

# INTRODUCTION TO American Folklore

***AM ST 196, SPRING 2008  
(On-line Version)***

**Instructor**

**SIMON J. BRONNER, Ph.D.**  
***Distinguished Professor of American Studies and Folklore***

**Physical Office Location**

**W356 Olmsted Building  
Penn State Harrisburg**

**On-Line Office (with Instant Messaging and Email):**

**(For instant messaging I use the ID "amstdsjb" on AIM, MW 1-3 p.m. (EST).  
Email messages to [sbronner@psu.edu](mailto:sbronner@psu.edu) will be checked daily, M-F, and  
responses made within 24 hours.**

**Mailing Address:**

**American Studies Program  
Penn State Harrisburg  
777 West Harrisburg Pike  
Middletown, PA 17057-4898**

**Phone and Email Contact Information:**

**717-948-6039 (office)  
717-948-6201 (staff)  
717-948-6724 (fax)  
[sbronner@psu.edu](mailto:sbronner@psu.edu)**

## **CONTENT, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECTIVES**

The **content** of AM ST 196 introduces the forms and functions of American folklore. Approaching folklore as an expression of *tradition* in our lives opens up socially significant questions about the relationship of tradition to modernization, individualism, and community. The course explains folklore to be fundamental to human lives and relates these cultural traditions to identities and values that Americans express in contemporary society. Folklore, you will discover, is all around us in the present, and emerging anew as well as significantly being found in our past. The study of folklore is an international subject, but in this course we will particularly focus on those traditions that distinctively emerged in America or were adapted in America from global sources. By examining the forms and functions of American folklore, we view a nation noted for its cultural diversity and strong community values as well as its mass cultural production. As in other American Studies approaches, we interpret meanings of texts and performances in their sociocultural contexts, and from folklore studies, we give attention particularly to methods of ethnography and field collection to uncover symbols, structures, and functions in expressive culture. Using these studies, we examine the ways that Americans convey values at various levels simultaneously: individual, family, community, nation, and globe. In a variety of media, including articles, websites, and videos, students will read, hear, and view examples of folklore, and learn of approaches to their interpretation. The expressions discussed in this class are uncensored, and coming from public culture, may contain strong or even offensive content; the educational intent of using them is to analyze materials as people know and express them so as to better understand culture.

The **structure** of the class is divided into six sections containing 12 lessons, each posing key questions that will be answered in the class materials:

1. Begin with the basics: definitions and locations of folklore in American culture. (1 lesson; What is Folklore and Who are the Folk?)
2. Introduce two major methods of collecting and analyzing folklore—ethnography and item collection-- that you can apply in your own work. (1 lesson; How Do We Study Folklore?)
3. Discuss the sociohistorical background of folklore studies in the creation of American tradition. (2 lessons; Is There an American Folklore and What is American About American Folklore, and How is Folklore Used in Modern and Post-Modern Society?)
4. Survey folklore's commonly associated groups (ethnic, religious, regional, occupational, and children's groups) and genres (stories, speech, songs, objects). Using a variety of evidence from oral, material, and social traditions, we will interpret the ways that diverse identities of Americans are commonly formed, expressed, and changed in settings. (4 lessons; What are the Common American Folk Groups and Folklore Genres?)

5. Conduct a focused inquiry to bring all this material together. We will probe one of your identities related to an experience in which you are immersed: being a college student. (2 lessons; How Has Student Culture Changed, and What Are the Themes of Student Life and How Are They Reflected in Folklore?)
6. Conclude with an awareness of trends, careers, and resources in American folklore studies. (1 lesson; How is Folklore Applied in Public and Academic Life?)

These sections are connected as a whole with the questions of identities and values that folklore reflects and creates. The course moves from the general to the specific by giving you background in the historical and contemporary overview of the field before giving a case study in student culture and the way that folklore reveals meanings of that identity. This case study will be a model for your own application of folkloristic methods in a project for the class, and for uses of folkloristic approaches in other classes and majors, and potentially, in an American Studies major and folkloristic career.

This course qualifies for General Education (GH) and US cultures requirements.

**Objectives:** By the end of the class, students will have

- (1) gained tools of analyzing folklore in America (specifically, ethnography of cultural behavior, collection of items in the field);
- (2) comprehended major American issues in the relation of folklore in modern society (e.g., role of tradition in a future-oriented society such as the United States, effect of modern technology on transmission of folklore, significance of identity and belonging to folk groups in a modern society, community and social relations in enactments of folklore, particularly as borne out by case study of college students);
- (3) articulated major concepts, sources, and scholarship on folklore as a topic of inquiry in American Studies (e.g., motif index, belief indices, structure, performance, symbol, context), and;
- (4) expressed in writing techniques of ethnography of a cultural narrative or custom and interpretation of field-collected texts.

**Instructional Technology:** The course utilizes an “Angel” web site at [cms.psu.edu](http://cms.psu.edu) for classroom resources and submission by students of their required work. If you’re accessing Angel from home, a broadband connection is highly recommended.

## **COURSE COMMUNICATION**

Communication is an important part of an online course. Since our class is not meeting face-to-face, students can sometimes feel isolated from the rest of the class and the instructor. To minimize this, there will be several different ways to communicate with each other during this

course. You should log into the course daily to check for updates, participate in discussions, access lectures and readings, and complete homework.

**Course Mail:** ANGEL has a built in mail system which is separate from other Penn State email. ANGEL mail should be used for private communications between students or between student and instructor. If you need to contact me by email, please use the ANGEL mail system. I will check my ANGEL mail daily Monday-Friday, and you can expect responses within 24 hours. To access mail in ANGEL, click on the **In Touch** tab, then select the link to **Send Course Mail** or **Read Course Mail**.

**Instant Messenger:** I will be available for online office hours through the use of AOL Instant Messenger (AIM), available free from this website <http://www.aol.com/>, on Mondays and Wednesdays from 1-3 p.m. My AIM ID is *amstdsjb*.

**Discussion Forums:** ANGEL has discussion forums which will be used for class discussions. Think of posting to a discussion forum as the equivalent to raising your hand in class. If you have a question or comment that could benefit the whole class, post it on one of the course discussion forums instead of using ANGEL mail. There will be at least two discussion forums available all semester in this class for you to utilize on an as needed basis:

- ☐ The **Technical Support** discussion forum should be used for questions about how to do something in ANGEL. Technical problems that can't be handled easily will be referred to the ANGEL Help Desk, and solutions will be shared.
- ☐ The **I don't understand** discussion forum should be used for questions about something covered in the text, lecture materials, or assignments. Students are encouraged to answer these questions too!

Other discussion forums have been added for limited periods associated with, and located within, specific lesson folders. **Be sure to post these discussion forum responses by the due dates posted on them.** If you haven't posted your responses by the due date, you will not receive credit for that discussion assignment. All discussion forums can be accessed from the **Lessons** tab in our course in ANGEL.

**Netiquette:** One of the first rules you learn when you communicate online is: Don't write EVERYTHING IN UPPERCASE! Mixed-case text is easier to read, and uppercase text may indicate SHOUTING. When typing in a message, break it up into short paragraphs to avoid enormous blocks of text. Don't make it up as you go along. Plan ahead by composing offline and then copying and pasting into an email, discussion forum, drop box, survey, or quiz/exam. (Remember that ANGEL will log you off after 90 minutes of inactivity – typing in a text box is considered inactivity.) Avoid using acronyms since you cannot be sure that all of your readers will know what they mean. Read what you have written before you send/submit it. This will help you spot errors in spelling, phrasing, and grammar, and also help you notice that you don't sound as friendly as you would like. Make sure your message is worded professionally. Following these few guidelines will help you to be properly understood and get your points across effectively.

