TOPICS IN FOLKLORE & FOLKLIFE: Dr. Janet Langlois
Folklore & Digital Culture   5057 Woodward, #9305.4/
ENG 5670 001 CRN: 24385   Barnes & Noble Café
TH 6-9 p.m.   .   OH: 1-3 p.m. T, 3-5 p.m. TH
0125 State Hall   313-577-7708/930-0504 (cell)
Winter, 2010   ad5634@wayne.edu

Course Description

At first glance, traditional folk cultures and cyberspace seem to be in two separate universes. Yet contributors to the course text noted below make a case for recognizing the "folkloric qualities of the World Wide Web, e-mail, and related digital media." We will examine digital storytelling, fairy tales in hypertext and urban legends threaded through multiple websites. We will look at how dislocated peoples have made ritual use of cell phones, cyber cafes and blackberries to maintain social, religious and ethnic networks, and at how young adults have created virtual memorial shrines for each other on sites world wide, for example. We will also examine virtual ethnography, the ways in which field researchers use new media technologies to exchange cultural knowledge. We will draw on a growing body of online scholarly literature pointing to how digital culture both shapes and is shaped by vernacular expression.

Required Text (Available for purchase online and at Marwil's Bookstore. On reserve at Purdy-Kresge Library)

Blank, Trevor J., ed. *Folklore and the Internet: Vernacular Expression in a Digital World.* Logan: Utah State University Press, 2009.

Class Readings and Activities Online

Many of the class readings and activities will be online, web related and emergent as we move through the semester. For instance, we will be interacting in some way with the online journal, *Cultural Analysis: An Interdisciplinary Forum on Folklore and Popular Culture*, and its upcoming online forum, "Representing/Experiencing Everyday Life in the Global Media: Commentary on the Global Lives Project" at the University of California at Berkeley in February, 2010. We will also consult with Wayne State University's own Digital Humanities Collaboratory and Digital Library Initiatives as well as with other faculty and students on their related research and/or participation.

Blackboard-Assisted Course

To access Blackboard and to communicate by email, you will need to activate your WSU Access ID at http://computing.wayne.edu/accessid/activate.php. You should do this even if you have another email address. If you do use another email address, you should have email that is sent to your WSU account forwarded to you by going to http://computing.wayne.edu/email/forwarding.php .

Course Requirements

Course requirements will include essay exams (40%); term projects—a critical evaluation of digital site, and a virtual ethnographic exercise (45%), and class participation (attendance, discussion & discussion board, oral work-in-progress report, etc.) (15%) (Fuller guidelines are forthcoming).

Working Syllabus

1. 1/14   **Introduction**

2. 1/21
Readings: Blank, *Folklore and the Internet,* introduction, chapter 1, pp. 1-66.

3. 1/28   **Urban Legends on the Web**
Readings: Blank, *Folklore and the Internet,* chapter 2, pp. 67-79; Blank, "Examining the Transmission of Urban Legends: Making the Case for Folklore Fieldwork on the Internet." *Folklore Forum* 37.1 (2007): 15-27 at https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/handle/2022/3231; Langlois, Janet, "'Celebrating Arabs': *Journal of American Folklore* 118:468 (2005): 219-236, at http://muse.jhu.edu.proxy.lib.wayne.edu/journals/journal_of_american_folklore/v118/118.468langlois.html
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4. 2/4   **Fairy Tales in Hypertext**
Readings: Robert Coover's postmodern novella *Briar Rose,* based on the classic fairy tale "Briar Rose" or "Sleeping Beauty, and put into hypertext by Robert Scholes. "Briar Rose." Briar Rose . Brown University. 4 Sep 2007 at
http://www.brown.edu/Departments/MCM/people/scholes/BriarRose/texts/BRhome.htm

5. 2/11   **Cyber Folk & Media**
Readings: Blank, *Folklore and the Internet*, chapter 3, pp. 80-97; Foote, Moncia, "Userpicks: Cyber Folk Art in the Early 21st Century." *Folklore Forum* 37.1 (2007): 27-38 at http://hdl.handle.net/2022/3251

 6. 2/18
Readings: Blank, *Folklore and the Internet*, chapter 4, pp. 93-122; Ellis, Bill, "A Model for Collecting and Interpreting World Trade Center Disaster Jokes." *Newfolk: New Directions in Folklore* 5 (2001) at http://www.temple.edu/isllc/newfolk/wtchumor.html.

Assignment #1 due (20%).

7. 2/25 "Representing/Experiencing Everyday Life in the Global Media: Commentary on the Global Lives Project" at the University of California at Berkeley in February, 2010 (TBA; date in February may change so that syllabus will be rearranged accordingly)
Readings: *Cultural Analysis: An Interdisciplinary Forum on Folklore and Popular Culture* volume TBA at http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~caforum/
          Midterm review

8. 3/4   **MIDTERM EXAM**

9. 3/11
Readings: Blank, *Folklore and the Internet,* chapter 5, pp. 123-158; Wikipedia exercises; other works by William Westernman TBA.
          Work-in-progess report on virtual ethnographic paper

