hearing a lot about China in the next decade, about its economy, its foreign and environmental policies. It’s going to be the work of translation to give us glimpses – human glimpses – at what’s going on.”
We will examine American poetry, and translations by American poets, working in the first decade of the century (plus a year or two) to see “what’s going on.” The purpose of our reading and discussions: to encourage clear images and clear thinking in your own book projects for publication in the 21st century’s second decade. What is the next new poetry? From whom and from what will it derive? Who are the most formidable and original American poets writing today? Who do contemporary poets choose to translate into English?

We will read new work by Maggie Nelson, D.A. Powell, Tsering Dhompa, and others, as well as translations by Anne Carson, Ilya Kominsky, Jean Valentine, and Donald Revell.