

FOLK STUDIES 276: INTRODUCTION TO FOLK STUDIES SPRING SEMESTER 2023

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Office Hours: Tuesday 9-10:30 (by Zoom), Wednesday 1-3, or by appointment.

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This will be a non-synchronous, online class. It will consist of readings, Power Points, films that you will need to stream, and discussion forums. Students will need internet access to use Blackboard and Flip. There is one book to purchase (Sims & Stephens, *Living Folklore*, 2nd edition); other readings are on Blackboard or other websites.

This course is an introductory survey of the major forms of traditional expressive culture (i.e., folklore), with an emphasis on the United States. We will cover major folklore genres, with a focus on the dynamic nature of folklore; explore the folklore of various cultural groups; explore methodologies of collecting and documenting folklore; discuss different ways to analyze and interpret folklore; and explore various applications of folklore. Emphasis will be given to the continuing relevance of folklore and to the relationship of folklore to popular culture and other aspects of American and world cultures.

Trigger warning: This class may occasionally deal with materials that are obscene or inflammatory in content (e.g., racist, sexist, homophobic, violent), or which expresses particular politics or ideology. The intention is not to promote such folklore but to deal in a critical way with the realities of folklore in contemporary culture.

FLK 276 fulfills Colonnade Program requirements for EXPLORATIONS, ARTS & HUMANITIES. It is also a required class for the Folklore minor.

FLK 276 Learning Outcomes

- A student completing FLK 276 should be familiar with the general definitions, concepts, and history of the study of folklore as an academic discipline.

- A student completing FLK 276 should have a basic understanding of the methods and practice of ethnographic research (i.e., fieldwork) in the discipline of folklore, and of ethical issues related to folklore research.
- A student completing FLK 276 should be able to recognize the dynamic process by which folklore is created anew out of cultural context and how it expresses and embodies traditional aesthetics, beliefs and values.
- A student completing FLK 276 will recognize how various folklore forms serve to shape and influence society in ways that give rise to new forms of tradition and cultural expression.
- A student completing FLK 276 should understand the ways in which traditional patterns of behavior and performance shape relationships with one another in community and society, both in the contemporary world and in the past.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS (450 points total)

1. **Class participation** (100 points). This is based on participation in Blackboard discussion forums, and Flip introductions. Online discussions will be graded both by both the frequency and the substance of participation. To participate, you will need to keep up with the readings, assignments, and other materials. There will be no deadlines on Blackboard discussion forums (except the end of the semester); they will remain open once they are posted.

2. **Paper #1, Collecting Legends** (50 points). A fieldwork-based project. This assignment will be explained in more detail.

3. **Paper #2, Material Culture** (50 points). A fieldwork-based project. This assignment will be explained in more detail.

4. **Paper #3**, (50 points). A fieldwork-based project. You can conduct research in one of three areas: family folklore, occupational/recreational folklore, internet folklore. This assignment will be explained in more detail.

5. **Exams: midterm and final** (100 points each, 200 point total). Exams are essay and short answer (not multiple choice, fill in the blank or true/false), and are open book. That **does not** mean they are easy; it means they emphasize concepts, applications and seeing the “big picture”, rather than memorizing details. **They are not synchronous; you will be given three days to complete them.** Dates: midterm prompt available 3/8, due 3/10; final prompt available 4/28, due 5/3.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Since this class is online, attendance will not be taken, but you need to keep up with readings and other materials, turn in assignments when they are due, and participate in discussion forums in a timely manner. If you find yourself unable to keep up with class, please communicate with Dr. Evans about this. **Discussion forums will not have deadlines, but unexcused late assignments will be marked down two points per day.** If you have a good reason for turning an assignment in late, please tell your instructor.

POLICIES ON PAPERS

Unexcused late papers will be marked down two points per day. If you have a good reason for getting it in late, please let your instructors know. We do not allow extra credit assignments, but will accept papers early for comment – “early” means at least one week before they are due.

PLAGIARISM POLICY

Any direct quotation (or close paraphrase) of somebody else’s work without acknowledging that you are quoting and crediting your source is plagiarism. This will result on a zero on your assignment with no possibility of a makeup. If you are caught twice, you will receive an F in the class. Here is a website on plagiarism from the WKU English department:

<http://people.wku.edu/jan.garrett/dptengpl.htm>. Here is WKU’s statement on academic dishonesty: <https://www.wku.edu/studentconduct/process-for-academic-dishonesty.php>.