10. 3/18   **SPRING BREAK—NO CLASS**

11. 3/25.   **Religion, Ritual & Gaming on the Vernacular Web**
Readings: Blank, *Folklore and the Internet,* chapter 6, pp.159-174; other works by Ron Glenn Howard TBA.
                   Work-in-progess report on virtual ethnographic paper
12. 4/1
Readings: Blank, *Folklore and the Internet,* chapter 7, pp. 175-93; Grider, Sylvia. "Spontaneous Shrines: A Modern Response to Tragedy and Disaster." *Newfolk: New Directions in Folklore 5* (2001) at http://www.temple.edu/isllc/newfolk/shrines.html
                   Work-in-progess report on final research paper
13. 4/8
Readings: TBA
                   Work-in-progess report on final research paper

14. 4/15   **Public Folklore in Cyberspace**
Readings: Blank, *Folklore and the Internet,* chapter 8 and appendix, pp. 194-230
                   Work-in-progess report on final research paper

Assignment #2 Virtual ethnographic paper on topic of student's choice due (25%)

15.4/22   **Conclusions and New Directions**
Readings:
                   Final exam review
                   Student evaluations

 FINAL EXAM SCHEDULED FOR THURSDAY, APRIL 29, 2010 FROM 6:00 P.M.

Contract between Instructor and Students I ask students to come to class, read and discuss readings, write term projects without plagiarizing, and have fun in the process. In turn, I, as instructor, agree to present concepts, examples and term project guidelines as clearly as possible, to give fair exams, and to return graded student exams and projects in a timely manner (usually one week later for exams and critical reviews, and no more than two weeks later for ethnographic projects). See the fine print below for more detailed discussion of class policies.

Attendance (5%) **The English Department attendance policy is as follows:**
Enrolled students in any English classes must attend one of the first two class sessions; otherwise, they may be required to drop the class. In addition, the instructor counts attendance as part of the class participation grade based on number of classes attended. Students are allowed up to 2 **excused** absences with no loss of grade that require notice to instructor; longer **excused** absences due to the flu or other reasons will be handled on a case by case basis, as students are asked to stay home if ill. Students who have 3 or more **unexcused** absences, however, may lose all attendance points and may be asked to withdraw.

Late Assignments Students may ask for extension of assignment due date up to a two-day grace period; after that time, two points marked down per day late (A=95% - 4 days late = 95-8 = 87 = B+/B). Papers over 7 days late will not be accepted.

Paper Format Reports should be typed, double-spaced, one-inch margins, no larger than 12 pt. type, no binders. (Material in appendices need not follow this format.)

Paper Revision TBD

Exam Make-ups Considered if student arranges with instructor before exam.

Incompletes
The mark of "I" (Incomplete) is given to either an undergraduate or a graduate student when he/she has not completed all of the course work as required for the term and when there is, in the judgment of the instructor, a reasonable probability that the student can complete the course successfully without again attending regular class sessions. The student should be passing at the time the grade of "I" is given. A written contract specifying the work to be completed should be signed by the student and instructor and filed with the English Department.Students receiving incompletes must finish their assignments by the end of a year or the grade will be replaced by an "F." The University will not allow any extensions past the year's deadline.

Withdrawals
The grade of "WN" applies to any student who has never attended class, or did not complete any assignments, or did not participate in credit-earning activities by the withdrawal date. If a student decides not to go to class after having received a grade for any component of a course, these grades will be issued only as follows: "WP"(Withdrawal with a passing grade earned to date) or "WF" (Withdrawal with a failing grade earned to date.).

Plagiarism
The College of Liberal Arts Policy on Plagiarism states:
*The principle of honesty is recognized as fundamental to a scholarly community. Students are expected to honor this principle and instructors are expected to take appropriate action when instances of academic dishonesty are discovered. An instructor, on discovering such an instance, may give a failing grade on the assignment or for the course. The instructor has the responsibility of notifying the student of the alleged violation and the action being taken. Both the student and the instructor are entitled to academic due process in all such cases. Acts of dishonesty may lead to suspension or exclusion.*My policy, on a case-by-case basis, follows the English Department 's guidelines based on college and university guidelines.

Writing Center information:
The Writing Center (2nd floor, UGL) provides individual tutoring consultations free of charge for students at Wayne State University. Undergraduate students in General Education courses, including composition courses, receive priority for tutoring appointments. The Writing Center serves as a resource for writers, providing tutoring sessions on the range of activities in the writing process – considering the audience, analyzing the assignment or genre, brainstorming, researching, writing drafts, revising, editing, and preparing documentation. The Writing Center is **not** an editing or proofreading service; rather, students are guided as they engage collaboratively in the process of academic writing, from developing an idea to correctly citing sources. To make an appointment, consult the Writing Center website: http://www.clas.wayne.edu/writing/. To submit material for online tutoring, consult the Writing Center HOOT website (Hypertext One-on-One Tutoring): http://www.clas.wayne.edu/unit-inner.asp?WebPageID=1330.

Educational Accessibility Services
If you have a physical or mental impairment that may interfere with your ability to complete successfully the requirements for this course, please contact the Educational Accessibility Services Office in Room1600 of the David Adamany Undergraduate Library to discuss appropriate accommodations on a confidential basis at 577-1851.

Honors Option
"The Honors Option allows a student in any course taught by a full-time, regular faculty member to elect honors level work, provided the instructor agrees to furnish commensurate extra instruction. If a grade of 'B' or above is earned in the course, the student will receive honors credit for the course on the transcript. Application forms for the Honors Option are available in the Honors Program Office and the Associate Chair's Office. The application form must be signed by the instructor and departmental honors adviser and should be returned to the Honors Program Office (via the Assistant to the Associate Chair) by the end of the first week of classes. The completed form must then be returned to the Honors Program Office at the end of the semester."