PROGRAM II APPLICATION: Cover Page

Title of Proposed Program *(limit to 90 characters for transcript entry):*

Fairy Tales and Folklore: Medieval to Present

Name of Applicant: Taylor Sites

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Local Mailing Address: West Campus Box 98033, Durham, NC 27708

Application Date: February 5, 2010 **Matriculation date: Fall 2008**

Anticipated graduation date: Spring 2012

Degree intended (AB or BS)**: A.B.**

Note: *For the BS degree, you must be sponsored by a department offering that degree*

Advisor: Ann Marie Rasmussen

Sponsoring Department: Medieval Renaissance Studies

Note: *Certificate Programs may not sponsor proposals*

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Abstract: *(The abstract is a very condensed summary of the proposed program. In five or fewer sentences, the abstract should state the program objective/s and describe the basic character of the program and any program highlights).*

My proposed course of study examines Fairy Tales and Folklore dating from the Medieval period to the present through eight different aspects (Literature, English, Philosophy, History, Cultural Anthropology, Psychology, Sociology, and Statistics) in order to elucidate the importance of Fairy Tales and Folklore throughout the course of history in creating morals and delineating social structures and boundaries. This study will also show them to be indicative of both social change and societal complacency. Upon completion of this program, I expect to be able to understand the way narrative facilitates and is the basis of psychological development and social integration as well as the impact of culture upon our belief systems.

Sequence of application materials: Cover sheet, List of Core Courses, Program II Check Sheet, Personal Statement, Letters from Advisor and DUS of sponsoring department (letters may be submitted separately).

PROGRAM II APPLICATION: List of Core Courses

List the course numbers and titles of your core courses here. If your program is approved, you are required to complete these as graduation requirements. Please mark these courses with an asterisk on the Program II Check Sheet on the next page.

Department/Number	Course Title	Column for Committee Use
English 144	Shakespeare after 1600	
German 173	Fairy Tales: Grimms to Disney	
MedRen 172S	Romance of King Arthur	
PHIL 124	Philosophy of Education	
CulAnth 187	Variety in Language	
MedRen 126	Independent Study (Theories of Folklore)	
Lit 151.LS	Russian Fairy Tale	
SOCIOL 138	Theory and Society	
English 121A	Medieval Eng Lit to 1500	
History 157A	Rise Mod Sci through Newton	
Lit 281	Paradigms Modern Thought	
SOCIOL 150	Changing American Family	
CulAnth 103S	Facts of Life	
English 157	The Devil's Pact	
PHIL 103	Symbolic Logic	
PSY 117	Intro to Stat Methods in Psy	
PSY 268	Brain and Language	
MedRen 196	Independent Study (Senior Thesis)	

History 303S	Focusing on Teaching and Pedagogy	
PHIL 108	Human Cultural Evolution	
PSY 117B	Stat Meth Data Analysis Psych	
Student's signature:		Date: 02/05/10
Advisor's signature:		Date: 02/05/10

PROGRAM II APPLICATION: Check Sheet

Provide Department and course number, course title, and credit for each entry.
Identify core courses with * and breadth courses with "B" in the left margin.

Department/Number	Course Title	Course Credit*	Column for Committee Use
Semester 1—Date: 2008 Fall Term			
ArtHist 144B *B*	Renaiss/Baroque Art Hist	1.0	
Italian 2 *B*	Elementary Italian 2	1.0	
Lit 20S *B*	SP TOP: Intro to Lit (Reading and Writing Place)	1.0	
MedRen 100 *B*	TOP Medieval/Renaiss ST (Early Modern Europe)	1.0	
Semester 2—Date: 2009 Spring Term			
HouseCS 79 *B*	House Course (SP TOP)	.5	
Italian 63 *B*	Intermediate Italian	1.0	
PHIL 134 *B*	Existentialism	1.0	
Religion 100 *B*	Old Testament/Heb Bible	1.0	
Writing 20 *B*	Academic Writing (Visualization, Memory, Art, Space)	1.0	

