

FLK 373 - 700: Folklore and the Media

Instructor: Dr. Kate Horigan (kate.horigan@wku.edu)

Office hours: Virtual meetings available by appointment

Graduate Assistants: Taylor Burden (taylor.dooley645@topper.wku.edu) and Allison Cate (allison.cate720@topper.wku.edu)

Course Meetings: Online Class (first bi-term only)

Course Description

Modern forms of expression and communication are complex, varying from face-to-face interaction (including most folklore) to standardized mass media (TV, films, CDs, magazines, video games, comics) to electronic forms that can be both personal and global (blogs, video sites, social networking). This course will examine contemporary forms of folklore, popular culture, and mass and electronic media, the ways they interact with each other and we interact with them, the complex ways they shape communication and creativity, ways that folk communities form around mass culture (e.g., fan cultures) and on the internet, and such issues as ideology, corporate or government dominance of the media, representation of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, social class, and other topics. New technologies are constantly changing the ways we communicate and express ourselves, and yet seeming new forms of communication are in many ways extensions of old, folkloric forms that have been around for a very long time.

Folklore and the Media fulfills the requirement for a Connections course (Local to Global) under the Colonnade plan. It will help students to meet this Colonnade education goal: *Students will examine local and global issues within the context of an increasingly interconnected world. Courses will consider the origins and dynamics of a global society, the significance of local phenomena on a global scale, and/or material, cultural, and ethical challenges in today's world.*

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of the course, students will

- understand basic concepts of culture, folklore, popular culture, mass media and new media, and their complex relationships on local, regional, national, and global scales.
- critically examine and analyze ways that folklore influences (and is influenced by) the cultural forms of mass, popular and electronic culture/media, including films and television, music, journalism, and the Internet.
- critically examine and analyze the ways that electronic media becomes a conduit for folklore forms such as rumors, legends, and jokes, spreading them around the world and altering their nature in ways that influence and shape cultures globally and locally.
- critically examine and analyze how rumors, legends, and conspiracy theories about such phenomena as terrorism and immigration influence public opinion,

- decision-making and policies, on local, national and global levels.
- critically examine and analyze how fan cultures and other folk cultures form and operate around popular and mass cultural phenomena on local and global levels.
- develop the tools for recognizing, examining, analyzing, and researching these phenomena in a critical manner that can be applied to everyday life and to their complex global interrelationships, and will be useful in analyzing cultural phenomena in local, regional, national and global contexts.

Not all folklore is pretty. Please be aware that this class will occasionally deal with folklore that contains obscene language and/or is inflammatory (e.g., racist, sexist, homophobic). We will also deal with folklore that expresses particular political and ideological positions. The intention is not to promote such folklore but to deal in a critical way with the realities of folklore in contemporary culture. It is imperative that all students speak to one other and to me with respect at all times.

Required Texts

All required readings are available on Blackboard or elsewhere online as noted.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

25% Quizzes

5 short quizzes based on readings; all quizzes will be due before midnight on the Sunday of the week in which they are assigned.

25% Discussion Board (DB) Post

Participate in 5 discussion forums on Blackboard (write and share your post in response to the posted prompt); all posts will be due before midnight on the Sunday of the week in which they are assigned.

5% Week 1 Check-In

Instructions for this assignment are at the end of the Week 1 PowerPoint lecture titled "What is Folklore?" Your emailed response is due by Sunday, 1/24 (11:59pm).

10% Film Review Assignment

Instructions for this assignment are at the end of the Week 5 PowerPoint lecture titled "Folklore and Film." Your paper is due by Sunday, 2/21 (11:59pm).

35% Final Exam

The final exam will cover lectures and readings from the entire course, and it will consist of a combination of short answer and essay questions. It will be made available online under "Tests & Quizzes" on **Thursday 3/4 and Friday 3/5** for the entire day (from 12:00am on 3/4 until 11:59pm on 3/5). You will be able to take it at any time on those days, but once you begin you will have to complete it within a 2-hour period.

