FOLK STUDIES 373: FOLKLORE & THE MEDIA
FALL SEMESTER 2022
Instructor: Katie Bennett
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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 (500 points total). All assignments will be further explained in prompts and class discussion.

1. **Class participation/Discussion board posts (100 points).** This is based on participation in Blackboard discussion forums. Online discussions will be graded both by the frequency and the substance of participation. To participate, you will need to keep up with the readings and other materials. There will be ten weeks in which discussion posts are due, and you will post a response to a prompt based on that week's materials, which is due the following Sunday at 11:59 pm. Late submissions will be graded at one letter grade deduction per day late.

2. **Discussion Engagement Parts 1 and 2 (100 points, 20 points each).** Replying to classmates' discussion posts for the weekly readings. The first three will be due at the

end of week 7, and the last two will be due at the end of week 13. I have structured it this way so that the final week of class may be dedicated primarily to working on your papers and completing the last discussion board.

3. **Midterm exam (100 points total).** Composed of two short essay questions (2-3 pages each) based on concepts discussed up to that point in the semester. Each prompt will require a certain amount of references used. Exam will be posted Wednesday, 10/9, and is due by Wednesday, 10/16, at 11:59 pm, giving students one week to complete it.

4. **Mini-Assignments (25 points each, 50 points total).** Twice during the semester you will complete mini-assignments that will task you with finding an intersection between folklore and the media in the world around you, as well as provide an opportunity for creativity. Prompts will be posted the week of their due date, and they will be due the following Sunday at 11:59 pm.

5. **Final Paper Proposal (50 points total, 1 page) to be posted on 10/28.** Students will receive feedback within the following week regarding their topic of interest and proposal for research. Proposal due 11/3.

6. **Final paper (100 point total, 8-10 pages)**. Final paper prompt will be posted on 10/28 and you will need to submit a proposal as listed above so that I may approve your topic. This paper will focus on a topic that shows the cross between folklore and media, whether it be one we discuss in class or one of the writer's choosing from outside of class. You will be expected to draw upon in-class readings as well as do research using scholarly sources such as the resources listed in this syllabus. More information will be disclosed at a later date.

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.

• **Assignments and Exams: Unexcused late assignments will be marked down by one letter grade per day late. Concerns regarding due dates will need instructor approval.** I am willing to work with you, life happens, just communicate it with me ASAP!

• **Any late work turned in within the last two weeks of class will be given a zero.**

AI tools prohibited:

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools are not permitted for any type of work in this class. If you choose to use these tools, your actions will be considered academically dishonest and a violation of the WKU Student Code of Conduct.

Communication Policy
As your instructor I will do my best to get back to you promptly. I am human and need to separate my work time and private life, as you should as well. To do this, I will have time constraints on email responses. Emails sent Monday-Friday will get a response within 24 hours. Emails sent over the weekend or during breaks will get a response the following business day. If you do not receive a response within these time frames, please send a follow-up message.

I will notify the class if I travel and will be unavailable.

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 in 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 katelyn.bennett@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 the instructor 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
- Weekly and by-appointment 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. For more information, visit https://www.wku.edu/sccjs/folklore.php and/or contact Dr. Ann Ferrell (ann.ferrell@wku.edu).

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 AResearch Guides@ (under "Resources" on the left side of the screen), then click on APopular Culture@.
Digital Folklore Podcast Spotify: https://open.spotify.com/show/2v1BelkrbSRSkHEP4cYffj?si=d41e3cdca39a4f25, Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/@DigitalFolklorePodcast/videos

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 ADatabases@ (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 "ProQuest 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.

| 8/19

Module 1: Introduction to Folklore and Popular Culture - what they are, what divides them, and what brings them together | Read:
1. https://whatisfolklore.org/
2. https://whatisfolklore.org/how folklorists-define-folklore/
3. Popular culture - Wikipedia

Watch:

1. What is Popular Culture and What is Pop Culture Studies - YouTube
2. PPT Lectures on BB
- Welcome/Syllabus
- Pop Culture and Folklore

Activity: Discussion post | Discussion Post due 8/25 |
| 8/26

Module 2: Electronic Media and methods of communication | Read:
1. Blank: "Pattern in the Virtual Folk Culture of Computer-Mediated Communication" Pages 1-12
2. Jenkins: "Introduction" to *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*.