Semester 3—Date: 2009 Fall Term			
EvAnth 93D *B*	Intro to Evolutionary Anthro	1.0	
Italian 101 *B*	Writing Workshop	1.0	
Lit 90 *B*	Literary/Cultural Study	1.0	
PHIL 100 *B*	History Ancient Philosophy	1.0 (W)	
Semester 4—Date: 2010 Spring Term			
English 144 *	Shakespeare after 1600	1.0	
German 173 *	Fairy Tales: Grimms to Disney	1.0	
MedRen 172S *	Romance of King Arthur	1.0	
PHIL 124 *	Philosophy of Education	1.0	
Department/Number	**Course Title**	**Course Credit**	**Column for Committee Use**
Semester 5—Date: 2010 Fall Term			
CulAnth 187 *	Variety in Language	1.0	
Lit 151 LS *	Russian Fairy Tale	1.0	
MedRen 196 *	Independent Study	1.0	
SOCIOL 138 *	Theory and Society	1.0	
Semester 6—Date: 2011 Spring Term			

English 121A *	Medieval Eng Lit to 1500	1.0	
History 157A *	Rise Mod Sci through Newton	1.0	
Lit 281 *	Paradigms Modern Thought	1.0	
SOCIOL 150 *	Changing American Family	1.0	
Semester 7—Date: 2011 Fall Term			
CulAnth 103S *	Facts of Life	1.0	
English 157 *	The Devil's Pact	1.0	
PHIL 103 *	Symbolic Logic	1.0	
PSY 117 *	Intro to Stat Methods in Psy	1.0	
PSY 268 *	Brain and Language	1.0	
Semester 8—Date: 2012 Spring Term			
MedRen 196 *	Independent Study	1.0	
History 303S *	Focusing on Teaching and Pedagogy	1.0	
PHIL 108 *	Human Cultural Evolution	1.0	
PSY 117B *	Stat Meth Data Analysis Psych	1.0	

Student's signature: _____ **Date:** 02/05/10

Program II Proposal

Personal Statement

Taylor Sites—Fairy Tales and Folklore: Medieval to Present

The word "fairy tale" brings to mind a number of images—probably the one foremost in your mind is one of Walt Disney's diluted concoctions, maybe *Cinderella.* While this is a lovely take on the word "fairy tale", it is not at all a truthful representation of that, and from as long ago as I can remember, Disney always seemed a little off. It appeared that the endings were too happy, a syrupy mess of love and coincidence breeding a sort of false sense of security. The story never seemed complete. From the day I had this thought, fairy tales were no longer the happy-go-lucky animated pictures on the screen. The definition of a true fairy tale is a story that glorifies the human condition and attempts to express morals through fantastic situations full of wonder, without the explicit use of magic. (The translation "fairy tale" is a misnomer—the correct translation would appear to be "wonder tales".) The Disney tales seemed to be erroneous; I began to question where these tales came from, why they exist, and what purpose they serve.

Today, a little wiser, I can look back at my experience and note that I was entirely correct: traditional fairy tales are not *fairy tales* of the modern era, but they started as dark tales with explicitly violent morals that warned both young and old to take a pause, even if it was through a fictional character, and compare your mundane life to their fantastic experiences. Those in the Renaissance period would draw conclusions from Charles Perrault's fairy tales, warning against mental dullness (as in

Hop o' My Thumb) or lying without a good cover-up (as in *Puss in Boots)*. These are not the benign fairy tales of the 1990's, but stories that provide morals for the masses.

These days, our sense of story is bipolar to say the least. We are content with teaching our children about idealistic situations where the prince always saves and then marries the princess, while the adults fester in the painfully blunt realism of highfalutin news stories. Recently, though, we observe a change. *Twilight* and *Harry Potter* are extraordinarily successful, and increasingly so. One can use these stories as the thermometers of the social climate; during dark times (i.e. the recession, or alternately, the plague) we humans seek safety in our fantasies, though now as more of a modern folklore genre as opposed to being in the same vein as the traditional niche of fairy tales. Now, at Duke, I have the opportunity to examine the use of fairy tales as vehicles for moral and social education through their narratives as well as their place in social structures.

I started out as a Literature major, but realized I could not fully examine the impact of fairy tales and folklore through that single lens. They were too important just to analyze with such a limited scope. So, I took Religion of the Hebrew Bible and a history class focusing on Early Modern Europe. In each, I found myself fitting together the pieces of information that all led to the formation of fairy tales. My favorite parts of the classes, respectively, were discussing angelology in the Old Testament for my final paper, and writing on the social history of vampirism through the epidemic of cholera. I always gravitated towards the "fairy tale" elements of each class, finding them the most riveting, interesting, and informative parts of the courses. My studies in literature became contrived efforts as I struggled to reconcile my love of social situations of all

sorts affecting the moral structures of society; meanwhile I was reading about the trial of O.J. Simpson. I began my fairy tale collection, and read the stories in my free time, noting that each story had more gravitas than trials ever could for societal morals.

