

**FOLK STUDIES 373: FOLKLORE & THE MEDIA
FALL SEMESTER 2022**

Instructor: Timothy H. Evans

Office: FAC 245

Office Hours: In-person: Monday 1-3. Zoom: Tuesday 9-10:30. You can always make an 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 are no books to purchase; readings are on Blackboard or other websites.

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 personal, group creations, and/or global (blogs, video streaming sites, social media, online multiplayer gaming, game streaming sites such as Twitch, etc). This course will examine contemporary forms of folklore, popular culture and mass and electronic media, the ways they interact, the complex ways they shape communication and creativity, ways that folk communities form around mass culture (e.g., fan cultures and gamers) and on the internet, and such issues as ideology, corporate or government dominance of the media, “fake news,” conspiracy theories, and other hot topics. New technologies are constantly changing the ways we communicate and express ourselves, and yet these new forms of communication and community 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.*

Folklore and the Media also fulfills requirements for an elective in the Folk Studies minor.

Course learning outcomes will support these Colonnade goals in the following ways:

- *Folklore and the Media* will prepare students to understand basic concepts of culture, folklore, popular culture, mass media and electronic media, and their complex relationships on local, regional, national, and global scales.
- Students will 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.
- Students will critically examine and analyze the ways that electronic media becomes a conduit for folklore forms such as jokes, rumors, legends, and conspiracy theories, spreading them around the world and altering their nature in ways that influence and shape cultures globally and locally.
- Students will critically examine and analyze how rumors, legends, and conspiracy theories influence public opinion, decision-making and policies, on local, national and global levels.
- Students will 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.
- Students will 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.

Be warned that this class may occasionally deal with material that is obscene or inflammatory in content (e.g., racist, sexist, homophobic, violent, frightening, politically partisan). The intention is not to promote such material but to deal in a critical way with the realities of contemporary cultures, American and global. Also, **we may discuss controversial topics**. It is okay to express your opinion, but please be respectful of others, pay attention to them, and be prepared both to explain your position and to consider alternatives.

I reserve the right to make changes in the class schedule as needed, but I will not add major writing assignments or exams. I may add occasional short readings, or homework assignments that are relevant to the class. I will not change exam dates except in emergencies, and in the event that I change due dates on readings or assignments, I will make them due later, not earlier.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS (475 points total). All assignments will be further explained in prompts and class discussion.

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. **Reflection on an article from Henry Jenkins' blog**, <http://www.henryjenkins.org/>, due Friday, 9/16, by midnight. (50 points)
3. **Proposal for semester project** (25 points), due Monday, 10/24, by midnight.
4. **Semester project** (100 points). A research-based project on a topic of your own choosing (but your instructors must approve it). The assignment can be a paper, or a media project (film, blog, podcast, etc.). Due Friday, 12/2, by midnight.
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. They are not synchronous; you will be given four days to complete them. Dates: midterm handout available 10/8, due 10/12; final handout available 12/3, due 12/7.

FOR POSTING AND CREATING VIDEOS, WE WILL USE THE APP FLIP. The app can be found at <https://info.flip.com/>. You will be given a flip code for class introductions.

ATTENDANCE AND LATENESS 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.

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 make up. If it happens more than once, you will receive a zero for the entire 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 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. Face coverings are now optional, but still encouraged when indoors in close proximity to others. Students can be vaccinated or boosted at no cost from the Graves Gilbert Clinic on campus. WKU's department of Environmental Health and Safety is offering free KN95 masks, email covid.help@wku.edu. Any member of the WKU Community who tests positive or has been identified as a close contact for COVID-19 must contact the WKU COVID Assistance Line within four hours of receiving the positive test result or being identified for exposure by calling 270-745-2019. Close contacts may not be required to quarantine if they are fully vaccinated and have received their booster (if eligible). 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.

FOLKLORE MINOR

Students at WKU have the opportunity to take a variety of folklore classes and may also minor in folklore. A folklore minor is fun, challenging, and includes many fascinating topics related to contemporary American life. It will help you develop valuable critical and problem solving skills for use in the complex social, occupational and political environments in which we work and live. These skills will make you a better candidate for employment, for admission into graduate programs in many fields, and for advancement in just about any career path. Courses include Introduction to Folklore, Foodways, African American Folklife, Roots of Southern Culture, Folklore and Literature, Folklore and the Supernatural, Women's Folklife, and many more offerings. For more information, visit <https://www.wku.edu/fsa/folkstudies/minor.php>, or talk to Dr. Evans (or any Folklore faculty member).

