

DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES AND CULTURAL STUDIES

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2010-2011 UKR 631 (Fall Term) *Folklore Theory*

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Time: TR 11-12:20

Place: HC 2 19

Office Hours: MW 13-1350

or by appointment

Course Website: On e-Class

Course Prerequisite: none

Course-based Ethics Approval in place regarding all research projects that involve human testing, questionnaires, etc.?

☐ Yes

☒ No, not needed, no such projects involved

Community Service Learning component

☐ Required

☐ Optional

☒ None

Course Description and Objectives: Folklore is a field that studies belief and its expression in artistic form. It studies the artistic practices of the common person, not the elite and highly educated artist or performer. This is a field that has been in existence for over 100 years and has both followed the intellectual trends in other fields and developed issues, approaches, and techniques of its own. To get a grasp on this important field, we will use the tool of looking at definitions of the "folk" over time. We will look at the history of how the folk are defined and use this as a way of grasping the issues and theoretical approaches of the field.

Texts: There is no required text. Rather, we will read or become acquainted with major theoretical works. In most cases the work will be assigned to one student to present, but all students will be expected to examine the work and to actively engage in the discussion of the presentation made by their classmate. In some cases, short readings such as articles or excerpts from the main text will be assigned to students not making the main presentation.

Specific works:

- 1) Simon Bronner, *American Folklore Studies, An Intellectual History*
- 2) Alan Dundes, *The Study of Folklore*
- 3) Barre Toelken, *Dynamics of Folklore*
- 4) Stith Thompson, *The Folktale*, plus the tale-type index and the motif index, the work of Aarne and Thompson and the update *The types of international folktales : a classification and bibliography, based on the system of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson / by Hans-Jörg Uther*.
- 5) Vladimir Propp, *The Morphology of the Folktale*
- 6) Alberta Lord, *Singer of Tales*
- 7) Richard Bauman, *Verbal Art as Performance*
- 8) Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy, the Technologizing of the Word*
- 9) Bruno Bettelheim, *Uses of Enchantment: Meaning and Importance of Fairytales*

- 10) Jack Zipes, *Fairytales and the Art of Subversion*
 - 11) Elaine Lawless, *Holy Women, Wholly Women: Sharing Ministries Through Life Stories and Reciprocal Ethnography*
 - 12) Joan Radner and Susan Lanser, *Feminist Messages: Coding in Women's Folk Culture*
 - 13) David Hufford, *The Terror that Comes in the Night: An Experience-centered Study of Supernatural Assault Traditions*
 - 14) Barbara Walker, *Out of the Ordinary: Folklore and the Supernatural*
- Henry Glassie and/or Michael Owen Jones on material culture and folk art
 Dan Ben Amos or Elliott Oring on Folk Groups and Genres

We will not have time for all of the above. Choice will depend on student specialization and student interest.

Course Schedule - General information: The first two meetings will be run primarily by the instructor. After that the course will switch to seminar format. One student will present a major work. The others will either familiarize themselves with the same work or read related studies or historical works commenting on a particular approach or a particular contribution to scholarship. The student who read the major work will do a presentation of approximately 15-20 minutes, something like a presentation at a conference. The other students will discuss the presentation, offering parallels or other views from their readings. Each week there will be a small written assignment (about 3-4 pages, double-spaced). The assignment will be to summarize a particular approach to scholarship and to discuss its current relevance.

Sept. 9: Introduction. What is folklore and what are the types of folklore? What are the traits of folklore? We will look at folklore as it is conceptualized today. We will also familiarize ourselves with the major organizations in the field and major resources such as on-line book reviews. Discussion of student interests and preliminary selection of the directions that the course will take.

Sept. 14: Books on the history of folkloristics. Some of the western ones are listed above. We will also look at other books and bring in surveys from other parts of the world. These other areas will be determined by student interests.

