

Special Topics in Anthropology: Folklore

Anthropology 385R

Fall 2007

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 10:00-11:30, Wednesdays 11:30-12:30, Thursdays 1:00-2:00

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Course Description:

Folklore comes in many forms and has many faces. For all peoples, folklore exists as a way to create, maintain, articulate, and/or challenge the cultural traditions they live in. Folklore is a vehicle for expressing meaning which may or may not be in harmony with the dominant culture to which the 'folk' belong. Everyone, both the powerful and the powerless can and do engage in a variety of folklore activities. This course will explore the process of folklore, particularly as it acts to define identities and relationships between individuals and groups. We will try to understand what it means to both create and consume folklore, examining the function of 'folklore' within our consumer driven society. The course will look at a variety of folklore genres from a variety of folk communities and cultures, stressing the interrelationship between context and understanding. Each student will conduct and present a folklore collection project, to be done in stages throughout the term. Each student will also create and present a piece of folklore, as part of a folklore creation project.

This course is a sophomore writing course. As such, it is designed to be a seminar style course where grades are determined on each student's reading, writing, research, and class participation. It is my goal as your professor to help each student improve on his/her writing skills throughout the semester, regardless of the strength or weakness of the student's writing at the semester's beginning.

Required Texts:

- Living Folklore, An Introduction to the Study of People and Their Traditions by Martha Sims and Martine Stephens
- Storytellers, Saints, and Scoundrels: Folk Narrative in Hindu Religious Teaching by Kirin Narayan
- The Choking Doberman and Other Urban Legends by Jan Harold Brunvand
- Witching Culture, Folklore and Neo-Paganism in America by Sabina Magliocco
- Selected articles on e-reserve/black board

Recommended:

- Why Suya Sing, a Musical Anthropology of an Amazonian People by Anthony Seeger

Grade Breakdown:

Reading Quizzes:	10%
Weekly Response Papers:	20%
Attendance and Participation:	20%
Folklore Creation Project:	20%
Creation:	10%
Creation Paper:	10%
Folklore Collection Project:	30%
Collection:	15%
Analysis Paper:	15%

Total:	100%
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Reading Quizzes

There will be a reading quiz given every week in this course. Reading quizzes will be short and simple, checking to see if you have completed the day's reading. Students who have read the material should be able to easily get all questions right, while students who have not read (or read without attention) will be unable to answer the questions. Quizzes will be given at the beginning of class on Tuesdays. If you are late or absent on a given day you can not make up the reading quiz. I will drop your lowest quiz grades, and count the highest 10 quizzes for 10% of your final grade.

Weekly Response Papers:

Each Thursday you will be required to turn in a short (two page) response paper. The paper should be a response to the course readings of that week. As a RESPONSE paper, it should not be a summary of the readings, but rather your thoughts and reflections that emerged from the material. You should include a discussion question in each response paper. The paper should be typed and must be turned in during class. **LATE RESPONSES ARE NOT ACCEPTED.** These papers will be graded check, check plus, check minus.

Final percentage points earned for these papers are tabulated as follows: check + = 2.0; check/check + = 1.8; check = 1.6; check/check minus = 1.4; check minus = 1.0

I will count the 10 highest paper grades together as 20% of your final grade. I expect the papers to reveal your close reading and full understanding of the week's readings. This is especially important given that there will be no exams in this course.

Attendance and Participation:

Attendance and Participation are both very central to this course. Much of the classroom time will be run in seminar format, with students sharing their thoughts and perspectives about the folklore we address. I believe you share with me the responsibility of creating a classroom atmosphere where ALL students feel comfortable participating. This means that your full participation requires not only speaking up in class, but actively and respectfully listening to others. Students who have perfect attendance but rarely contribute to class discussion will not earn high participation grades. For class discussion to go well, it is essential at all times that you are up to date on the work. Participation will also include engagement on our course blackboard site. Student will be asked semi-

regularly to do mini-blackboard assignments (such as post an example of folk music or respond to a folkloric website). Every student should check the course black board site daily. Each student is allowed two absences for any reason. Beyond that your absences will adversely affect your grade. Students wishing to be absent for religious holidays will be granted an additional excused absence *only if* they notify me at least a day in advance.