## **TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS AND SKILLS**

To access the full range of ANGEL features, the Web browser that you use should display frames, run Java 1.4.1 (or later) and JavaScript, and have cookies enabled. If you use a pop-up blocker, please make sure that it is configured to allow pop-up windows for ANGEL. To make sure these features are set up correctly or find out how to receive assistance with setup, go to ANGEL at <http://cms.psu.edu>, click on the Help link in the upper right corner of your screen, and navigate to the ANGEL Diagnosis Page.

Though you may have success with other Web browsers, system administrators have verified that the following browsers work best with ANGEL:

- **Windows**

- Firefox 1.0.7 or 1.5.0.1
- Internet Explorer 6.0
- Mozilla 1.7.12
- Netscape 8

- **Mac OS X**

- Firefox 1.0.7 or 1.5.0.1
- Mozilla 1.7.12

- **America Online (AOL)**

- Log on to AOL, then use a recommended browser to access ANGEL.

**Note:** To download the latest version of each browser, navigate to ANGEL's Help section and the "Technical Needs" subheading.

**Computer Configuration:** System administrators suggest that the computer you use to access ANGEL be configured with the following:

- **Minimum hardware and software** suggested:

- **Windows:**

Pentium class II / III 400 Mhz processor; 128 MB of RAM (256 for Windows XP); 10 GB hard drive; CD-ROM drive; Windows ME, 2000, or XP; antivirus software

- **Macintosh:**

PowerPC G3 or higher; 256 MB of RAM; 10 GB hard drive; CD-ROM drive; OS X (10.3.9 or higher); antivirus software

- **Screen resolution** of 800x600 pixels or higher

- **Internet access** through a high-speed connection (ISDN, DSL, cable, Penn State backbone), or by a modem no slower than 56.6 kbps.

**Note:** The majority of computers in Penn State Student Computing Labs meets or exceeds these requirements.

**Technical Skills:** A very basic familiarity with computers and the Internet will get you started in this course. It is recommended that you be able to use word processing software properly (for instance, edit, copy, paste, and save). You should also be able to handle email communications, including attachments, and be able to use a browser to access the Internet. If you encounter any technical challenges, you have several options: access ANGEL Help by clicking on the Help link available in the upper right of every ANGEL screen to “Submit a question” or “Report a problem”; post your question in the “Technical Support Discussion Forum” on the Lessons tab of our course; or communicate with me via email.

### **REMOTE ACCESS TO LIBRARY RESOURCES**

Many of Penn State’s library resources can be utilized from a distance. A number of research tools and databases are available on the LIAS website at [www.lias.psu.edu](http://www.lias.psu.edu). In addition, you can:

-access electronic databases, and even full-text articles and books. Especially good databases for folklore bibliography are MLA and America:History and Life. For full-text databases containing journals in folklore studies, see JSTOR, Literature On-line, Anthrosource, and Muse. These databases can be located in the Electronic Sources A-Z list at <http://www.lias.psu.edu/alallrem.html>.

-have documents delivered to your desktop through ILLIAD and books available for pickup at various locations through the “I Want It” feature in CAT or EZ-Borrow. See <https://ill.libraries.psu.edu/> for details.

-talk to reference librarians in real time using ASK!, a “Virtual Reference Service.” See <http://ask.libraries.psu.edu/>

You must have an active Penn State Access Account and be registered with the University Libraries to take full advantage of the Libraries’ resources and services. Registration and services are free.

### **REQUIRED READING IN PRINT TEXTS**

**(Can be Purchased at Campus Bookstores at Harrisburg and Mt. Alto or Through On-Line Sellers)**

Bronner, Simon J. *Folk Nation: Folklore in the Creation of American Tradition*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002. ISBN 0842028927

\_\_\_\_\_. *Piled Higher and Deeper: The Folklore of Student Life*. Little Rock: August House,

1995. ISBN 0874834430

Oring, Elliott, ed. *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres: An Introduction*. Logan: Utah State University Press, 1986. ISBN 087421128X

### **REQUIRED READING IN ELECTRONIC TEXTS AVAILABLE ON ANGEL**

Bascom, William. "Four Functions of Folklore," *Journal of American Folklore* 67 (1954): 333-49.

Bronner, Simon J. "Folklore," "Folklorist," "Fourth of July and Juneteenth," and "Thanksgiving" in *Encyclopedia of American Folklife*, ed. Simon J. Bronner, pp. 419-22, 422-26, 428-34, 1220-24. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2006.

\_\_\_\_\_. "'Left to Their Own Devices': Interpreting American Children's Folklore as an Adaptation to Aging." *Southern Folklore* 47, no. 2 (1990): 101-15.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Let Me Tell It My Way: Joke Telling by a Father and Son." *Western Folklore* (1984): 18-36.

\_\_\_\_\_. "This Is Why We Hunt: Social and Psychological Meanings of the Traditions and Rituals of Deer Camp." *Western Folklore* 63 (2004): 11-50.

Dundes, Alan. "Getting the Folk and the Lore Together," *Johns Hopkins Magazine* 27 (1976): 23-31.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Structuralism and Folklore," *Studia Fennica* 20 (1976): 75-93.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Who Are the Folk?" in *Interpreting Folklore*, by Alan Dundes, pp. 1-19. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980.

Hansen, Gregory. "Public Folklife" in *Encyclopedia of American Folklife*, ed. Simon J. Bronner, pp. 1006-9. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2006.

Charles Camp, ed. "What Do Folklorists Do?" in *Time and Temperature*, ed. Charles Camp. Washington, D.C.: American Folklore Society, 1989, reprinted on-line, <http://afsnet.org/aboutfolklore/whatFLdo.cfm>

### **REQUIRED VIEWING OF VIDEO LINKS AND TRANSCRIPTS IN ANGEL (AND RETRIEVABLE FROM FOLKSTREAMS.NET)**

Technical Note: When you link to the videos, you will be given a choice of MPEG-4 or Real-Surestream formats. MPEG-4 gives you better quality, especially if you watch it in full-screen, but may take a little longer to download than Real-Surestream. MPEG-4 also may require a Quicktime plug-in, which is free at <http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/>. Real-Surestream may require a plug-in from Real Player, which can be obtained free at

<http://www.real.com/player>. Most computers have these plug-ins already loaded.

*Buck Season at Bear Meadows Sunset*. George Hornbein, Kenneth Thigpen. 1984. (Color, 26 minutes)

A portrait of a hunting camp in northern Appalachia, the men who hunt there, and the traditions they keep alive. The men hunt the old way: they drive the deer. They keep the traditions of their grandfathers' camp alive in the stories they tell and the way they hunt.

*Cajun Country*. Alan Lomax. 1991. (Color, 56 minutes)

Alan Lomax's wonderful documentary about the bayous of Louisiana which have combined French, German, West Indian, native American and hillbilly ingredients into a unique cultural gumbo.

*Finnish American Lives*. Michael Loukinen. 1982. (Color, 45 minutes)

A 1982 portrait of traditional Finnish American culture in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, highlighting the fragile community of memory connecting one with parents and grandparents. A Michael Loukinen production from Up North Films.

*Give My Poor Heart Ease: Mississippi Delta Bluesmen*. Bill Ferris. 1975. (Color, 21 minutes)

A 1975 account of the blues experience through the recollections and performances of B.B. King, James "Son" Thomas, Shelby "Poppa Jazz" Brown, James "Blood" Shelby, Cleveland "Broom Man" Jones, and inmates from Parchman prison.

*Madison County Project: Documenting the Sound*. Martha King, Rob Roberts. 2005. (Color, 24 minutes)

Madison County Project: Documenting the Sound examines the tradition of unaccompanied ballad singing in Madison County, North Carolina and how both documentary work and the power of family and community have influenced that tradition.