Sept. 16: Early definitions of the folk as other, either in terms of time or in terms of space or both. Historic-geographic approach. The Tale Type and Motif Indexes. One student will bring the indexes to class and present them. Others will look at other versions, either older ones or ones particular to their world area. One student may be assigned Thompson's *The Folktale* and will make a presentation of that book.

First small assignment – either a discussion of the indexes and their uses or the application of them to specific materials. Assignment will be due the following week.

Sept. 21: More on indexing folklore. Indexes that apply to material other than tales. Indexing problems. The application of indexing to contemporary work. Indexes and digital technologies.

Sept. 23: Reactions to the historic-geographic method. Structuralism and Vladimir Propp. One student will present Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*. Assignment will deal either with category building and indexing in contemporary databases or problems with and advantages of the historic-geographic method. This will depend on student interest.

Sept. 28: Other reactions to the historic-geographic method. Albert Lord and the common man as artist. Redefining the concept of "text." One student will present Lord's work. Discussion of Lord and the oral theory and of changes in the understanding of "folk" and the understanding of "text."

Sept. 30: Continuation of the discussion of "folk" and "text."

Assignment will be an attempt at applying either Propp (morphological analysis) or Lord (oral formulaic analysis).

Oct 5: The text in context. New understandings of the folklore text and the folk performer lead to a focus on performance. We will look at Ong or Bauman or both. We will either have one student presentation on Ong (on Oct. 5) and another on Bauman (on Oct. 7), or we will combine the two.

Oct. 7: More on performance. Focus on the audience: as passive tradition bearers, in terms of their effect on the performance. The various qualities of performance. Experiments with performance. Performer self-awareness. The influence of the collector on performance.

The assignment will have to do with performance. I will either ask you to discuss the works that you have read or we can think about doing a performance experiment and having you write that up.

Oct. 12: The folklorist as advocate for the folk. This grows out of Lord and the recognition of the folk performer as artist and creator, not just a passive transmitter. It grows out of a focus on the audience and the context of folklore. Approaches can be some of the recent biographies of folklorists of the past. We can also look at feminist approaches, particularly coding and views of the woman as performer. We can also look at reflexivity.

Oct. 14: Continue as above. Depending on whether we look at feminist folkloristics or reflexivity, we will choose a student presentation on the appropriate topic for this date.

Assignment will be a discussion of the current attempts to understand and express the "folk" point of view.

Oct. 19: Psychoanalytical approaches to folklore. Interest in both the performer and the audience leads, among to psychoanalytical examinations of the text, the performer, and the audience as a folk group. Instructor will do an introduction and discuss the major authors such as Alan Dundes.

Oct. 21: Student presentation of the work of a writer like Bruno Bettelheim. Other psychoanalytical approaches, esp. those based on Jung. More psychoanalytical studies.

Assignment will again be of the apply this method type. It would be good if we could again use the same texts as were analyzed by other methods.

Oct. 26: Examining motivation leads to the work of Zipes, Marina Warner, Henry Giroux and others. This work has a political component. It could be called deconstructionist. Scholars point out the motives of collectors, etc. and show that scholastic objectivity is not as objective as it claims to be.

Oct. 28: Student presentation of Zipes or one of the other works.

Assignment will be to discuss the type of data that would be needed for this type of analysis.

The month of November. Our class meeting dates are: **Nov. 2, 4, 9, 16, 18, 23, 25, and 30.** I am not choosing our topics at this time. As you can see from the brief list of suggested readings, we could go in the direction of looking at material culture; we could look at belief. Other topics that are typically treated by folklorists today are heritage studies and the construction of memory. There is a lot of interest in politics, both on the micro and macro level. For those of you interested in a specific world

area, looking at the history of folklore scholarship in that area and comparing it to folklore studies in the West might be a good idea. As we approach November, we will make our choices and proceed accordingly. Assignments will also be determined at this time.

During the November period we will try to tailor our work to the specific interests of class participants. This period will also be the time that students work on course papers. The paper can be either a discussion and critique of a set of approaches to folklore (a specific area of folklore) or it can be an analysis of an item of folklore according to one of the approaches studied. You can use a combination of approaches if you wish. Check with the instructor.

