

ENL 295 INTRO TO FOLKLORE Women's Studies Section

Dr. C. Crabtree 219 Briggs 3-1080

Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 12:45-1:45, by appointment other days. I'm usually in my office till 6:00. You may drop into my office before class, but I may be too busy to spend much time with you.

Description

This course entails the study of what folklore is (which may surprise some) and genres of folklore such as the folktale and folksong; the popular joke, proverbs, and customs; material artifacts (like quilts); urban legends; and even computer and Internet lore. But folklore study does not involve merely the analysis of static "texts" (like a list of jokes told in your family or wedding customs). We can view the telling of a joke or the traditions for preparation of the bride as an expressive phenomenon, a kind of performance we can examine within the context of the folk group. Your work this semester will entail collecting from your family and ethnic group and from other people you know (possibly including your classmates). As a theme, we'll focus on weddings and funerals and the specific ways various groups and subgroups of people demonstrate customary behavior. Although our primary emphasis is on various American folk groups, we will discuss folk texts and performances from Romania and other countries. You are asked to research one group different from your own.

As a Women's Studies class, this course will focus especially on women in folklore, and your reports and research should usually involve questions of how women affect and are affected by folk performance. We will use the tools provided by feminist theory in our research and discussion.

Objectives:

- *An understanding of folklore theory and its evolution from a collection of artifacts or survivals from ancient cultures to a study of folk performance as dynamic and ongoing.
- *Familiarity with several genres of folklore, including proverb, joke, folktale, quilts and embroidery, folk or "naive" art, urban legend, Internet jokes and humor, dance and gestures, holiday, birth, wedding and funeral customs (including cornrows and related hairstyles for brides or life stages places from Romania to Sierra Leone...).
- *In-depth understanding of a research/oral report topic.
- *Awareness of and respect for diversity in its cultural forms.
- *Intensified awareness for the student of her or his own participation in a variety of "folk" groups; analysis and appreciation of how folk events function in our contemporary and local communities as well as communities world-wide, past and present.
- *Recognition of folkloristic methods and applications, including connections to, and divergence from, anthropology, sociology and literature.
- *A deeper understanding of the student's location in various folk groups.
- *Research skills for oral history and other primary sources as well as scholarly and popular ones.
- *Understanding of how the tools of feminist analysis can deepen our insight into folk groups and folklore.
- *Research in scholarly journals and books and varied writing assignments will strengthen and broaden the student's academic sophistication.
- *Practical experience in taking oral histories, interviewing, and collecting, as well as interpreting "raw" data.

Texts:

The Study of American Folklore: An Introduction, by Jan Harold Brunvand, 4th Edition, Norton, 1998.

This is your primary text.

Hand-outs or readings on reserve at the library:

Angela Carter, "The Erl-King" and "The Bloody Chamber."

Ann Sexton's poems from Transformations.

Excerpt from Gail Kligman, The Wedding of the Dead.

Jay Melcher, "Children's Folklore,." In Children's Folklore, ed. Sutton-Smith.

Jerrilyn McGregory, "'May the Work I've Done Speak for Me': African American Women as Speech Community."

Janet Langlois, "Mothers' Double-talk," in Feminist Messages: Coding in Women's Folklore, Ed Radner, 1993.

Short folktales from various cultures.

Other handouts as appropriate.

Films: Daughter of the Dust, "The Gandy Dancers," Songcatcher, excerpts from Brother Where Art Thou? and others.

Policies and Procedures

*Attendance is critically important in this class. Please drop now if you intend to miss more than three classes.

*If extraordinary circumstances occur, and you must miss more than one class in a row, you must e-mail or call my office (3-1080) and leave a brief message with the secretaries. Do not expect faculty to be able to return your calls. I'll try up to a point. Just let me know what the problem is. Bring a doctor's form or some documentation for your absence of more than one day.

*For any absence, you are required to get missed information from a classmate. Please don't ask me to recap an entire class. Get a phone number of a classmate.

*There are no make-ups for missed quizzes and class exercises. Assignments must be turned in before or during class on the day they are due.

*Failure to arrive on time and well-prepared for an oral report results in a maximum grade of "C" for the report.

Plagiarism is theft. You'll fail the assignment, or possibly the course. See me if you are unsure about how your paper is going.

Grading:

Oral history of a foremother or forefather (see hand-out) 10%

Class participation, 10%

Class exercises and quizzes (about ten, involving quizzes on the text and peer activities), 10%

Collections (proverbs. etc.) 5%

Short paper (5 pages) 5%

Oral report (with written summary of article), 15%

Final paper (with oral presentation) 25%

Exam, 20%

Requirements:

Two museum or folk festival visits, one to the Wright Museum of African American Art. One collection of jokes, proverbs, or children's rhymes, primarily from your own folk group, typed.

One summary of an article from a folklore journal (or, with my guidance, a chapter from a folklore book).

This assignment should focus on a folk group other than your own (unless you choose a different group for your final project).

An oral history of the oldest appropriate person in your family or folk group.

One short paper and various class and homework assignments.

A final project of about ten pages, with an oral report. See hand-out for details.

A final exam.

Please note that, although we are using genres like folktale, wedding customs, jokes, and proverbs to organize the course, we will be discussing theoretical issues throughout the course. Much of the theoretical material will be found in class lectures, so you have an additional reason for attending class consistently.