*The Men Who Dance the Giglio*. Jeff Porter. 2000. (Color, 28 minutes)

A documentary on the Brooklyn St. Paulinus Festival. This film explores ethnicity, cultural traditions, and religious devotion as the performers, participants, and community members explain the significance of the festival.

*Pizza, Pizza Daddy-O*. Bob Eberlein, Bess Lomax Hawes. 1968. (Color, 18 minutes)

PIZZA PIZZA DADDY-O (1967) looks at continuity and change in girl's playground games at a Los Angeles school.

*Popovich Brothers of South Chicago*. Jill Godmilow, Martin Koenig, Ethel Raim. 1978. (Color, 59 minutes)

Filmmaker Jill Godmilow (with folklorists Ethel Raim and Martin Koenig) made this film in 1977 when there was a community of 1100 Serbian-Americans families in South Chicago. They worked in steel mills, drove trucks, taught school, played tennis and golf, watched



television, and went to church on Sunday. But what connected them to their family, church and community and provided the deepest expression of their identity was their traditional Serbian music and the Popovich Brothers were a constant source of that music.

*Rattlesnakes: A Festival in Cross Forks, PA.* George Hornbein, Kenneth Thigpen. 1992. (Color, 24 minutes)

The annual rattlesnake bagging contest at this tiny Appalachian festival includes a parade, a fair, firefighters' contests, and a greased pig chase. A George Hornbein/Ken Thigpen film.

*Salamanders: A Night at the Phi Delt House.* George Hornbein, Marie Hornbein, Tom Keiter, Kenneth Thigpen. 1982. (Color, 12 minutes)

An annual, weekend party at a college fraternity, which includes swallowing live salamanders develops into a competition among coeds that has sexual overtones. A George Hornbein/Ken Thigpen film.

*The Sea Bright Skiff: Working on the Jersey Shore*\_Rita Moonsammy, Louis Presti. 1991. (Color, 28 minutes)

The Sea Bright-style skiff dates back to the mid 1800s along the North Jersey Shore. Charles Hankins still hand-crafts these boats of New Jersey cedar and green oak, though they no longer serve as fishing vessels. He demonstrates the process of building the skiff, step by step.

*Steppin'.* M.J. Bowling, Jerald B. Harkness. 1992. (Color, 55 minutes)

Introduces viewers to the step show, an exciting dance style popular today among black fraternities and sororities. In addition to many rousing, crowd-pleasing performances, the program examines the cultural roots of steppin' in African dancing, military marching and hip-hop music, and discusses its contemporary social significance on college campuses.

*Two Homes, One Heart: Sacramento Sikh Women and their Dances and Songs.* Joyce Middlebrook. 1992. (Color, 26 minutes)

Sikhs in Northern California celebrate special events with Giddha and Bhangra, songs and dances from their native land, Punjab, India.

### **REQUIRED REVIEW OF WEBSITE LINKS IN ANGEL**

Center for Pennsylvania Culture Studies Website. Penn State Harrisburg.  
<http://www.hbg.psu.edu/hum/paculture/>. Accessed July 2, 2007.

"Heritage Projects and Place-Based Education," American Folklife Center Website.  
<http://www.loc.gov/folklife/edresources/ed-heritage.html>, Accessed July 1, 2007.

"On-Line Archive of American Folk Medicine." UCLA. <http://www.folkmed.ucla.edu/>. Accessed July 2, 2007.

"Smithsonian Folklife Festival," Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Smithsonian Institution, <http://www.folklife.si.edu/center/festival.html>, Accessed July 1, 2007.

"Annual Meeting," American Folklore Society Website, <http://afsnets.org/annualmeet/index.cfm>. Accessed July 1, 2007.

## **GRADING**

1010 points total:

- This course requires **two writing assignments**, worth a total of 500 points, applying tools of analysis learned in the class. One is an ethnography of an oral narrative or social custom worth 250 points, and the other is a collection of 5 texts gathered in the field worth 250 points. Students will follow a template for each type of analysis which is posted on ANGEL under the **Lessons** tab, "**Writing Assignment Guides, Rubrics, & Drop Boxes**" folder. Each writing assignment should have at minimum of 7 double-spaced pages of text, and demonstrate the use of library book and article sources from print as well as on-line sources. Students are required to confer with the instructor about the topic for the ethnography assignment. The topic choice for the Ethnography writing assignment is **due 3/2/08**, and the paper is **due 4/27/08**. The collecting writing assignment is due 3/9/08. These topic choices and papers will be submitted to drop boxes available on ANGEL, Lessons tab, "Writing Assignment Guides, Rubrics, & Drop Boxes" folder.
- There are **four Discussion Forum posts** worth 50 points each for a total of 200 points located within specific Lesson folders.
- Learning assessments will be posted within each Lesson folder to allow you to measure your progress in preparation for the final exam. There are **11 learning assessments** in the course. The completion of these learning assessments will constitute a total of 55 points (11 learning assessments at 5 points each).
- The course contains one examination scheduled at the end of the course, which you take on-line. It is designed to test comprehension of readings and course content. The examination, completed on-line, contains multiple-choice. The questions and answers are scrambled by the computer program, so each examination is unique. The examination is worth 250 points.
- There is an "About You" survey at the beginning of the course that you are required to complete. You will be credited with 5 points upon submission.

## **EVALUATION OF DISCUSSION FORUM POSTINGS & WRITING ASSIGNMENTS**

It is recommended that you "log in" to our course in ANGEL at least three times per week, accessing the course resources and completing lesson assignments. This will often involve

the posting of material and commentaries on the course discussion forums, and the completion of each lesson's learning assessment in the time frame specified in the syllabus. You will be *evaluated* on the quality of your postings to the discussion forums. A grading rubric, posted below, will be utilized to evaluate the quality, not the quantity, of your responses.

### Discussion Forum Postings Grading Rubric (5 @ 50 points each):

ATTRIBUTE	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average	Poor
1. Student followed guidelines and instructions of assignment (e.g., length, theme, timeliness)	10	8	6	4	2
2. Student contribution is thorough and properly documented	10	8	6	4	2
3. Student contribution demonstrates knowledge and/or research of subject	10	8	6	4	2
4. Student contribution demonstrates insight, creativity, and/or imagination	10	8	6	4	2
5. Written or visual contributions are clear, well composed, and logical in sequence and content	10	8	6	4	2
Total possible points	50				

### Learning Assessments Grading Rubric (16 @ 5 points each):

ATTRIBUTE	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average	Poor
1. Student followed guidelines and instructions of assignment (e.g., length, theme, timeliness)	1	.75	.50	.25	0
2. Student contribution is thorough and properly documented	1	.75	.50	.25	0

3. Student contribution demonstrates knowledge and/or research of subject	1	.75	.50	.25	0
4. Student contribution demonstrates insight, creativity, and/or imagination	1	.75	.50	.25	0
5. Written or visual contributions are clear, well composed, and logical in sequence and content	1	.75	.50	.25	0
Total possible points	5				

**Ethnography & Text Collecting Writing Assignments Grading Rubric (2 @ 250 points each):**

ATTRIBUTE	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average	Poor
1. Student followed guidelines and instructions of assignment (e.g., length, theme, timeliness)	50	40	30	20	10
2. Student contribution is thorough and properly documented	50	40	30	20	10
3. Student contribution demonstrates knowledge and/or research of subject	50	40	30	20	10
4. Student contribution demonstrates insight and initiative	50	40	30	20	10
5. Written or visual contributions are clear, well composed, and logical in sequence and content	50	40	30	20	10
Total possible points	250				

**Summary of Assignments, Dates Due, and Grading:**

Type of Assignment	Date Due	Total Course Points
--------------------	----------	---------------------