Dec. 2: Presentations of student projects/papers. The presentations should be approximately 20 minutes long, just as they would be at a professional meeting.

After each presentation, there will be a question and answer session, just as there would be at the meeting of a professional association. Students will use the comments that they receive during these sessions to improve their papers for the final write-up.

Dec. 7: Presentation of student projects/papers, same as Dec. 2.

Final project: there is no exam in this course, but the final project is due on the same date as that set for our examination, namely Dec. 21. The project should be written up as a formal paper and it should be like an article that would be submitted to a scholarly publication. This means that it should be approximately 25 pages long, with a bibliography and notes.

Grade Distribution (see “Explanatory Notes”):

There is a written assignment due almost every week. The small assignments are about 3-4 pages long. Three to four pages is a guideline; it is neither a minimum nor a maximum. There are a total of 7 small assignments specified. One more small assignment will be made during the month of November.

Each small assignment is 5% of your total grade. Together, all small assignments are worth 40%

Class participation – 20%

Final project – 40% - the write-up of this project is due on Dec. 21. The 40% is distributed between the oral presentation and the write-up. Oral presentation 10% and written paper 30%.

Explanatory Notes on Assignments: Class participation means actively discussing the topics of the week, presenting materials that you have found, and suggesting other resources. It also means responding to the work of your classmates, offering them suggestions and feedback.

Required Notes:

“Policy about course outlines can be found in Section 23.4(2) of the University calendar.” (GFC 29 SEP 2003). “The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at www.ualberta.ca/secretariat/appeals.htm) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.” (GFC 29 SEP 2003)

☛ Plagiarism and Cheating:

All students should consult the “Truth-In-Education” handbook or Website (<http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/TIE/>) regarding the definitions of **plagiarism** and its consequences when detected.

Students involved in translation courses should be aware that on-line “translation engines” produce very dubious and unreliable “translations.”

Students not writing in their native language should be aware that, while seeking the advice of native or expert speakers is often helpful, **excessive editorial and creative help** in assignments is considered a form of “cheating” that violates the code of student conduct with dire consequences. An instructor or coordinator who is convinced that a student has handed in work that he or she could not possibly reproduce without outside assistance is obliged, out of consideration of fairness to other students, to report the case to the Associate Dean of the Faculty. Before unpleasantness occurs consult <http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/TIE/>; also discuss this matter with any tutor(s) and with your instructor.

☛ **Attendance, Absences, and Missed Grade Components:**

In cases of potentially excusable absences due to illness or domestic affliction, notify your instructor by e-mail within two days. Regarding absences that may be excusable and procedures for addressing course components missed as a result, consult sections 23.4.2 and 23.4.3 of the University Calendar. Be aware that unexcused absences will result in partial or total loss of the grade for the “attendance and participation” component(s) of a course, as well as for any assignments that are not handed-in or completed as a result.

☛ **Policy for Late Assignments:**

Students who consult in advance with an instructor regarding contingencies preventing the timely completion of an assignment may, at the discretion of the instructor, be granted an extension. Otherwise, assignments may be handed in one class-day after the stated deadline without penalty, with a 33%-per-class-day penalty assessed for each subsequent class-day of lateness.

Grading:

Marks for assignments, tests, and exams are given in percentages, to which letter grades are also assigned, according to the table below (“**MLCS Graduate Grading Scale**”). The percentage mark resulting from the entire term work and examination then produces the final letter grade for the course.

“MLCS Graduate Grading Scale”

A+	97-100	Excellent
A	93-96	Excellent
A-	90-92	Excellent
B+	87-89	Good
B	79-86	Good
B-	74-78	Satisfactory
C+	68-73	Satisfactory
C	63-67	Failure
C-	58-62	Failure
D+	54-57	Failure
D	50-53	Failure
F	00-49	Failure