READINGS

There are no books to purchase. All readings are available online, either on blackboard or at other websites. Links are given on the class schedule, below. Readings available at the class blackboard site are marked **BB** on the schedule. If you have trouble accessing any of these, please inform your instructor ASAP.

WEBSITES

Students are encouraged to check out folklore and popular culture related websites, including:

FOLKLORE:

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

Kentucky Folklife Program - <http://kentuckyfolklife.org/>

American Folklore Society - <https://americanfolkloresociety.org/>

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>

New Directions in Folklore (online journal)

<https://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/ndif/issue/archive>

Folklore Forum (online journal) - <http://folkloreforum.net/contents/>

Geek Anthropologist - <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”.

POPULAR CULTURE/MASS MEDIA:

Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association - <http://pcaaca.org/>
Confessions of an Aca-Fan (Henry Jenkins’ blog - author of *Convergence Culture*) - <http://www.henryjenkins.org/>
Pop Matters - <http://www.popmatters.com/>
Media Commons (In Media Res) - <http://mediacommons.org/imr/>
Jane McGonigal’s blog (game designer & author) - <http://janemcgonigal.com/>
Journal of Visual Culture (online journal) – <http://intl-vcu.sagepub.com/>
Transformative Works and Cultures (online journal with a focus on media studies and fan cultures) - <http://journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc>
Association for Cultural Studies – <http://www.cultstud.org/wordpress/>
Americana: AmericanPopularCulture.Com - <http://www.americanpopularculture.com/home.htm>
Popular Culture 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 “Popular Culture”.

ACADEMIC JOURNALS, ARTICLES AND SEARCH ENGINES:

JSTOR - <http://www.jstor.org/> Provides electronic access, through WKU, to many academic journals, and some books. You can go to the JSTOR page and click on “log in through your library.” Or, you can find JSTOR under “Resources” on the WKU library page (see below).
Google Scholar (search engine) - <http://scholar.google.com/> (general search engine for scholarly or academic sources)

WKU Library Resources: Go to the library webpage - <http://www.wku.edu/library/> - click on “Databases” (under “Resources” on the left side of the screen). This brings up a long list of databases in alphabetical order. The two most broadly useful databases for this class are “EBSCO Host Databases” and “Pro Quest Databases,” both of which have search engines that access a wide variety of resources. The list of library databases also includes many more specialized resources such as “African American Experience,” “Latino American Experience,” “Graphic Novels Database,” “Music Index,” and many others. You can also access JSTOR.

You are also encouraged to talk to librarians. The WKU librarian for Folk Studies and Popular Culture is Sean Kinder, https://libguides.wku.edu/prf.php?account_id=51038. In addition, the reference librarians are happy to help you with research questions. If the library doesn’t have a book or article that you need, you can use **Interlibrary Loan**, <https://www.wku.edu/library/services/access/ill/>. This service can generally get you an article within a few hours, or a book within a few days.

CLASS SCHEDULE WITH READINGS (There will also be Power Points to read; these are not listed by title on the schedule. Readings on Blackboard are marked BB.)

Unit 1: 8/22 – 8/30. Introduction, Folklore/Popular Culture: Basic Concepts	<p><u>Read:</u> <i>American Folklore Society webpage</i>. Read the online article “What is Folklore?,” https://whatisfolklore.org/ and the definitions of folklore here: https://whatisfolklore.org/how-folklorists-define-folklore/. <i>Wikipedia: Popular Culture</i>. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Popular_culture Julia Kelso, “Quantum Folklore,” <u>BB</u> or http://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/ndif/article/view/870/920 Power Points</p>	Introductions on Flip, Discussion boards
Unit 2: 8/31-9/9. Mass & Electronic Media: Basic Concepts	<p><u>Read:</u> Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi, “Forms of Media as Ways of Knowing.” <u>BB</u> Henry Jenkins, “Introduction” to <i>Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide</i>. <u>BB</u> Michael Dylan Foster, “The Challenge of the Folkloresque.” <u>BB</u>. Power Points</p>	Discussion boards
Unit 3: 9/10-9/16. Henry Jenkins’ Blog.	<p>Go to Henry Jenkins’ blog, <i>Confessions of an Aca-Fan</i>, http://henryjenkins.org/. Browse through the archives and find an article that interests you. Write a reflection on the article or make a Power Point reflection. A prompt will be posted on <u>BB</u>.</p>	Due Friday, 9/16, by midnight
Unit 4: 9/17-9/23. Folklore in the Media: Mass Media	<p><u>Read:</u> Mikel J. Koven, “Folklore and Film.” <u>BB</u> Catherine Tosenberger, “Kinda Like the folklore of its day: <i>Supernatural</i>, fairy tales, and ostension.” http://journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/article/view/174/156 Power Points</p>	Discussion boards
Unit 5: 9/24-9/30. Folklore in the Media: Internet and Social Media	<p><u>Read:</u> Trevor J. Blank & Lynne S. McNeill, “Fear Has No Face: Creepypasta as Digital Legendry,” <u>BB</u>. Limor Shifman, “The Cultural Logic of Photo-Based Meme Genres.” http://vcu.sagepub.com/content/13/3/340.full.pdf+html Power Points</p>	Discussion boards
Unit 6: 10/1-10/7. Legends, Rumors, Conspiracy Theories	<p><u>Read:</u> Gary Alan Fine & Bill Ellis, <i>The Global Grapevine</i>, Introduction and chapter 1. <u>BB</u> John Bodner et al, “Conspiracy Theory 101: A Primer”. <u>BB</u> Power Points</p>	Discussion boards