Ethnography of Narrative or Custom Paper	Approved topic submission due 3/2/08 Paper submission due 4/27/08	250
Collection of five texts gathered in the field	Paper submission due 3/9/08	250
Discussion Forum Posts (4 @ 50 points each)	As specified in course schedule	200
Learning Assessments (11 @ 5 points each)	Within Each Lesson	55
"About You" Survey	1/20/08, 11:00pm	5
Final Examination	End of Semester	250
TOTAL		1010

### Points Conversion to Grades:

Points	Grade	Quality of Performance	GPA Equivalent
941-1010	A	Exceptional Achievement	4.00
911-940	A-	Excellent Achievement	3.67
871-910	B+	Extensive Achievement	3.33
841-870	B	Good Achievement	3.00
811-840	B-	Acceptable Achievement	2.67
771-810	C+	Fair Achievement	2.33
711-770	C	Fair Achievement	2.00
611-710	D	Minimal Achievement	1.00
Below 610	F	Failure	0.00
	XF	Academic Dishonesty	0.00

## ***POLICY STATEMENTS: Academic Freedom, Academic Integrity, Attendance, Confidentiality, Disability Services***

**Academic Freedom:** According to Penn State policy HR64, "The faculty member is expected to train students to think for themselves, and to provide them access to those materials which they need if they are to think intelligently. Hence, in giving instruction upon controversial matters the faculty member is expected to be of a fair and judicial mind, and to set forth justly, without supersession or innuendo, the divergent opinions of other investigators." See <http://guru.psu.edu/policies/OHR/hr64.html>.

**Academic Integrity:** According to Penn State policy 49-20, Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity free from fraud and deception and is an education objective of this institution. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating of information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. The instructor can fail a student for major infractions. For more information, see <http://www.psu.edu/dept/ufs/policies/47-00.html#49-20>. I may choose to use Turnitin as a plagiarism detection tool.

**Attendance:** Although an on-line course does not meet in a classroom at a set time, attendance policies stated in 42-27 apply. On-line students are expected to complete every lesson in the course and are held responsible for all work covered in the course. A student whose irregular attendance causes him or her, in the judgment of the instructor, to become deficient scholastically, may run the risk of receiving a failing grade or receiving a lower grade than the student might have secured had the student been in regular attendance. Participation by students in the course should not be disruptive or offensive to other class members. See <http://www.psu.edu/ufs/policies/42-00.html#42-27>.

**Confidentiality:** The right of students to confidentiality is of concern to your instructor and to the University. According to Penn State policy AD-11, "The Pennsylvania State University collects and retains data and information about students for designated periods of time for the expressed purpose of facilitating the student's educational development. The University recognizes the privacy rights of individuals in exerting control over what information about themselves may be disclosed and, at the same time, attempts to balance that right with the institution's need for information relevant to the fulfillment of its educational missions. Student educational records are defined as records, files, documents, and other materials that contain information directly related to a student and are maintained by The Pennsylvania State

University or by a person acting for the University pursuant to University, college, campus, or departmental policy. Exclusions include: Notes of a professor concerning a student and intended for the professor's own use are not subject to inspection, disclosure, and challenge." For more information, see <http://guru.psu.edu/policies/Ad11.html>.

**Disability Services and Accessibility:** Any student who cannot complete requirements of the class because of physical disabilities should make circumstances known to the instructor. In cases where documentation of disability is available, alternative ways to fulfill requirements will be made. For more information, see Penn State's disability services handbook at <http://www.hbg.psu.edu/studaf/disability/dshandbook.htm>.

## ***THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE***

As with any course, you will get out of this course what you put into it. Learning in an online course is clearly different from taking classes in a traditional face-to-face classroom. They are not easier if only because you cannot sit in the back of the classroom and pretend that you have completed the week's assignments. Be prepared to commit the time needed to complete all assignments by their due dates.

On the other hand, enjoy the flexibility this online course provides you to organize your learning experience around **your** schedule. You choose when you want to work since our classroom virtually never closes, except for 5:00 to 7:00 a.m. U.S. Eastern Time daily, during which time ANGEL maintenance is conducted.

Below are some tips to help you to be as successful as possible in this course:

- ☐ Log into our course at least three times each week. Assume that the first time you log on in a given week it will be to access the next lesson folder to determine your learning tasks for the week. Additional log-on time will be used to complete the required learning activities.
- ☐ Make sure that you keep up-to-date on your postings.
- ☐ Take responsibility for your own learning and plan to be a self-directed learner. Assume that taking initiative on your part will be positively received and will maximize your learning.
- ☐ Stay on top of your reading assignments and become good at research and analysis with library as well as on-line resources. For the writing assignments, you should plan some time in the library and not rely solely on Internet sources.
- ☐ If you feel lost or confused, ASK!! No question is too basic.

- ☐ Be prepared for the amount of time that online learning takes and make time for it in your week.
- ☐ Work on being flexible and patient. Life has a way of intruding into the online classroom that can sometimes be uncomfortable and trying. Technical issues and difficulties are also a part of that life. Don't wait until the last minute to complete your weekly requirements to minimize these potential difficulties.

I am looking forward to enjoying an enriching learning experience with you!

## ***COURSE SCHEDULE***

<b>Section</b>	<b>Lesson</b>	<b>Title</b> (Summaries Below)	<b>Student Tasks</b>	<b>Due Dates</b>
<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>  <b>Getting Started</b>  <b>Week of 1/14/08</b>		Read syllabus  Review course schedule  View "About your Professor"  Complete the "About You" survey  Post any course questions to appropriate discussion forum	1/20/08  @  11:00pm
<b>1</b>  <b>The Basics</b>	<b>1</b>  <b>Week of 1/21/08</b>	<b>What is Folklore and Who are the Folk? What Is Not Folklore?</b>	View PowerPoint presentation  Read: <i>Folk Groups and Folklore Genres</i> , pp. 1-23  Read: Dundes, "Who are the Folk?" in Angel  Read: Bronner, "Folklore" and "Folklorist" in Angel  Complete Learning Assessment 1	1/27/08 @ 11:00pm



<p><b>2</b></p> <p><b>Methods of Collecting and Analyzing Folklore</b></p>	<p><b>2</b></p> <p><b>Weeks of 1/28/08 &amp; 2/4/08</b></p>	<p><b>How Do We Study Folklore?</b></p> <p><b>Documenting and Interpreting Folklore through Functionalism, Structuralism, and Symbolism</b></p> <p><b>Explanation of Assignments</b></p>	<p>View PowerPoint presentation</p> <p>Read: <i>Folk Groups and Folklore Genres</i>, pp. 225-54.</p> <p>Read: Bascom, "Four Functions of Folklore," in Angel</p> <p>Read: Dundes, "Structuralism and Folklore" in Angel</p> <p>Read: Dundes, "Getting the Folk and the Lore Together"</p> <p>Review: <i>Folk Nation</i>, pp. 71-76.</p> <p>View: <i>Pizza, Pizza Daddy-O</i> and read transcript at <a href="http://www.folkstreams.net/film.73">http://www.folkstreams.net/film.73</a></p> <p>View: <i>Rattlesnakes: A Festival at Cross Forks, PA</i></p> <p><a href="http://www.folkstreams.net/film,117">http://www.folkstreams.net/film,117</a></p> <p>Review: <i>On-line Archive of Folk Medicine</i></p> <p><a href="http://www.folkmed.ucla.edu/">http://www.folkmed.ucla.edu/</a></p> <p>Complete Learning Assessment 2 by 2/10/08 @ 11 p.m.</p> <p>Discussion Post 1: Example of folklore from your own experience and identify variations of those of others you recognize in your tradition to Discussion Forum by Thursday, 2/7, 11:00pm</p>	<p>See Separate Due Dates for Learning Assessments</p>
<p><b>3</b></p> <p><b>Sociohistorical Background of American Folklore Studies</b></p>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p><b>Week of 2/11/08</b></p>	<p><b>Is There an American Folklore, and If So, What is American about American Folklore?</b></p>	<p>View PowerPoint presentation</p> <p>Read: <i>Folk Nation</i>, pp. 3-64, 105-43, 170-98</p> <p>Complete Learning Assessment 3</p>	<p>2/10/08 @ 11:00pm</p>