DISABILITY POLICY

In compliance with WKU policy, students with disabilities who require academic and/or auxiliary accommodations for this course must contact the Student Accessibility Resource Center located in Downing Student Union, 1074, <https://www.wku.edu/sarc/>. SARC can be reached by phone number at 270-745-5004 [270-745-3030 TTY] or via email at sarc.connect@wku.edu. Please do not request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a faculty notification letter (FNL) from The Student Accessibility Resource Center. Please email your FNL to tim.evans@wku.edu.

OTHER POLICIES

- **Pay attention to the syllabus! You are responsible for doing readings and assignments on time. Readings should be done by the dates on the syllabus, unless you are informed otherwise.**
- **Please check your emails and the class blackboard site on a regular basis.**

- **Please tell Prof. Evans or Ciara if you are having any issues that impede your class performance – internet access, physical or mental health, family emergencies, etc. Any such information will be confidential.**

STAYING HEALTHY DURING COVID: WKU GUIDELINES

All students are strongly encouraged to [get the COVID-19 vaccine](#) and subsequent booster shots, as well as flu shots. Students can be vaccinated or boosted at no cost from the clinic on campus. WKU's department of Environmental Health and Safety is offering free KN95 masks, email covid.help@wku.edu. Please refer to the Healthy on the Hill website for the most current information, www.wku.edu/healthyonthehill.

WKU COUNSELING CENTER

Potter Hall, Room 409

Phone 270-745-3159

<https://www.wku.edu/heretohelp/>

Hours of Operation:

- The Counseling Center is open from Monday – Friday from 8:00am-4:30pm.
- For emergency and after hours information, call 270-745-3159.

The best way to schedule an appointment is to call the office at (270) 745-3159 or stop by Potter Hall 409 and we can work to coordinate schedules and get you an appointment ASAP.

The Counseling Center is open throughout the calendar year and closed during holidays and other specified dates found in the WKU Academic Calendar.

THE LEARNING CENTER

The Learning Center (TLC) provides free tutoring services that empower students to achieve academic success. Trained peer tutors are available to review course content, answer questions, and demonstrate effective study strategies. TLC offers individual appointments and group sessions (PASS) for hundreds of undergraduate courses. For more information or to make an appointment, visit www.wku.edu/tlc.

TITLE IX/DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

Western Kentucky University (WKU) is committed to supporting faculty, staff and students by upholding WKU's Title IX Sexual Misconduct/Assault Policy and Discrimination and Harassment Policy at <https://www.wku.edu/studentconduct/titlenine.php>. Under these policies, discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct based on sex/gender are prohibited. **If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator, or Title IX**

Investigators, 270-745-5429 or 270-745-5121. Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a faculty member, WKU faculty are “Responsible Employees” of the University and **MUST** report what you share to WKU’s Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator. If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to **afford you confidentiality**, you may contact WKU’s **Counseling and Testing Center** at 270-745-3159.

REQUIREMENTS FOR CLASS INTERACTION

The U.S. Department of Education requires that distance education courses must include regular and substantive interaction between students and faculty. For more information about Regular and Substantive Interaction at WKU, please visit the [Regular and Substantive Interaction in Online and Distance Learning webpage](#). In this course, regular and substantive interaction will take place in the following ways:

- Regular participation in discussion boards,
- Frequent announcements,
- Twice weekly office hours,
- Timely and detailed feedback on assignments.

READINGS

TO BE PURCHASED AT THE CAMPUS BOOKSTORE (or online):

Martha C. Sims and Martine Stephens. *Living Folklore: An Introduction to the Study of People and Their Traditions*. 2nd edition. (Utah State University Press, 2011).

Please purchase the **2nd edition** of Sims & Stephens (not the 1st.) It is available as an ebook from the publisher, if you prefer that. You should be able to find used copies online, but please have a copy as soon as possible. The preface and the first two chapters are available on Blackboard, in case there is a delay in getting a copy.

BLACKBOARD. Readings marked BB on the schedule can be found on the class blackboard site.

WEBOGRAPHY. Students are encouraged to check out folklore related websites, including:

WKU Department of Folk Studies and Anthropology - <http://www.wku.edu/fsa/>

Kentucky Folklife Program <https://kentuckyfolklife.org/>

American Folklore Society <http://afsnet.org> (professional/scholarly organization for folklorists)

American Folklife Center, Library of Congress – <http://www.loc.gov/folklife/>

Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage - <http://www.folklife.si.edu>
Folkstreams (folklore film streaming) - <http://www.folkstreams.net>
Local Learning Network (resources for folklore in K-12 education) – <http://locallearningnetwork.org>
Folkwise (access to a variety of folklore-related social media): <https://linktr.ee/Folkwise>
Geek Anthropologist (articles on fan cultures, gaming, science fiction etc.) - <http://thegeekanthropologist.com/>
Snopes (urban legends/fake news debunking website) – <http://www.snopes.com/>
WKU Folklife Archives - <http://www.wku.edu/library/dlsc/manuscripts/index.php>
Folklore Research Guide, WKU library - Go to the library webpage - <http://www.wku.edu/library/> - click on “Research Guides” (under “Resources” on the left side of the screen), then click on “Folk Studies”.