Midterm exam: Posted Saturday, 10/8, due Wednesday, 10/12, by midnight	Midterm Exam You have five days to complete the midterm. A study guide will be posted on <u>BB</u>.	Midterm Exam. Due Wednesday, 10/12, by midnight
Fall break! 10/13-10/16		No assignments
Unit 7: 10/17-10/23. COVID Folklore & Conspiracy Theories	<u>Read</u> : Andrea Kitta & Ian Brodie, “Precedented: COVID-19 and Vernacular Response.” <u>BB</u> Elizabeth Tucker, “The Girl Who Hid: Campus Rumors and Legends of the Spring of 2020.” <u>BB</u> Power Points	Discussion boards
Proposal for semester project: due 10/24	Proposal for semester project (1-2 pages). A prompt will be posted on <u>BB</u>.	Project proposal, due Monday, 10/24
Unit 8: 10/24-10/30. Fake News	<u>Read</u> : Tom Mould, “Introduction to the Special Issue on Fake News.” <u>BB</u> . Timothy H. Evans, “The Bowling Green Massacre.” <u>BB</u> Power Points	Discussion boards
Unit 9: 10/31-11/6. Fan Cultures	<u>Read</u> : Tok Thompson, “The Beauty, the Beast, and the Fanon: The Vernacularization of the Literary Canon and an Epilogue to Modernity.” <u>BB</u> Matthew Hale, “Cosplay: Intertextuality, Public Texts, and the Body Fantastic.” <u>BB</u> . Power Points	Discussion boards
Unit 10: 11/7-11/13. Humor	<u>Read</u> : Carrie Iwan, “The Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster: Traditionalizing in Cyberspace.” http://www.venganza.org/2008/05/22/traditionalizing-in-cyberspace/ Trevor Blank, “Faux Your Entertainment: Amazon.com Product Reviews as a Locus of Digital Performance.” <u>BB</u> . Power Points	Discussion boards
Unit 11: 11/14-11/20. Games and Gaming	<u>Read</u> : Ben Gillis, “An Unexpected Font of Folklore: Online Gaming as Occupational Lore.” <u>BB</u> Nick Mizer, “It’s in the Cards: Narrative and Storytelling in <i>Magic the Gathering</i> ,” https://thegeekanthropologist.com/2016/11/28/its-in-the-cards-narratives-and-storytelling-in-magic-the-gathering/ Power Points	Discussion boards
Thanksgiving 11/21-11/27.	Thanksgiving Break – no assignments (work on your projects!)	No assignments

Unit 12: 11/28-12/2. Vernacular Creativity	<u>Read:</u> Don Stacy, “All Mixed Up: A Cultural Explanation of Mixed Tapes and CDs.” http://folkloreforum.net/2008/11/24/all-mixed-up/ Tok Thompson, “Beatboxing, Mashups and Cyborg Identity: Folk Music for the Twenty-First Century.” <u>BB</u> Power Points	Discussion boards
Semester Project: due Friday, 12/2	Semester Project. A prompt will be posted on <u>BB</u>.	Semester project. Due Wednesday, 11/30, by midnight
Final Exam: Posted Saturday, 12/3, due Wednesday, 12/7, by midnight	Final Exam. A study guide will be posted on <u>BB</u>.	Final exam. Due Wednesday, 12/7, by midnight