	<b>4</b> <b>Week of</b> <b>2/18/08</b>	<b>How has Folklore been Used in America in a Modern and Post-Modern World?</b>	View PowerPoint presentation Read: <i>Folk Nation</i> , pp. 199-283 Complete Learning Assessment 4 Discussion (Team) Post 2: on modern or post-modern examples of folklore you are aware of (e.g., Internet hoaxes, chain letters, corporate festivals) to Discussion Forum by Thursday, 2/21, 11:00pm	2/24/08  @ 11:00pm
<b>4</b> <b>Survey of Folk Groups and Folklore Genres</b>	<b>5</b> <b>Week of</b> <b>2/25/08</b>	<b>What are Common American Folk Groups? Ethnic, Regional, and Religious Groups</b>	View PowerPoint presentation Read: <i>Folk Groups and Folklore Genres</i> , pp. 23-70 View: <i>Finnish-American Lives</i> , and read transcript <a href="http://www.folkstreams.net/film,35">http://www.folkstreams.net/film,35</a> View: <i>Two Homes, One Heart: Sacramento Sikh Women and their Songs and Dances</i> , and read transcript <a href="http://www.folkstreams.net/film,108">http://www.folkstreams.net/film,108</a> View: <i>Cajun Country</i> <a href="http://www.folkstreams.net/film,125">http://www.folkstreams.net/film,125</a>  Complete Learning Assessment 5 due 3/02/08 @ 11:00pm	3/2/08 @ 11 p.m.

	6 Week of 3/3/08	What are Common American Folk Groups? Occupational, Family, Children's Groups, and Others	<b>Collecting Assignment Due 3/9/08</b>  View PowerPoint presentation  Read: <i>Folk Groups and Folklore Genres</i> , pp. 71-120.  Read: Bronner, "Left to Their Own Devices" in <i>Angel</i>  Complete Learning Assessment 6  Complete Course Mid-Semester Evaluation	3/9/08 @ 11:00pm
	7 Weeks of 3/17 & 3/24/08	What are Common American Folklore Genres? Speech, Narratives and Songs	View PowerPoint presentation  Read <i>Folk Groups and Folklore Genre</i> , pp. 121-98  Bronner, "Joketelling by a Father and Son" in <i>Angel</i>  View: <i>Madison County Project: Documenting the Sound</i> , <a href="http://www.folkstreams.net/film,120">http://www.folkstreams.net/film,120</a>  View: <i>Give My Poor Heart Ease</i> , and read transcript <a href="http://www.folkstreams.net/film,80">http://www.folkstreams.net/film,80</a>  View: <i>Popovich Brothers of South Chicago</i> , and read transcript <a href="http://www.folkstreams.net/film,40">http://www.folkstreams.net/film,40</a>  Complete Learning Assessment 7	See 2 separate due dates for each Learning Assessment

	<p><b>8</b></p> <p><b>Week of 3/31/08</b></p>	<p><b>What are Common American Folklore Genres? Objects, Beliefs, and Customs</b></p>	<p>View PowerPoint presentation</p> <p>Read: <i>Folk Groups and Folklore Genres</i>, 199-224</p> <p>Read: Bronner, "This Is Why We Hunt" in Angel</p> <p>Read: Bronner, "Thanksgiving" and "Fourth of July and Juneteenth" in Angel</p> <p>View: <i>Buck Season at Bear Meadows Sunset</i>,</p> <p><a href="http://www.folkstreams.net/film,100">http://www.folkstreams.net/film,100</a></p> <p>View: <i>The Men Who Dance the Giglio</i></p> <p><a href="http://www.folkstreams.net/film,146">http://www.folkstreams.net/film,146</a></p> <p>View: <i>The Sea Bright Skiff: Working the Jersey Shore</i></p> <p><a href="http://www.folkstreams.net/film,41">http://www.folkstreams.net/film,41</a></p> <p>Complete Learning Assessment 8</p> <p>Discussion (Team) Post 3: Team Interpretation of Texts to Discussion Forum by Thursday, 4/6, 11:00pm</p>	<p>4/06/08</p> <p>@ 11:00pm</p>
<p><b>5</b></p> <p><b>Case Study: Folklore of American Students</b></p>	<p><b>9</b></p> <p><b>Week of 4/7/08</b></p>	<p><b>How has Student Culture Changed? Race, Gender, Class, and Sexuality</b></p>	<p>View PowerPoint presentation</p> <p>Read: <i>Piled Higher and Deeper</i>, pp. 11-142</p> <p>Complete Learning Assessment 9</p> <p>Discussion Post 4: Occupational, Family, or Student Events to Discussion Forum by Thursday, 4/13, 11:00pm</p>	<p>4/13/08</p> <p>@</p> <p>11:00pm</p>

	10 Week of 4/14/08	What are the Themes of Student Life and How are they Reflected in Folklore? Work, Play, and Belonging	View PowerPoint presentation Read <i>Piled Higher and Deeper</i> , pp. 143-246 View: <i>Steppin'</i> , <a href="http://www.folkstreams.net/film.134">http://www.folkstreams.net/film.134</a> View: <i>Salamanders</i> <a href="http://www.folkstreams.net/film.113">http://www.folkstreams.net/film.113</a> Complete Learning Assessment 10	4/20/08 @ 11:00pm
6 Trends, Careers, and Resources in American Folklore Studies	11 Week of 4/21/08	How is Folklore Applied in Public and in Academic Life?	<b>Ethnography Assignment Due 4/27/08 at 11 p.m.</b> View PowerPoint presentation Read: "What Do Folklorists Do?" in Angel Gregory Hansen, "Public Folklife" in Angel Review: "Heritage Projects and Place-Based Education" at the American Folklife Center website: <a href="http://www.loc.gov/folklife/edresources/ed-heritage.html">http://www.loc.gov/folklife/edresources/ed-heritage.html</a> Video about the Smithsonian Folklife Festival at <a href="http://www.folklife.si.edu/center/festival.html">http://www.folklife.si.edu/center/festival.html</a> American Folklore Society annual meeting description at <a href="http://afsnet.org/annualmeet/index.cfm">http://afsnet.org/annualmeet/index.cfm</a> Center for Pennsylvania Culture Studies <a href="http://www.hbg.psu.edu/hum/paculture/">http://www.hbg.psu.edu/hum/paculture/</a> Complete Learning Assessment 11	4/27/08 @ 11:00pm

	<b>12</b> <b>Week of</b> <b>4/28/08</b>	<b>Final Exam</b> <b>Review</b>	Complete Course Evaluation Review for Final Exam Final Exam	To be announced for finals week of May 5
--	---	------------------------------------	---	--

## **LESSON SUMMARIES**

### **Section 1: The Basics**

#### **Lesson 1: What is Folklore and Who are the Folk? What is Not Folklore?**

We begin with the history and definition of the key term “folklore” at the heart of this course. More than just giving you a dictionary entry, I want you to think about why the category for a type of expression was introduced in the first place and why it continues to hold significance as an analytical concept for scholars as well as a popular term in the American imagination. There are distinctions you will learn between early narrow (folklore as a relic or survival) and more elastic modern academic definitions (expressions shown to repeat and vary), and between scholarly (i.e., folklore as expressive culture) and vernacular (i.e., folklore as falsehood) conceptualizations, of the term folklore. Then we’ll break the term down into its parts—folk and lore—and find distinctions there, too. Folk, you’ll find, stands for the social aspect that we all share and lore represents the material of tradition. Especially important is the modern definition proposed by Alan Dundes for a “folk group” and you’ll read his justification for his broad-based conceptualization and some criticism to invite your own judgment. If folklore is broadly defined in contemporary usage, then the question is raised of what it is not, and we will make some distinctions between folk, popular, and elite culture to guide you through the literature on folklore.

