

ENGLISH 315 002
FOLKLORE & FOLKLIFE
SPRING 2012
T/R 1:30-2:45

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

English 315 is an advanced introduction to folklore in a global context; it helps student develop understandings of global patterns and process through the study of traditional cultures. During the semester we'll study folktales, legends, jokes, handmade objects and carnival, and together develop ways of understanding what lies beneath the deceptively simple surface of traditional materials such as songs, stories, quilts, and festivals. English 315 draws upon theoretical perspectives from folklore scholarship, literature, and anthropology. The class explores the concept of tradition and asks why some traditions have lasted into the present, how others have changed, and what their changes signify. We will examine how global processes affect communities and traditions by thinking about how understandings and expressions of differential identity are produced, patrolled, and resisted. We'll also ask what functions traditions serve for the people who maintain them, what factors influence their content and their performance, and how people manipulate and invent traditions for their own ends. We will begin with an emphasis on local knowledge and tradition, then examine how this process of examining instances of local examples of expressive culture that are actually part of global cultural flows illustrates how local understandings are related to global processes of dissemination and understanding.

COURSE PREREQUISITES

Students enrolled in this course must have completed English 101 and a total of six (6) hours of literature before taking this course. As you must be able to successfully complete an independent research project, I also strongly recommend that students complete English 302 before taking this course.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- Define Folklore and Tradition.
- Describe how folk narratives and traditions are disseminated in a global context
- Identify Folklore Genres and how they are used to enforce social boundaries, challenge official discourses and shape individual and group identities.
- Explain how global processes affect communities by thinking about how understandings and expressions of differential identity are produced, patrolled, and resisted.
- Describe and carry out the proper procedure for conducting a Folklore fieldwork project,
- To identify scholarly folklore resources and apply them to a unique field research project
- To apply folklore theories and research methods to real-life problems or issues that might arise

REQUIRED TEXTS & MATERIALS:

The following texts are available at the University Bookstore, Johnson Center. You may also purchase these texts from the retailer of your choice, such as www.bigwords.com or www.bookfinder.com.

Brunvand, Jan. 1998. *The Study of American Folklore* (4th edition). NY: Norton. **(SAF)**

Durand, Jorge & Douglas S. Massey. 1995. *Miracles on the Border: Retablos of Mexican Migrants to the United States*. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press. **(MOTB)**

Hallett, Martin & Barbara Karasek. 2008. *Folk and Fairy Tales*. NY: Broadview Press. 4th Edition **(FFT)**

Narayan, Kirin. 2008. *My family and other Saints*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press **(MFOS)**

In addition to books, you will also need the following:

- Standard digital recorder or standard cassette recorder (for fieldwork projects)
- A sense of good humor and openness toward new academic experiences

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Course Wiki

I have created a Wiki page for this course. Students are added to the wiki after they have been registered in the course. I will be using this page to post all assignments, course announcements and other valuable information throughout the semester.

All work will be submitted electronically via the wiki space. To login for the first time, point your browser to the following URL: <http://mypbworks.com>, then sign in. You will also receive an invitation The website stable URL is: <https://engh315002s2012.pbworks.com/w/page/50046680/FrontPage>.

Please note: **you are responsible** for signing into PB Works and accessing the wiki. If you have trouble, you should notify me no later than January 31, then come to my office during hours to work out the problem.

Class Participation

This class will conduct itself as a discussion rather than a lecture. I say this now because I do not want anyone taking this class to expect it to be a lecture class. I will sometimes lecture for 5-15 minute stretches, but most of our class sessions will be spent in real discussion, and the topics of our discussion will be determined as much by your intellectual interests as by my own. This means that you should expect class periods to be intense and fun, a place to test out your own ideas about what we're reading and writing. Students who do not participate in our discussions will most likely see their final grade go down; if there are four or five students who end up carrying much of the burden of discussion, they will probably see their hard work reflected in their grade as well.

Most importantly, you should expect class discussion to follow your interests and concerns as you voice them. The required readings will be the starting point for our class discussions and each student is expected to complete all readings, come to class ready to participate in class discussions, and to have thoughtful questions and comments prepared in advance. If you are ever uncertain about your class participation grade, you should see me. Remember, a full **twenty percent (20%)** of your final grade will be based on participation, and you cannot earn a participation grade unless you are actively participating in our class sessions. If your schedule is such that you do not think you cannot attend every class, then you should plan to take this course in a semester when you will have more time.