Folklore Collection Project:

As the core assignment of this class, I am asking each of you to be folklorists, and conduct research on one particular type of folklore. You will need to collect or document 15 examples of one folkloric form. These pieces will need to be described and catalogued individually. You will write an accompanying paper of 8-10 pages in which you analyze the pieces you have collected. How does this collection represent or reflect the culture from which it emerged? How do the individual pieces reflect a variety of meaning surrounding this folklore? What dynamics of folklore are evident within your collection and the collection process? These and other questions are to be addressed within your analysis paper. The analysis paper should include at least five references, at least three of which must be from scholarly sources.

You will turn in a short written proposal of what you would like to do for this collection project on October 2nd. I will give you more detailed guidelines about this project in mid-September.

The first five examples of your collection project will be due November 1st, and are to be posted for other students to review on our black board site. In most cases you will post documentation of the items, rather than the items themselves. But think creatively about how you are posting and presenting your folklore collection.

Your analysis paper and the complete collection are to be posted on Blackboard by November 27th. Each student will present their folkloric collection directly to the class. We will also have an end of term celebration.

Folklore Creation Project

Folklore is a process of creativity and expression that we all partake in, at least as consumers of folklore. But folklore's meaning often lies as much in its production/performance as in its consumption. All of you will be required to produce/create an original piece of folklore that somehow expresses your relationship with a folk-group and/or that folk-group's relationship to the world. In the anthropological tradition of participant-observation, this project asks you to become a creative *participant in* (not just a thoughtful *observer of*) a folklore tradition. This piece of folklore will be presented to/shared with the class. Along with the folklore piece, you will turn in a 5-6 page paper which analyzes/reflects upon the meaning of the piece you have created. In the paper, you should use at least two scholarly references to compliment your personal analysis. We will be discussing more specific guidelines and ideas later in the semester. This project is due December 11th (the last day of class), and students will present their projects at a celebration/culmination of work during the assigned final exam period. (Again, there is no exam).

Academic Honesty:

Both Oxford College and I take the matter of academic honesty very seriously. I would like to remind you that you are required to follow the Oxford College Honor Code. Any suspected breaches to the Honor Code will be referred to the Honor Council for review and possible disciplinary action. This includes acts of plagiarism. I have found in the past that many college students do not understand what does and does not constitute plagiarism. In this technological age, it is easy for students to plagiarize, and it is equally easy for professors to catch students plagiarizing.

Course Schedule

August 30 Course Introductions

September 4 Living Folklore chapter 1 and *Ishmael*

September 6 *Dr Singer will be presenting at the
Latin American Studies Association Meetings*
Class Cancelled
Reading: Living Folklore chapter 2

September 11 Tradition – conservative and dynamic elements
Folklore chapter 3
Scandalous Sunbonnet Sue
First Quiz

September 13 ***Rosh Hashanah* and *Ramadan begin***
Folklore chapter 5
Bauman: “*I go into more detail now, to be sure*”
First Writing Response Due

September 18 Folklore chapter 6
Folk Festival and Festival Folk

September 20 Folklore chapters 7 & 8

Folklore of Ethnic Minorities, Folklore of Hate
September 25 Bottigheimer: *Work, Money, and Anti-Semitism*
Jewish Folktales

September 27 Mules and Men
Film: Ethnic Notions

October 2 Mules and Men
Folklore collection proposal due

October 4 Choking Doberman Preface – chapter 2

October 9	Fall Break – No Class
October 11	Choking Doberman chapters 3 - 7
October 16	Witching Culture Intro-chapter 1
October 18	Witching Culture chapters 2 & 3
October 23	Witching Culture chapter 4 Living Folklore chapter 4
October 25	Witching Culture chapter 5
October 30	Witching Culture chapter 6 & 7
November 1	Storytellers, Saints and Scoundrels Intro – chapter 2 Five items of your folklore collection due on Black Board before class
November 6	Storytellers chapters 3 & 4
November 8	Storytellers chapters 5-7
November 13	Storytellers chapters 8-11
	<i>Folklore and the creative process</i>
November 15	Capitalism and Immediatism
November 20	
November 22	-THANKSGIVING
November 27	Collection project due on BlackBoard by 5 PM Collection presentations in class
November 29	
December 4	Family Folklore Singer: A Slice of Life, a Slice of Love
December 6	
December 11	Last day of classes Folklore Creation Projects are due..... Papers, and when possible Creations should be posted on Blackboard.
December 13	Final Exam Period.

Class will meet to present folklore creation projects to one another