#### **Objectives**

The objectives of Lesson 1 are:

- First, to recognize what folklore is, and distinctions that have arisen over time between early and modern usage and the scholarly (representing folklore as tradition) and vernacular (perceiving it as falsehood) conceptualizations.
- Second, to comprehend what is included in the category of folk culture and what is excluded, or overlapping with popular culture. By the end of the lesson you should be

able to explain definitions of folk and popular culture and their analytical purposes.

### Assessment Questions for Lesson

1. What is the origin of the term “folklore”?
2. Contrast the differences between the nineteenth-century perspective of folk as a level of culture and the “modern” view of folk as a social process.
3. What is the difference in transmission between folk and popular culture?

## **Section 2: Methods of Collecting and Analyzing Folklore**

### **Lesson 2: How Do We Study Folklore?**

In this lesson, you'll learn about how folklorists identify folklore items and scenes, and take that evidence to interpret folklore's meaning. For identification, we'll discuss the process of collecting folklore “texts,” with attention to “contexts.” You'll see examples of this process in the reading by William Wilson who established a major folklore archives. This process is often called “field collecting” or you'll hear references to collecting “in the field,” to underscore the direct experience of a researcher with contemporary tradition-bearers. The field does not have to be an exotic locale, because all people have folklore by virtue of participating in culture. It can at the family dinner table where a festive food is served, at the playground where games are still played that you remember from your own childhood, in the street where you offer a gesture of greeting or departure, or at an outing where you hear a joke you've heard before told with great panache. Part of the identification stage is not only to collect the material, but also to classify it and annotate it with standard references and indexes of traditional material (e.g., type and motif-index, ballad numbers, and belief categories). Most of these are in print form, which you'll use in the library, but I have posted at least one effort to digitize a field collection that can be used for annotation; it's the On-Line Archive of Folk Medicine at UCLA. Try it out by entering an ailment or ingredient to see what has been folklore has been collected by students like you. To get us talking to one another about traditions, there is your first discussion forum where I ask you to relate an example to the group of folklore in your own experience and I also want you to read the other posts to comment when you recognize a variation of a folklore text you know.

For interpretation, there are three approaches to deriving meaning that I introduce here: (1) functionalism, (2) structuralism, (3) symbolism. You'll be able to use these methods of identification and interpretation in your two writing assignments, and you'll find that many folkloristic readings inside and outside this course refer to these approaches. I'll explain the assignments in this lesson, and show you the templates and examples that I've prepared to guide you. They are all posted to Angel. To visualize the differences between the first writing assignment of collecting items and the second assignment of doing an ethnography, I have given representative videos for you to watch done by folklorists. The first of *Pizza, Pizza Daddy-O* shows children performing ring and clapping songs in a playground, and you'll see a transcript that identifies and annotates the songs as “texts” taken in a certain “context.” The second, *Rattlesnakes*, is an example of an “ethnography,” that is, an observation of a

bounded cultural scene in which symbolic communication and behavior occurs. It's a festival in Pennsylvania and you'll notice that rather than separate out the individual items as texts, the folklorists wanted to give you a view of the festival as a custom containing many behavioral facets from the snake "roundup" to the greased-pig contest. You can think of the difference as one between a literary and a behavioral treatment. Collecting of items separates texts as if they were literary works with themes, motifs, and symbols. The items can be culled from conversation (such as a slang term or proverb) as well as from a rendering of a joke you solicit. Ethnography is a slice of life (or in our assignment, a custom) in which behaviors or performances are situated in a certain setting, time, and place that mark it as a special cultural scene. Other examples might be "rites of passage" such as a wedding or funeral, settings such as deer camp (which we'll talk about later in the course) or summer camp, and a slumber party or a birthday party.

## Objectives

By the end of Lesson 2, you should be able to:

- Know the folkloristic processes of identification and classification, including the concepts of field collecting and annotation using standard references and indices.
- Comprehend the interpretative approaches of structuralism, functionalism, and symbolism and give examples of analyses using these approaches.
- Prepare for the writing assignments later in the course using (1) field collecting of texts in context and (2) ethnography of a social custom

## Assessment Questions for Lesson

1. What according to William Bascom is the reason that folklore persists in the modern age?
2. What can be learned from analyzing the structure of a story?
3. What is the basis of psychoanalytic interpretation of folklore?
4. In the ethnographic film *Rattlesnakes*, what are the functions of the festival that the filmmakers document?

## **Section 3: Sociohistorical Background of American Folklore Studies**

### **Lesson 3: Is There an American Folklore, and If So What is American about American Folklore?**

You'll learn that folklore scholarship was European-centered at its beginnings, starting with the renowned work which you are probably familiar of the Brothers Grimm in early nineteenth



century Germany. Many scholars doubted that there was an American folklore other than the myths possessed by Native Americans, because the young nation lacked an ancient history, homogenous racial stock, or consistent boundaries and landscape. As in the reading by Alexander Krappe, a sentiment could be heard that there was only a derivative folklore in America, not an American folklore that emerged out of American soil. This view was countered by people like B.A. Botkin, MacEdward Leach, and John Lomax who you will read made an argument for a vibrant folklore out of the distinctive experiences that shaped America such as the frontier, immigration, industrialization, and democracy. There was indeed an effort to tie awareness of American folklore into a sense of American nationhood. Folklore not only reflected what Americans went through, but it also was used to *create* Americans by suggesting a national tradition, especially as America diversified in the twentieth century with immigration and industrialization.

## Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to answer the questions posed in the title of this lesson by

- Identify the types of lore that qualify as “American Folklore” rather than “Folklore in America” and the historical themes and experiences American folklore reflects
- Know the historical background of American folklore scholarship such as the mission and significance of the American Folklore Society and racial offshoots such as the Hampton Folklore Society (devoted to African American lore)
- Explain what is American about American folklore by noting the attributes that folklorists such as John Lomax and Allen Eaton assigned to it (freedom of expression, heroism of comic demigods, regional mobility and community, democratic spirit of the “common man”)

## Assessment Questions for Lesson

1. Why did some early European folklorists think that America lacked a national folklore?
2. What was the defense of Americanists such as B.A. Botkin and John Lomax to the idea of an American folklore?
3. What is the value of immigrant folk arts to national culture, according to Allen Eaton?

## Lesson 4: How Has Folklore Been Used in America in a Modern and Post-Modern World?

In the last lesson, maybe you accepted the argument that America has a folklore presented by folklorists because you associated their examples with romantic folksy

characters of cowboys, hillbillies, pioneers, and hardy immigrants living in community with twice-told tales and homespun crafts. Can there be an American folklore in a modern technological world filled with televisions, telephones, and airplanes? You're a part of this world and I invite your commentary in a posting. You'll read how the idea of people seeking identities by folk traditions that aligned them to overlapping groups addressed this issue. Folklore was no longer restricted to word of mouth, but conceptualized as tradition and expressive culture that could be transmitted by fax and family. Indeed, traditions arose to reflect America's mobile, technological society. As Americans during the computer age became more aware of globalism, moaned or celebrated their consumerism and submission to corporate control, and regarded themselves as individuals, the question arose whether folklore addressed these "post-modern" trends. You'll read how scholars conceptualized emergent folklore in contemporary society, transmitted in a "virtual community" over the Internet or organized in a corporation, as well as noticing a turn to folklore as local "heritage" in a global society that appeared to lose its sense of community. In addition to noting that folklore continued to thrive in new forms, another quandary to address was why tradition-centered folk groups such as the Amish expanded, rather than became extinct at the hands of modern forces, despite sociological predictions of doom.