How I grade Participation:

You will receive a class participation based on your performance over the course of the semester. I will track participation on a weekly basis; if you have questions about this aspect of your grade, please see me. Your grade will be evaluated using the following rubric:

About Class Participation:

I am aware that some students do not like to talk in class, and feel unfairly penalized by class participation requirements. If you feel like you are one of these students, try one of the following suggestions to enhance your class participation grade:

Prepare a list of questions based on the reading before class. Ask these questions during the class discussion period.

Take initiative when the class works in small groups.

Answer questions when you are called upon in class.

Outstanding: Participates and initiates class discussion based on class readings and answers questions when called upon. Actively participates in small group work and completes in-class assignments.

Satisfactory: Answers questions when called upon, but does not initiate or participate in ongoing class discussion. Participates in small group work and completes in-class assignments.

Poor: Occasionally answers questions when called upon but does not initiate or participate in class discussion. Participates minimally in small group work.

Deficient: Attends class but does not participate in discussions, small groups, cannot answer questions when called upon, or does not attend class session.

Group Work & Homework

This is a large class section. To ensure that all students are engaged and participating, I will assign all students to working groups. These groups will consist of 5-7 students each and will have distinct assignments that will rotate for each class period. You will also be given group work assignments in nearly every class. When you are asked to work in groups, you should sit with your group members and complete the work together. Part of this work will be leading class discussions, bringing study questions and bringing examples of folklore to class. Please see the syllabus for your group assignment days. Your group work and homework will be assessed as part of your class participation grade. I also occasionally assign work to be completed out of class that will be graded. I will announce homework assignments in class; they will not be posted on the wiki.

Exams Questions and Quizzes

In lieu of a mid-term and final exam, students will be evaluated on the course content throughout the semester with in-class and take home exam questions. These questions will be scheduled throughout the semester. Students will also be evaluated with periodic quizzes. These quizzes will consist of multiple-choice and short answer. In both cases, exam questions and quizzes will be based on the required readings. Students who miss exam questions or quizzes will not be permitted to make up this work later. Exams and quizzes will account for **25% of your final grade.**

Written Assignments

Students will be expected to complete three formal writing assignments ranging from 3-10 pages in length that are based on Folklore fieldwork collection and analysis; students are required to collect, document and then submit their primary field research to the Northern Virginia Folklife Archive.

The first and most basic course assignment asks students to identify a folklore item from their everyday experience and to analyze it in terms of function and meaning in context. The second assignment requires students to collect a second item of folklore and to provide a more in-depth analysis of the item.

The final term project requires students to complete a formal folklore collection, typically an in-depth interview and field visit, and to identify several items of folklore in context. Students must complete an analysis based on academic sources and to frame their original research in the context of existing folklore scholarship. The final project includes a bibliography that is prepared in the same style and format as outlined for submission to the major national and international Folklore journals. All Folklore students are asked to prepare their collections for submission to the Northern Virginia Folklife Archive (folklore.gmu.edu/nvfa) following the guidelines for archival practices set by the NVFA and the American Folklore Society. Formal written essays will account for 50% of your final grade.

You grade will be calculated as follows:

Class Participation (in-class discussion, homework & poster presentation)	20%
Exam Questions & Quizzes:	25%
Paper I:	10%
Paper II:	20%
Paper III:	25%

LATE WORK AND EXTENTIONS:

- All papers are due at the start of class on the day of the assignment. You must upload your papers to the wiki before the start of class. Any paper that is uploaded after the start of class, emailed to me, or printed off and left in my mailbox will be considered late. If you know you will not be able to make a paper deadline (i.e., due to a personal emergency or extenuating circumstances), you should talk to me (face-to-face or on the phone) before the day the paper is due and we can discuss the possibility of handing in late work. I will not negotiate assignment extensions via e-mail.
- If you miss a paper deadline, your grade will be reduced by one letter grade. All papers must be turned in within one week of the due date or the grade will be recorded as an “F.” I will not accept any assignments after the last day of class **Thursday May 3, 2012**
- If you miss a class, you are responsible for all the material and announcements covered in class. Please get the names and numbers of one or two classmates for this purpose. I will not be able to re-teach the class, and I simply do not have time to answer emails about what we covered in class when students are absent.

OFFICE HOURS AND OTHER RESOURCES

Please remember that I am always happy to meet with students in my office to answer questions about the course content or class procedures. If you are having trouble with some aspect of the course, you don’t understand some of the material, you are getting behind in the reading or assignments, or you are having difficulty with any aspect of the course, come talk to me. If I am not aware of the problem I can’t help you find a solution.