Policies & Resources

Academic Integrity: From the WKU Office of Counseling and Student Affairs:

"Violations of academic integrity include cheating, plagiarism, or lying about academic matters. Plagiarism is defined as any use of another writer's words, concepts, or sequence

of ideas without acknowledging that writer properly. This includes not only direct quotations of another writer's words, but also paraphrases or summaries of another writer's concepts or ideas without acknowledging the writer properly (i.e., citing them). Cheating includes behaviors such as giving or receiving data or information under any circumstances not permitted by the instructor. Lying about academic matters includes falsification of data or information as part of an academic exercise, or knowingly providing false information to a faculty member. Students who have plagiarized an assignment or otherwise cheated in their academic work or examination may expect an 'F' for the assignment in question or 'F' for the course." All instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct, which may impose additional sanctions.

Accessibility and accommodations: I am happy to make accommodations for differing abilities in the classroom. In compliance with University 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, Room 1074. The 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. Accommodation letters may be delivered via email.

Email and Blackboard: This course will be delivered entirely via Blackboard, and you will be expected to check your WKU email regularly. Technological issues will not be an excuse for late or missing work. Before emailing me, I ask that you check the syllabus first for answers to questions regarding assignments, grades, etc. You can usually expect a response from me within 24-48 hours during the work week. Please use professional etiquette in your correspondence (salutation, signature, full sentences, etc.).

Late or missed work: Make-up assignments will be accepted in cases of extenuating circumstances such as illness or other hardships. Please contact me to communicate about make-up work expectations and deadlines.

Learn more about the [Folklore Minor](#) and [Master's Degree in Folk Studies](#).

[WKU Syllabus Information](#)

Weekly Schedule

Subject to change with notification.

Date	Lectures	Reading	Assignments
Week 1 1/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is Folklore?• Folklore and Folk Groups in the Digital Age• Legends and Ostension	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• American Folklore Society “What is Folklore?”• Blank “Introduction: Pattern in the Virtual Folk Culture of Computer-Mediated Communication”• Peck “Tall, Dark, and Loathsome: the Emergence of a Legend Cycle in the Digital Era”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Week 1 Check-In due via email by Sunday, 1/24 (11:59pm) (find instructions in PP lecture “What is Folklore?”)• DB Post 1 due Sunday 1/24 (11:59pm)
Week 2 1/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Newslore and Fake News• Vernacular Commemoration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Frank, “<i>Caveat Lector</i>: Fake News as Folklore”• Goldstein, “Never Remember: Fake News Turning Points and Vernacular Critiques of Bad Faith Communication”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• DB Post 2 due Sunday 1/31 (11:59pm)• Quiz 1 due Sunday 1/31 (11:59pm)
Week 3 2/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Refugee Lore and Foodways• Conspiracy Theories	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Baer, “‘Give me...Your Huddled Masses’: Anti-Vietnamese Refugee Lore and the ‘Image of Limited Good’”• Bock “Deliberate Infectors and Exotic Origins: The Folklore Behind COVID-19”• Deutsch “The Folkloric Roots of the QAnon Conspiracy”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• DB Post 3 due Sunday 2/7 (11:59pm)• Quiz 2 due Sunday 2/7 (11:59pm)
Week 4 2/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Occupational Folklore• The Folkloresque	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gillis “An Unexpected Font of Folklore: Online Gaming as Occupational Lore”• Foster “Introduction: The Challenge of the Folkloresque”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• DB Post 4 due Sunday 2/14 (11:59pm)• Quiz 3 due Sunday 2/14 (11:59pm)

Week 5 2/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Folklore and Film • Folktales 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Koven “Folklore and Film” • Preston “Disrupting the Boundaries of Genre and Gender: Postmodernism and the Fairy Tale” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz 4 due Sunday 2/21 (11:59pm) • Film Review assignment due Sunday 2/21 (11:59pm)
Week 6 2/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fan Culture • Cosplay and Bodylore • Gender, Sexuality, and Folklore 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jenkins “Star Trek Rerun, Reread, Rewritten: Fan Writing as Textual Poaching” • Ellis “What Bronies See When They Brohoof: Queering Animation on the Dark and Evil Internet” • Hale “Cosplay: Intertextuality, Public Texts, and the Body Fantastic” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DB Post 5 due Sunday 2/28 (11:59pm) • Quiz 5 due Sunday 2/28 (11:59pm)
Week 7 3/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final exam this week 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Exam take on Blackboard on Thursday 3/4 or Friday 3/5