## Objectives

By the end of the lesson, you should be able to answer the question in the title of the lesson by:

- Explaining the ways that folklore emerges in modern settings and transmitted by new technologies.
- Identifying the ways that folklore responds to post-modern attributes of extreme individualism and globalism.

## Assessment Questions for Lesson

1. What is the basis for Richard Dorson calling the legends of contemporary students folklore?
2. How does folklife fit into a concept of multiculturalism?
3. Why does Jay Mechling think that popular culture will not displace folklore?

## **Section 4: Survey of Folk Groups and Folklore Genres**

### **Lesson 5: What Are the Common American Folk Groups? (Ethnic, Regional, and Religious Groups)**

The American experience is often distinguished by its record of immigration and migration. You should know from this lesson why “ethnic” folklore is used as an overarching concept that includes immigrant lore; ethnicity has a connotation that generations after the first immigrants, an identity based on national ancestry still is significant. It also carries the connotation of a relation of groups to a national norm. A cultural question arises if many of these groups coexist within a national context associated with a majority or normative ethnic cast: how much assimilation to national norm occurs thought of as a loss of ethnic tradition, or is there more of a hybridization in which different traditions fuse to form ethnic forms that are distinctively American? In this lesson, we’ll examine the experience of different groups that came to America. A related question is the impact of ethnic groups on regionalism, such as the Pennsylvania Culture Region known for its German heritage or Cajun Country associated with French culture, although the film you will see argues for a multicultural hybridization there. In American experience, historical ports of entry and geographical features influenced the formation of folk regions such as the Deep South, New England, Ozarks, and Appalachia. Just as region is often associated with ethnicity, so too is religion tied to ethnicity. In the United States there has been a tradition of religious pluralism where different religions—especially Catholicism, Protestantism, and Judaism—have coexisted, and at the same time a religious separatism whereby communal societies and dissident groups saw an opportunity in America to live in religious community (examples are the Shakers and Harmonists). The United States has also been an incubator for new religions starting in the eighteenth century with the Church of the Brethren and continuing into the present day with “new age” and “spiritualist” or syncretic religions. Another issue bringing religious folklore up to the present is the influence of religions brought by recent waves of immigration such as Islam, Sikhism, and Buddhism. You’ll have a glimpse of Sikhism, for instance, in one of the films to be viewed. An important concept is the idea of religious folklore which can emerge within “organized” religions. You’ll learn, for instance, about folk Catholic practices such as home altars, public shrines, and Virgin Mary devotion.

## Objective

By the end of the lesson, you should be able to

- Describe representative ethnic, religious, and regional American groups and give examples of their folklore
- Explain the historical background of “ethnic” and “regional” cultures in America
- Use folklore as evidence to describe cultural processes associated with an ethnically diverse nation such as the United States: assimilation, acculturation, hybridization, communalism, multiculturalism

## Assessment Questions for Lesson

1. In the film *Finnish-American Lives*, what is the distinctive folklore of Finnish Americans that separate them from Finns and Americans?

2. How is the concept of ethnic folklore different from immigrant folklore?
3. What is a folk region? How does the film *Cajun Country* depict a folk region?

## **Lesson 6: What are Common American Folk Groups? (Occupational, Family, Children's Groups, and Others)**

An experience that we all share is aging and identifying with a family. In this lesson, we examine the ways that this common experience is related to folklore. One idea that you we will discuss is that folklore is important as a form of inter-generation learning; when we talk about American values and attitudes, we can find in folklore ways that a new generation learns the symbols and beliefs of the family unit as well as the national culture in which it operates. Unlike ethnic and religious folklore, where we previously talked about a profile of traditions for the group, within the context of childhood, we regularly discard as well as add forms of folklore. One idea that we'll discuss to explain the great changes in folkloric knowledge through childhood is that folklore acts as an adaptation to aging. We associate it with childhood because it is then that we are going through the most physical, social, and cognitive changes. Do we stop needing folklore as adults? No. Arguably for Americans, work and family become a central concern in adulthood, and these concerns are reflected in folklore in the workplace that ranges from slang to rituals to stories. We close with an inquiry into other group associations we may have beyond work and the way that folklore reflects and creates our identities—for a unit as small as “a couple” (sociologically identified as a *dyad*), an organization (even one that is temporary such as a camp), or folk groups, which according to folklorist Alan Dundes, consist of “at least two persons who share any trait in common.”

### **Objectives**

By the end of the lesson, you should be able to

- Differentiate an “age group” from an “ethnic group” in cultural terms
- Explain the functions of children's folklore and the way it operates as an adaptation to aging
- Discuss the ways that different occupational groups reflect and create their identities
- Extend the idea of groups using folklore to create a sense of identity to social units such as dyads and organizations.

### **Assessment Questions for Lesson**

1. Why is folklore used as an adaptive device in childhood?
2. What are the themes of children's folklore that separate it from other age groups?

3. What is the importance of storytelling in a workplace, according to Robert McCarl?

## **Lesson 7: What Are Common American Folklore Genres? (Speech, Narratives, and Songs)**

The minimal unit of folklore is a single utterance, which can be described as folk speech. It does not even have to be spoken, since a gesture in American Sign Language may be used by a deaf person, for instance, to express slang. Following our previous discussion of the way that American values are inherited and perpetuated, attention is often given to sayings and proverbs as containing collective wisdom. In this lesson, we begin with the sayings we think of as American and ask how it is distinguished from the values expressed in other national traditions. We will extend this inquiry into values into discussions of stories that are formed with symbolic speech. We will discuss the types of narrative, including legends, jokes, and tales. To give an example of narratives analyzed in context, I provide a case study I did of an African American father and son who shared a joke repertoire. This leads us to think of the rich legacy of American folk song, many of which are performed to convey a “story,” including blues, ballads, and ethnic music. You’ll view films that delve into the ethnic-regional roots of these traditions and efforts to maintain them as markers of local identity and national heritage.

### **Objectives**

By the end of the lesson, you should be able to:

- Discuss the way that American proverbs convey American beliefs and values, or worldview
- Identify different types of narrative prose, including legends, tales, and jokes
- Interpret the functions of folk songs from Appalachian, Delta, and Balkan traditions in different ethnic-regional contexts

### **Assessment Questions for Lesson**

1. What are the sources and functions of African-American blues?
2. What is the difference between a legend and a folktale?
3. Why did Appalachians want to preserve ballads in the Madison County Project?

## **Lesson 8: What Are Common American Folklore Genres? (Objects, Beliefs, and Customs)**

In this lesson, we'll discuss the idea that objects, beliefs, and customs "mediate" social relations and symbolize values. By the process of mediation, folklorists mean the way that expressions provide symbols and occasions to bring people together into community and once there function to define cultural roles and expectations. Two visual examples in this lesson will be in Pennsylvania deer camp and a festival like the Feast of St. Paulinus featuring a giant homemade tower called a "Giglio." I use the overarching term "custom" for these events, which includes, as you will learn, rituals, holidays, festivals, games, and sports. Underlying many of these customs and the objects used within them is the notion of belief. Sometimes a belief is stated as folk speech, such as the folk medical belief in "An apple a day keeps the doctor away," but on other occasions, belief is silently implicit as a folk idea such as the future-orientation implicit in eating pork and sauerkraut on New Year in Pennsylvania so as to insure a prosperous future. We would also be remiss in a course on American folklore if we didn't talk about holidays and sports as customs that are associated with American identity. The examples I'll take up with you are Thanksgiving and Fourth of July/Juneteenth, which you'll see have had complicated and contested meanings through the years. Talking about those holidays also allows us to integrate the role of football and baseball, respectively, as customs Americans belong to them. This lesson is especially applicable to the second writing assignment on ethnography, since the assignment calls for observation and analysis of a social custom, and I provide an example of ethnographic interpretation in the reading on deer camp. Following up the last lesson on oral genres, in this lesson on social and material genres you'll become aware of some differences between objects and narratives as evidence for analysis.