Watch:
1. PPT Lecture
2. Folklore doesn't meme what you think it memes - Lynne McNeill

Activity: Discussion post | Discussion Post due 9/1 |

	9/3 (University Closed 9/2) Module 3: Online Communities	Read: 1. McNeill: "Real Virtuality: Enhancing Locality by Enacting the Small World Theory" 2. Gillis: "An Unexpected Font of Folklore: Online Gaming as Occupational Lore." Watch: - PPT Lecture Listen: - [S1E3: Hidden Meanings (Haunted Videogames, ARGs, & Folk Groups) — Digital Folklore](#) (Podcast, 57 minutes) Activity: Discussion Post	Discussion Post due 9/8	
	9/9 Module 4: Storytelling in News Media and Public Reactions	Read: 1. Fine and White: "Creating Collective Attention in the Public Domain: Human Interest Narratives and the Rescue of Floyd Collins" 2. Horigan: "From 'Angel of Mercy' to 'Fallen Folk Hero': Zeitoun's Story Travels" Activity: Mini-assignment	Mini-assignment 1: Find-a-news story or make-a-news story due 9/15	

9/16 Module 5: Conspiracy Theories and Fake News	Read: 1. Mould: "A Doubt Center Approach to Contemporary Legend and Fake News" 2. Bock: Deliberate Infectors & Exotic Origins: The Folklore Behind COVID-19 3. Evans: "The Bowling Green Massacre" Watch: - PPT Lecture Activity: Discussion Post	Discussion Post due 9/22	
9/23 Module 6: Internet Legends	Read: - Mould: "Counter Memes and Anti Legends in Online Welfare Discourse Listen: - S1E1: The Internet is The New Woods (Monsters, Ostension, & Moral Panics) — Digital Folklore (Podcast, 50 minutes) Watch: 1. Peck: "Dark, Tall and Loathsome: the Emergence of a Legend Cycle in the Digital Era" – Diamond session: https://jaf.press.uillinois.edu/509/index.html 2. PPT Lecture Activity: Discussion Post Midterm review guide will be posted this week	Discussion Post due 9/29	

9/30 Module 7: Worldbuilding and Unreality	Read: 1. Wilsey: "Dear David: Affect and Belief in Twitter Horror" 2. VICE: 'Martin Scorsese's lost film' Goncharov (1973), explained Listen: - Digital Folklore: No-Clipping Reality (Liminal Spaces & Possibilities) (Podcast, 43 minutes) Explore: - Mystery Flesh Pit National Park - Read FAQ Activity: Discussion Post & Engagement	Discussion Post due 10/6 Discussion engagement part 1 due (3 responses) 10/6, 11:59 pm	
10/9 Module 8: Midterm Fall Break: 10/7-10/8	Prompt posted 10/9 - 1 week to complete and submit	Midterm due Wednesday 10/16, 11:59 pm	

10/14 Module 9: Fan Cultures	Read: 1. Hale: "Cosplay: Intertextuality, Public Texts, and the Body Fantastic." 2. Falzone: "The Final Frontier is Queer" 3. Phillips: "In a Land of Venn Diagrams: Reflections on Anti-Fans and Counter Memes, Trolls and Anti-Legends" Watch: - PPT Lecture Activity: Discussion Post	Discussion Post due 10/20	

10/21 Module 10: Vernacular Cultures: Case Studies	Read: 1. Thompson: "Beatboxing, Mashups and Cyborg Identity: Folk Music for the Twenty-First Century." 2. [Ask a Punk for the Address - Virginia Folklife Program](#) Watch: 1. Style Wars on YouTube or Folk Streams: https://www.folkstreams.net/films/style-wars (Film, 1 hour, 9 minutes) 2. PPT Lecture Activity: Discussion Post	Discussion Post due 10/27	

10/28 Module 11: Starting final paper	Prompt will be posted 10/15	DUE: Final Paper proposal	
11/4 Module 12: Film and the Folkloresque	Read: 1. Foster: "Introduction: The Challenge of the Folkloresque" 2. Koven: "Folklore and Film" Watch: - PPT Lecture Will receive feedback on paper proposal this week Activity: Mini-assignment 2	Mini-Assignment 2: Find-a-film or make-a-film due 11/10	

11/11 Module 13: Music	Read: 1. Shonekan: "Black Mizzou: Music and Stories One Year Later" 2. Morrison: "Musical Trafficking: Urban Youth and the Narcocorrido-Hardcore Rap Nexus" Watch: - PPT Lecture Visit: - [Artists - Smithsonian Folkways Recordings](#) Activity: Discussion Board Post & Engagement	Discussion Post due 11/17 Discussion engagement part 2 due (2 responses) 11/17, 11:59 pm	
11/18 Module 14: the "Posthuman" and Class Wrap up Thanksgiving Break 11/27-11/29	Read - Thompson: Selections from "Posthuman Folklore" Watch: - PPT Lecture Activity: - Discussion Post - Work on papers		
Module 15: Final Paper	Final Paper Due	Paper due Tuesday, 12/3, 11:59 pm	