The Folklore Resources Webpage: <http://folklore.gmu.edu>

The University Writing Center (Robinson A114 or to go to <http://www.writingcenter.gmu.edu>) offers one-to-one or small group conferencing sessions on all stages of writing. Trained graduate and undergraduate tutors help clients develop their own strategies for overcoming writer's block; responding to assignments; developing, focusing, and organizing ideas; revising; and editing. Call 703-993-1200 for hours and/or to make an appointment. In addition to one-on-one tutoring, the Writing Center also provides an On-line Writing Lab (OWL), consult the Writing Center's OWL website at writingcenter.gmu.edu/owl/index.html.

Handouts and assistance for using Photoshop elements and incorporating images in Word documents:

http://www.irc.gmu.edu/resources/findingaid/TAC_Photoshop_Elements/PE2/index.htm

The STAR (Student Technology Assistance and Resource) Center: <http://media.gmu.edu>

Mason IT Training (with free workshops): <http://ittraining.gmu.edu>

TESTING OR OTHER ACCOMODATIONS

Students needing special accommodations should provide appropriate documentation from the Disability Resource Center (<http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc>). All requests will be accommodated to the extent possible.

GMU HONOR CODE

Upon applying for admission, all Mason students are required to sign a commitment to uphold the Honor code, and to “pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.” All students are responsible for understanding the Honor Code, as well as for reporting any violations. For more information on the Honor Code and its requirements, see the University catalog:

<http://catalog.gmu.edu/content.php?catoid=5&navoid=410&bc=1#Honor>

PLAGIARISM:

The GMU Honor Codes defines plagiarism as the “presentation of one's own the works, the work, or the opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgement” and “borrowing the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought of someone else without proper acknowledgement.” In order to avoid plagiarism, writers give credit through accepted documentation styles such as the MLA, APA or Chicago Style (each using parenthetical citation, footnotes, or end notes). A simple listing of books and articles at the end of a paper **is not sufficient** to avoid plagiarism. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual theft and will not be tolerated in this class. Students who submit plagiarized work for this course should expect to receive an “F” for their final course grade and will be reported to the University's Honor Committee.

As this is 300 level course, I assume that each of you has the ability to complete independent research, to follow the proper citation guidelines (in this case, Chicago Manual of Style for the Social Sciences or MLA) and how to incorporate secondary sources into your research papers. If you have any doubts about how to acknowledge sources for your papers, or on the types of assistance that you are permitted to receive from others, please ask me. Students who violate the Honor Code in this course will be reported to the Mason's Honor Committee and should expect to receive an “F” in the course.

Course Schedule

Week 1:

Jan. 24 **Introduction, course overview, defining Folklore**

What is Folklore? How does it inform everyday life?

Folklore Speed “dating”

Jan 26 **Folklore and Folk Groups**
Read: “What is Folklore?” on the American Folklore Society’s website:
<http://www.afsnet.org/?page=WhatIsFolklore>
AND Chapters 1 & 3 in **SAF**

Group work: How do these authors define Folklore? Go to Google and search “folklore.” What hits do you get? Based on this brief research, how is folklore defined by the general public? How is this definition different from the formal definitions week?

Week 2:

Jan 31 **Folklore and Cultural Worldview**
Read: Tolkein, Barre. Folklore and Cultural Worldview AND
Minor, Horace. Body Ritual Among the Nacirema (on wiki)

All students should bring 3 examples of folklore from their everyday life and be ready to explain how they are folklore

Group Work: How is your personal folklore an expression of your worldview?

--How does globalization affect the formation of local groups? Today we will map our social networks using social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc) and various handheld technologies (cell phones, iPads) to see determine how the of your global social networks.

Feb 2 **Folklore Genres:** Legend & Myth
Chapters 8 & 9 in **SAF AND**
“Playing with Fear: Interpreting the Adolescent Legend Trip”
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1499808>

Bring an example of a legend and myth to class.

Group Work: How are legend and myth different? How are they confused in common vernacular?

Latin American Folk Legends: La Llorona, Stolen Body parts, Legend Trips

Week 3: **FIELDWORK PART 1**

Feb 7 How to collect Folklore
Read Chapter 2 in **SAF AND**
Read: *Folklife and Fieldwork* online

Today we will talk about fieldwork and folklore collection. You should bring in your audio recording equipment to use as part of our in-class activity.