## Objectives

By the end of the lesson, you should be able to:

- Distinguish between the differences between oral, social, and material genres as evidence for analysis
- Explain the process by which objects and customs "mediate" social relations, and give examples in the Feast of St. Paulinus and deer camp traditions documented in videos
- Discuss the ways that "national" holidays of Thanksgiving and Fourth of July/Juneteenth have evolved complicated and contested meanings through American history

## Assessment Questions for Lesson

1. What is the relationship of Juneteenth to July 4<sup>th</sup> celebrations?
2. Folklorists have argued that Thanksgiving has manifest and latent functions? What are they?
3. Why is the Sea Bright Skiff still made by hand?

## **Section 5: Case Study: Folklore of American Students**

### **Lesson 9: How Has Student Culture Changed? Race, Gender, Class, and Sexuality**

College students have not conventionally been thought of as a folk group because they were considered too literate, temporary, or elite to qualify, but as you have seen in this course in a “modern” approach to folklore, all people have traditions they use to form identities and relate values. As a case study, we begin with a historical overview to understand the formation of student culture. You should discern an evolution from what I call “the old-time college” to the modern “multiversity.” Note that forms of the “old-time college” still exist and both types feature their own types of folklore. But they often have different symbols and values. The argument from your reading is that the “old-time college” initiated participants into a community and symbolized in their four years of college a passage into adulthood. Folklore genres such as initiations, moving-up ceremonies, class scraps, and coming of spring rituals were central traditions to the idea of community and passage. The multiversity is more about individualism and identity, and that has placed conversational genres associated with individuals making their way in a mass culture more to the fore, such as legends and beliefs. We also see significant social changes as the social base of students has expanded and diversified. This leads us to consider the concept of “intersectionality,” which refers to social structures based on culturally based assumptions in which race, gender, class, and sexuality intersect. Folklore becomes a way that these social structures become manifest and the cultural assumptions about a hierarchy of values become evident. Examples we will discuss, for instance, are the gendered assumptions beneath lore of the “virgin test” and suicide legends, esoteric (within the group) and exoteric (outside of the group) racial assumptions in performances of step shows by historically black fraternities, class assumptions in lore of “party schools” and school rivalries, sexuality issues in AIDS and roommate legends. To carry the discussion of such issues further, I have set up a discussion forum and asked you to comment on how you could see such issues in customs and practices of various institutional groups. You can talk about student events, or extend it to organizational, family, or occupational groups in which you participate. Besides commenting on your own post, be sure to respond to others, especially noting perspectives you have gained from participation in similar experiences.

#### **Objectives**

By the end of the lesson you should be able to:

- Explain the sociohistorical evolution from the old-time college to the modern multiversity, and the ways they developed different folkloric profiles
- Discuss the concept of intersectionality with reference to race, gender, class, and sexuality in modern lore that is found on many campuses nationally, such as “virgin



test,” suicide, “party school,” and roommate legends.

### Assessment Questions for Lesson

1. What is the function of student folklore in the modern “multiversity” according to *Piled Higher and Deeper*?
2. What is the commentary on mass culture in the folklore of “blue book” scams?
3. What was the function of initiations and scraps in the “old-time college”?

## Lesson 10: What are the Themes of Student Life and How are They Reflected in Folklore? Work, Play, and Belonging

If student culture works like others we have seen in the course, then themes of concern to the group will come through symbolically in folklore. It will come as no surprise that your reading observes issues such as grades and success (or fear of failure), authority relations with professors, romance and sexuality, and a sense of belonging as themes underlying much of the folklore shared by students. It may surprise you to read views of the way that American student culture is different from others in relation, for example, to the importance of athletics, or the mixed message of college as both an elite and democratic institution. In this lesson, we also return to our question about post-modern culture, and after reading the afterword of *Piled Higher and Deeper* contemplate the impact of the Internet not just on the production of knowledge and course delivery such as this one, but also on community formation and expressions of play and belonging. To visualize some of these issues, you’ll view two short films on campus customs—one is a salamander swallowing ritual held for years at a Penn State fraternity, and the other is a step show performed by historically black fraternities and sororities. They invite questions of meaning: Why do they do it? What does it convey? What is its function? And I’ll pose some potential answers as folklorists have addressed these questions for student culture.

### Objectives

By the end of the lesson, you should be able to answer the question in the lesson title by:

- Identifying themes of concern in modern student culture and giving examples of the way that folklore addresses those themes
- Discuss the impact of digital communication on transmission and meaning of student folklore
- Analyze specific events such as fraternity rituals for their functions and symbols.

### Assessment Questions for Lesson



1. What is the function of step shows in African American fraternities and sororities, according to *Piled Higher and Deeper* and the film *Steppin'*?
2. What is the function of virgin tests in college student folklore and how has it changed over time?
3. How is graduation like a rite of passage and why do some folklorists think it has lost its functional significance?

## **Section 6: Trends, Careers, and Resources in American Folklore Studies**

### **Lesson 11: How Is Folklore Applied in Public and Academic Life?**

In this lesson you'll learn the roles that folklore programming has in public and academic life. You should realize that the kind of learning in this course is being applied in many ways and is an important trend of folkloristic work in the future. One important area of application is called public folklore. Examples are in festivals, exhibitions, and artists-in-the-schools programs that are intended to generate cultural pride, understanding, and tolerance among the public. As you will read, these efforts have expanded to use folklore in various social and occupational settings such as health delivery systems (such as the medical ethnography archives at the Hershey Medical Center), aging centers, refugee centers, arts apprenticeship programs, and regional marketing campaigns for tourism and economic community development. You'll read in one of the documents in Angel that the term "folklorist" engages skills and tools for careers and public service. You should also get an idea of the range of activity and its national significance from posted websites describing public institutions such as the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian Folklife Festival on the National Mall. You'll also review a link to the American Folklore Society which promotes an academic role in centers and curricula for American Studies, anthropology, English, sociology, history, and psychology—and yes, departments of folklore in North America and abroad. It is a branch of learning that encourages students to use and analyze human resources and interpret cultures to develop insights into society and tradition. American folklorists who work in both public and academic settings gather at annual meetings of the American Folklore Society, and you can get an idea of the issues they take up by reviewing the American Folklore Society meeting link posted in Angel.

### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to answer the question in the lesson title by:

- Defining "public and applied folklore" in American institutions and communities
- Describing the kind of careers and roles that folklorists have in America

- Discussing the role of folklore within academic centers, organizations, and curricula

### **Assessment Questions for Lesson**

1. What is the difference between “public” and “academic” folklife?
2. Why does the federal government sponsor a national folklife festival?
3. How does the knowledge of folklore apply to fields other than education?

### **Lesson 12: Course and Exam Review**

Prior to the final exam to be held during finals week, I will post a document that summarizes the material covered in the course and gives sample multiple-choice questions to be found on the exam. There will also be opportunities through Angel to pose questions to me and to the entire group concerning course content. On the weekend before finals week, you will be able to fill out a final course evaluation. I will not have access to Angel at that time, so your responses will be kept anonymous. I encourage you to submit this evaluation to help us assess the effectiveness of this course. During finals week, you will be able to access the exam. The questions and answers are scrambled so each exam is unique, and therefore you need to take the exam by yourself. Trying to share the exam with others will undoubtedly result in failure. Once you log in, you have 60 minutes to complete the exam, just as you would in a proctored exam, so be sure to set aside the time to take it without interruptions.