Week 1

Tues. Intro to the class and each other. Who are the folk? Overview of genres. Cat's Cradle.

Thur. Discuss Ch. 1, Introduction, Brundvand, 3-21. Theory of folklore. Folktale handouts.

As you read, think about what folk groups you participate in, and plan questions for oral history (see hand-out).

Week 2

Tues. Hand-out, Jay Melcher, "Children's Folklore." Feminist theory. Short library research project: What is the meaning of your name, preferably your first but possibly your last as well. Use dictionaries, encyclopedia, and dictionary of symbols. Your research need not relate only to folklore, but keep an eye open for clues. We'll use this assignment in part to illustrate the difference between folklore and other

forms of cultural expression. Turn in a single-spaced typed report (or list) of your findings, due next Tuesday.

Thur. Ch. 2 in Brunvand, 22-47.

Langlois article: "Mother's Double-Talk." (urban legend)

Week 3

* Tues. "Name" report is due, about a page, typed. Chap. 3 in Brunvand.

"Little Red Riding Hood."

Thur Ch. 4, 5, 71-112. Bring "folk object" from your home or family, if possible.

Week 4

Tues. Oral History due. We'll watch a film on railroad workers, or "Gandy Dancers."

Ch. 7 (We are skipping Ch 6)

Thur. Handout from The Wedding of the Dead by Gail Kligman, about funerals and weddings in northern Romania.

Week 5

* Tues. Oral reports: Sign my syllabus and your own! _____, _____, _____, monogenesis."

Thur. Guest speaker, Dr. James Callow, Professor Emeritus and founder of the Folklore lArchive. Field hollers, folksongs, and the Blues.

Week 6

Tues. Finish Ch. 5. Oral reports: _____, _____, _____, _____.

Thur. Ch. 6 to 175. Note especially issues of women and sexuality in extremely patriarchal societies.. Oral reports: _____, _____, _____, _____.

Week 7

Tues. Hand-out on Bascom's four social functions of folklore.

Midterm Exam on Georges and Jones and hand-outs to date, especially The Wedding of the Dead.

Thur. Finish reading Ch. 6. Finish oral reports: _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, _____.

Week 8

Tues. . Initiation and taboos: film and hand-outs. Hand-out: Pocius on Newfoundland rugs and egalitarian vs.hierarchical communities.

Notice views of the human body embedded in various cultural practices for male and female.

**Thur. Short paper due (3 pages; see hand-out) on practices related to women's initiation (including mutilations) and marriage or childbirth practices in two cultures.

Week 9

Tues. Holidays. Costumes, masks, and theory of day of license.

Thur. More on music. Possible guest singer.

Cinderella, Beauty and the Beast to Snow-White, hand-outs. Feminist analysis of the role of the girl in the folktale--powerful or merely a victim?

Week 10

Tues. Have your Final Paper topic selected.

Reading assignments from hand-outs

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Thur. Read Ch. 8, sections to be announced.

Week 11

Tues. Ch. 9 in G & J, sections to be announced. Hand-outs, Web material on modern survivals and adaptations. Stories from Western Europe: Rapunzel, Juniper Tree, Tom Thumb, Sleeping Beauty, Hansel and Gretel, and African stories.

** Thur. Turn in one solid paragraph on your topic.

Gypsy folktale hand-out. Eastern European tales. Angela Carter's modern folktales, "Beauty and the Beast" and "The Erl-King."

Urban legends, hand-out from Jan Brunvand.

Literary theory and the folktale.

Week 12

Tues. Guest speaker.

Thur..

Week 13

**Tues. Begin brief oral reports on your papers. Volunteers first, then reverse alphabetical order through the class roll.

.% Paper is due.***.

Thur. Oral reports on Final Papers.

Week 14

12/5 Tues. Oral reports continue. Theory review.

12/7 Thur. Synthesis and review.

Oral reports continue.

Exam as scheduled.

ADD TO SYL. Quilts. Read 471, "The Baby Roast..."(to be discussed later).

Wed. Quilts and embroidery, carving. Read or review Chs. on Folksong and Ballad.

Fri. Read or review pages from The Wedding of the Dead (hand-out). Wedding and funeral customs.

Guest singer Dennis Sinnett (probable date), folksongs.

Dr. Callow: folksongs and hollers.

Easter eggs

Easter and seder (Passover) celebrations. Keep a journal of family celebrations, tape record collection on wedding and funeral traditions, Easter, etc.

Easter eggs and traditions.

Monday Film, Daughters of the Dust. Voodoo, rootworking, and the film. .

Week 14

Oral reports on Final Projects. _____

**Oral reports. _____

Oral reports. _____ Review for exam.

Exam as scheduled.

Monday Film on Gandy Dancers, oral reports.

Review chapters on Folksongs (know types like work songs, courtship lyrics), Ballads.

Irish Easter egg handouts, chapters on folksong and ballad.

Collection due (just a printed hard copy for now). If you need more time, see me. Dr. Callow will t.

Gullah and Daughters of the Dust

Theory essay.

Paper topics:

Corn rows and research on hair designs for girls and women in various cultures.

Historical backgrounds of do-wop to rap.

Irish/Scottish/English folksongs in Appalachia

Folktales and legends in modern literature

McGregory, "May the Work I've Done Speak for Me,"

Shoe tree