<http://www.loc.gov/folklife/fieldwork/>

Feb 9	Folklore Genres: Folktales, Jokes, Anecdotes Read: SAF: Chapter 10 AND Dumb Blondes, Dan Quayle, Hilary Clinton and Stupidity in Jokes: http://www.jstor.org/stable/541162	Group Work: Practice interviews Today we will talk about fieldwork and folklore collection. You should bring in your audio recording equipment to use as part of our in-class activity. Students should bring in 2-3 jokes. Groups will pick the best jokes to share with the class Exam Question #1
Week 4 Feb 14	Riddles and Proverbs Proverbs, Riddles and Folk Games Read Chapter 5, 6, & 18 in SAF	Each team should bring 3 examples each of proverbs
Feb 16	Riddling Contest	Group Work: Bring 5-7 riddles for the contest Paper 1 Due today
Week 5 Feb 21	Family Folklore Read: MFOS pp. 1-66	How does Narayan shape her family stories? If you were writing a memoir of your own family, what types of stories would you include? Exam Question #2
Feb 23	Read: MFOS pp. 67-138	
Week 6 Feb 28	Read: MFOS pp. 139-end	Students will bring in 1 family story to share (should print out in advance of class)
Mar 1	FIELDWORK PART 2 Read: Oral History Techniques (article on wiki) and Family Folklore and Oral History Interviews: Strategies for Introducing a Project to One's Own Relatives: http://www.jstor.org/stable/1499570	Take on-line quiz on this material and read assignment for Paper 2: Family Folklore

Week 7	Folklife	
Mar 6	Material Culture Read Chapters 19 & 21 in SAF	Bring an example of an object (or photograph of an object) that is significant to you to class. Group Work: Reading objects Exam Question #3
Mar 8	Festival and Spectacle Read Chapter 15 in SAF and Cinco de Mayo Article (wiki)	Group Work: Look at common festivals in your hometown and around the DC area. How are they distinct from the traditional festival?
Week 8	Mid-term	
Mar 13	Spring Break	
Mar 15	Spring Break	
Week 9	Story and Performance	
Mar 20	Performance: Folk Drama and Gesture Read Chapters 16 & 18 in SAF	Group Work: Make a list of gestures and other non-verbal ways you communicate with your friends and family. How does gesture and other non-verbal communication translate to the on-line world (or does it?)
Mar 22	Folk and Fairy Tales Read FFT : Preface and Introduction and Little Red Riding Hood (pp. 27-63) and Fairy Tales from a Folkloristic Perspective (pp. 335-341) and What Fairy Tales Tell Us (pp. 359-366).	We will read a variety of folk and fairy tales this week. Some will be based in a literary tradition; others will be from an oral tradition. Think about the ways you have been introduced to these stories, and how the stories you've heard differ from those you read this week.
Week 10	Folk and Fairy Tales	
Mar 27	Read FFT: Cinderella, pp. 94-101; Little Gold Star pp. 113-117; Cinderella pp. 135-138; Hansel and Gretel pp. 139-146; Rapunzel pp. 154-156; Ugly Duckling pp. 161-168; AND "Tricksters," pp. 204-219	Exam Question #4
Mar 29	Folktales as Stories/Folktales as Literature Read: FFT "Villains," pp. 220-234 AND "A Less	Group Work: pick a fairy tale and design a performance for class on April 3

than Perfect World,” pp. 235-267.

Week 11

April 3 Prepare for performances in advance of class today.

Fairy Tale Performances

April 5 **Tales Told Far and Wide:** Fairy Tales and Science
Read: The Egg and the Sperm: How Science has Constructed a Romance based on Male-Female Stereotypes. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3174586>

Watch one episode of Grimm or Once Upon a Time. We will discuss the use of Fairy Tales in literature, popular culture and science.

Paper 2 Due today

Week 12 Storytelling in a Digital Age

April 10 The Art of Storytelling

Read: TBA

What makes a story? What are the elements of great storytelling?

April 12 Digital Storytelling

Watch iTunes U video series (8 parts, approximately 30 minutes total).

How is digital storytelling distinct from conventional storytelling?

Week 13 Folk Art as Narrative

April 17 Beyond the Border (in-class film)

April 19 Read MOTB Introduction and Chapters 1& 2

Complete Study Guide (wiki) **Exam Question #5**

Week 14

April 24 Read MOTB Chapters 3 & 4

Complete Study Guide (wiki)

April 26 Read MOTB Chapters 5-7 (read captions of ALL retablos)

Group Work: “reading” folk art as narrative. Be sure to bring your book to class today

Week 15

May 1 Political Narratives: Underground Undergrads (wiki)

How are personal narratives used in this political context? Why is the personal story important to this political movement?

May 3 Wrap-up

Final Papers Due

Exam Question #6

May 11 All final papers returned via the course wiki