I began looking for courses that would fit my interests more specifically and in a more focused manner. I began adding things to my bookbag like "Developmental Psychology" (key in the understanding the processing of fairy tales), "Symbolic Logic", "Russian Fairy Tales", and "Victorian Poetry". I struggled to hold to the traditional Literature major, for while fairy tales and folklore are a major part of what I wanted to do in literature, the sphere I was working within became too small, and I realized that I would have to instead go outside of the requirements. I set about making another bookbag that, while adhering to Duke's breadth requirements, also translated into the field that I want to study. The courses were cohesive, interesting, and, to use a particularly relevant word, enchanting. It made sense that I would study "Medieval English Literature" in conjunction with "Paradigms of Modern Thought" and "Human Cultural Evolution". The courses that I chose pointed me straight at fairy tales and folklore. In short, they became what seemed to me a valid major.

Several topics emerged that began to overtake my studies: the creation and relevance of fairy tales and folklore could be mapped against the background of social revolution as well as societal complacency, like a sine curve. There was a direct correlation between depressions, plagues, wars and intense poverty and the force of fairy tales and folklore as a teaching tool. If this could be graphed successfully, one could prove that fairy tales are truly the canaries in the coalmine for turmoil. It is my belief that fairy tales and their meanings can be extrapolated to the sources of misery

in society. Socioeconomic status determines the relevance of fairy tales. Another source of interest was the link between religion and fairy tales. Many stories are very pagan tales, but teach the morals of the great religious books (although many have put a small twist on the matter to make the morals more palpable). Perhaps fairy tales and folklore help to bridge the gap between Christian and Pagan beliefs; They seem to be vehicles for faith through fate: marriage to the perfect prince, wealth through virtue, and outer beauty as representative of inner beauty. Finally of interest is that the fairy tales of today are meant, for the most part, for pleasure, whereas between the Medieval period and the Victorian Era they were pedagogical. This raises even more questions about the collective understanding of society: the cultural anthropology and sociology of the populace, paired with the psychology and philosophy of the author or translator himself.

Interdisciplinary studies would help me to bring at least these three points to a culmination. Seeking out the meaning of fairy tales in only the literary sense would be greatly limiting; to understand their full impact one must examine them from every vantage point available. There is no wrong way to look at a story, but the least correct must be in only examining a story from one side. It is then a 2-D representation of itself, akin to the Disney movies of today. Indeed, all considered, fairy tales and folklore is a broad yet specific field that consists of many elements, ranging from mob mentality to specific interpretation of historical texts. One must look at the precursors as well as the modern results of years of re-firing the stories. It would be impossible to truly come to terms with this field of study without Literature, English, Philosophy, History, Cultural Anthropology, Psychology, Sociology, and Statistics, for they are so integral to

the creation and upkeep of these rich stories. (In keeping with the understanding that fairy tales and folklore are universal creations with many factors, I will also fill the breadth requirement of a Program I major).

In order to combat appearing too narrow in my studies, I must point out that fairy tales in their traditional sense are not a very widespread topic—in fact, the tales just make up a small niche within folklore. Much of our perceived knowledge of fairy tales is derived from our true knowledge of folklore. In true fairy tales, there are no magical powers to behold—these stories are dedicated entirely to the perception of human life; the broad topic of folklore (an easier one to explore solely for the reason that it is such an open field) examines everything from the myths to King Arthur, the Viking legends to the Far East's mythology. It is necessary then to examine folklore as the backdrop for fairy tales, and understand that out of a broader folk understanding, one may derive the necessary knowledge to explore fairy tales more fully—something not traditionally done within the field of Literature. Thus, my topic is not only fairy tales, but also folklore; this will hopefully translate fully and entirely into my career of choice, giving me full range to explore the various factors affecting all our lives.

After Duke, I hope to get my Ph.D. in Literature, and to become a professor of this very same field. It is a socially relevant subject for all those seeking a higher education, as fairy tales are the amalgamation of several important factors, ranging from Philosophy to Psychology. Although I hope to teach within a Literature department, I will be a jack-of-all-trades; no traditional program would prepare for this in such a pointed manner as Program II.