ACADEMIC JOURNALS, ARTICLES AND SEARCH ENGINES:

Kentucky Folklife Magazine (online journal) <https://kyfolklifemag.org/>
New Directions in Folklore (online journal) <https://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/ndif/issue/archive>
Folklore Forum (online journal) <http://folkloreforum.net/contents/>
JSTOR <http://www.jstor.org/> (Provides electronic access, through WKU, to many academic journals, and some books, in folklore and other areas. You can go to the JSTOR page and click on “log in through your library.”)
Google Scholar (search engine) <http://scholar.google.com/> (general search engine for scholarly or academic sources)
WKU Libraries Database <https://libguides.wku.edu/az.php> (Gives access to a number of databases for useful publications, including JSTOR, Project Muse and EBSCO Host.)
The best known American academic (peer-reviewed) folklore journals are the *Journal of American Folklore*, the *Journal of Folklore Research*, and *Western Folklore*.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

PART I. INTRODUCTION.

1/17-1/23. Syllabus, introductions, preliminary issues.
Read: Sims & Stephens, Preface.
Read: *American Folklore Society webpage*. Read the online article “What is Folklore?,” <https://whatisfolklore.org/> and the definitions of folklore here: <https://whatisfolklore.org/how-folklorists-define-folklore/>. Explore the websites of the American Folklife Center, <https://www.loc.gov/folklife/>, and the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, <https://folklife.si.edu/>.

1/24-1/31. Folklore: basic concepts.

Read: Sims & Stephens, Chapter One, "Folklore."

Julia Kelso, "Quantum Folklore," BB or

<http://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/ndif/article/view/870/920>

2/1-2/7. Folk groups

Read: Sims & Stephens, Chapter Two, "Groups."

Robert McCarl, "Occupational Folklore," BB.

Bob Gates, "Things We Do for Fun: Recreational Folklife in Kentucky," BB

2/8-2/14. Fieldwork.

Read: Sims & Stephens, Chapter Seven, "Fieldwork and Ethnography."

Elliott Oring, "Folk Narratives," BB.

**** 2/15: Paper (Legend Collecting) Due.****

2/15-2/21. Tradition.

Read: Sims & Stephens, Chapter Three, "Tradition."

Alice Walker, "Everyday Use," BB.

Carrie Iwan, "The Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster: Traditionalizing in Cyberspace." (read the article, and survey the FSM website)

<http://www.venganza.org/2008/05/22/traditionalizing-in-cyberspace/>

2/22-2/28. Case Studies.

Read: Sims & Stephens, Chapters Eight & Nine, "Examples of Folklore Projects," and "Suggestions for Activities and Projects."

3/1-3/7. Ritual.

Read: Sims & Stephens, Chapter Four, "Ritual."

Additional reading(s) TBA

3/8-3/10. **Midterm Exam:** posted in the morning of Wednesday, 3/8, due Friday 3/10, by midnight.

3/11-3/19. Spring Break!

3/20-3/26. Performance.

Read: Sims & Stephens, Chapter Five, "Performance."

Tok Thompson, "Beatboxing, Mashups and Cyborg Identity: Folk Music for the Twenty-First Century," BB

**** 3/27: Paper #2 (Material Culture) due.****

3/27-4/2. Skate Board Art & Folklore (Ciara's unit).

Read: Paul O'Connor, "Iconography," from *Skateboarding and Religion*.

4/3-4/9. Interpretation.

Read: Sims & Stephens, Chapter Six, "Approaches to Interpreting Folklore."

4/10-4/16. Folklore in the Digital Age.

Read: Trevor J. Blank & Lynne S. McNeill, "Fear Has No Face: Creepypasta as Digital Legendry," BB.

Limor Shifman, "The Cultural Logic of Photo-Based Meme Genres."

<http://vcu.sagepub.com/content/13/3/340.full.pdf+html>. (Please bring examples of currently popular photo-based memes, or similar phenomena.)

4/17-4/23. Applications of Folklore

Read: Selections from Tim Lloyd (editor), *What Folklorists Do*, BB.

4/25-4/28. 5/4. Catch up, TBA.

****4/28. Paper #3 due.****

4/28-5/3. Final Exam.