

English 270

Professor Shuman

Office Hours: Tues and Thurs 8-8:30 and 10:30-11:30  
566 Denney Hall; 292-6555

Texts: Elliott Oring "Folk Groups and Folklore Genres: an introduction (referred to as "Intro) and Elliott Oring "Folk Groups and Folklore Genres:" a reader (referred to as "Reader")

Calendar:

October 20 Mid-Term Exam  
October 25 Term Paper Topic Description Due  
November 17 Term Paper Proposal Due with one example of a similar paper from the Ohio State Folklore Archive  
November 29 and December 1 Oral Presentations of Term Papers  
December 1 Written Term Paper Due

The Term Paper: The goal of this class is to prepare you to do folklore research. Your term paper will be based on your "fieldwork" which could include any of the following: observation of a cultural event, an interview with a person who can tell you about their cultural practices, or a tape recording (audio or video) of people telling stories or jokes, engaging in a ritual event, making things, celebrating, playing, or other cultural events. According to one definition, folklore is the study of artistic practices in everyday life. The thing you study should have some "artistic" dimension, that is, it should be something that people can describe as done well or not done well, and it should be part of the activities of a "folk group." A folk group can be a family, an occupational, ethnic, religious, or age group, or it may be any group that shares standards and categories of thinking. Your term paper will be a description of what you learned and a discussion of the context in which these folk practices are meaningful.

The term paper topic description is a brief statement of what you plan to study, how you plan to do your study (interview, observation, etc.), what folk group is involved, and the context in which the things you study are meaningful.

All papers are filed in the O.S.U. folklore archive, located in 568 Denney Hall. Before November 17, please visit the folklore archive (hours are posted on the door, and an appointment is a good idea-call 292-7532) and find a paper on a topic similar to yours. The paper does not need to be identical, and more than one student may use the same archive paper; the purpose of this assignment is for you to examine other folklore

term papers and to think of ways in which you might improve upon what others have done.

Grading:

Midterm 20%; Final 20%; Term Paper 50%; Term Paper Description and Proposal 5%; Class Participation and Attendance 5%

Reading Assignments

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Week One October 22 Introduction, Definitions

How people identify artistic aspects of the past as

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Traditional:

folklore as oral in a world of writing

local in a global world

passed down through generations

handmade in a machine-made world

Week Two October 27 Folklore in Context

discuss handout on definition of folklore

Read Oring "On the Concepts of Folklore" pp. 1-22 in "Intro"

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and "Danielson "Religious Folklore" pp. 45-70 in "Intro"

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October 29 The Concept of Folk Group

Read Oring "Ethnic Groups and Ethnic Folklore" pp. 23-44 in

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"Intro"; Manning "Carnival in Canada: the politics of

celebration" pp. 78-86 in "Reader"; and Lawless "Brothers and

Sisters: Pentecostals as a Religious Folk Group" in "Reader"

Week Three October 4 and 6 Folklore as Communication

Read Mechling "Children's Folklore" pp. 91-120 in "Intro" and

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Iona and Peter Opie "The Lore and Language of

Schoolchildren" pp. 169-177; Bettelheim "Transformations:

the fantasy of the wicked stepmother" pp. 178-184; and

Goldstein "Strategy in Counting Out: An Ethnographic

Folklore Field Study" pp. 185-195 in "Reader"

Week Four October 11 and 13 Fieldwork Methods

discuss handout on term papers and "Folklore Fieldwork"

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pamphlet distributed in class

Read Leary "The Land Won't Burn: An esoteric American proverb and its significance" pp. 302-307 in "Reader"

Week Five - October 18 - Folklore as Performance

Read Bell "Tending Bar at Brown's: Occupational Role as Artistic Performance" pp. 146-157 in "Reader" and Basso "Wise Words of the Western Apache" pp. 291-301 in "Reader"

October 20 - Midterm exam

Week Six - October 25 and 27 - Versions and Variants

Read Toelken "Ballads and Folksongs" pp. 147-174 in "Intro", Mieder "Wine, Women and Song" From Martin Luther to American T-shirts" pp. 279-290 in "Reader", and Burns, Barnie, Child and Buchan, pp. 245-278 in "Reader"

Week Seven - November 2 and 4 - Folk Narrative

Read Oring pp. 121-146 in "Intro" and Basgoz, Ramsey, Brandes, and Allen, pp. 197-244 in "Reader"

Week Eight - November 8 and 10 - Folk Objects

Read Bronner pp. 199-224 in "Intro" and Welsch, Mitchell and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett pp. 315-338 in "Reader"

Week Nine - November 15 and 17 - The Politics of Folklore

Read Evans-Pritchard "The Portal Case: Authenticity, Tourism, Traditions, and the Law" pp. 43-51 in "Reader"

Week Ten - November 22 - Ritual

Read Poggie "Risk and Ritual: In Interpretation of Fishermen's Folklore in a New England Community" pp. 137-145 in "Reader" and Deshen "Ethnicity and Citizenship in the ritual of an Israeli Synagogue" pp. 114-123 in "Reader"

Week Eleven - November 29 and December 1 - Presentation of Term

Paper Projects