

Course Outline

FOLK 25 I: Folklife Studies

Ian Brodie
Jan. 6 – Apr. 6, 2010
T & Th, 10:05-11:20

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Calendar Description:

This course examines distinctive cultural regions throughout North America and the lifeways of the peoples living there. Students will conduct fieldwork.

Course Objectives:

Somehow, the subtitle “Regional Ethnology” became attached to this course. Ignore it. And for the most part, ignore the description, as it doesn’t make much sense either. [I’ll tell you about it in class.]

This course is ostensibly a study of vernacular experience and everyday life. It could be argued that if one were to divide “folklore” (either the discipline or that which the discipline studies) into two parts, on one side would be folk literature (as broadly understood, encompassing song, narrative, jokes, etc.), and on the other side would be folklife. One could understand the former as the domain of collectors, and the latter as the domain of ethnographers; the former is text, the latter context. These distinctions will prove to be false, but provide a good starting point for discussion. Through readings and short writing assignments based on observation and/or reflection, this course will explore various aspects of everyday experience.

Fair Warning:

This is a **reading- and writing-intensive** course. All readings are required. They should be read before the class in which they are to be covered, and students should be prepared to discuss them. Class time will be split between class discussions of the readings and lectures meant to place the readings into a larger folkloric context.

Readings:

There is no book to buy: all readings are available online. Go to <http://faculty.cbu.ca/ibrodie/folklife/> for links. The links will work from on-campus computers. (You can reach them from off-campus as well, but it might be more labour-intensive.)

Evaluation:

4 short writing assignments @ 15% each	60%
1 long writing assignment	30%
1 oral presentation	10%

Course Regulations:

- There is no final exam in this course.
- Late assignments without significant and specific explanatory documentation will be penalised one mark (i.e. one percent of your final mark) per day. All assignments **must** be completed to pass the course
- Presentations will be scheduled in advance. Missing your presentation without significant and specific explanatory documentation will result in a mark of zero.

Course Breakdown and Reading Schedule (at a Glance)

		Tuesday	Thursday
Introductory Things	January 7		First day business
	January 12 and 14	What is Folklore: the Primer	Folklife as context for (and of) expressive culture
Occupational Folklife	January 19 and 21	McCarl, "Occupational Folklife"	Robinson, "'Topping Out' Traditions"
	January 26 and 28	Thomas, "Pickup Trucks"	Rahkonen, "No Laughing Matter"
Space and Place	February 2 and 4	Brodie, "The Very Environment" Occupation papers due	Gordon, "Embodiment, Community Building"
	February 9 and 11	Dehnert, "Neighborhood Tavern"	Rosenstein, "An Object in its Own Domain"
	February 16 and 18	Everett, "Roadside Crosses"	Adams, "Making the Sprawl Vivid"
	February 23 and 25	<i>A week's reprieve, spent reading, I am sure</i>	
Building, Constructing, and Eating Community	March 2 and 4	O'Brien, "A Cup of Tea in the Woods" Place papers due	Everett, "A Welcoming Wilderness"
	March 9 and 11	Li, "Chinese Restaurants"	Del Giudice, "Wine Makes Good Blood"
Play, Games, and Sport	March 16 and 18	Robidoux, "Imagining a Canadian Identity" Eating papers due	Kruckemeyer, "Sawdust in Your Blood"
	March 23 and 25	Bronner, "This is Why We Hunt"	Harris Walsh, "Irish-Newfoundland Step Dancing"
Concluding things	March 30 and April 1	Presentations Play papers due	Presentations / Evaluations
	April 6	Final Papers Due	

Topic one: Introductory Things

January 12

In which Ian enlightens the multitudes on the nature of contemporary folklore study, for those unfortunate not to have had him in the past

January 14

In which Ian goes into greater detail on what, precisely, is meant by 'folklife'

Topic two: Occupational Folklife

January 19

McCarl, Robert J., Jr. 1978. "Occupational Folklife: A Theoretical Hypothesis." *Western Folklore* 37.3: 145-160.

- January 21 Robinson, John V. 2001. "The 'Topping out' Traditions of the High-Steel Ironworkers." *Western Folklore* 60.4: 243-262.
- January 26 Thomas, Jeannie B. 1995. "Pickup Trucks, Horses, Women, and Foreplay: The Fluidity of Folklore." *Western Folklore* 54.3: 213-228.
- January 28 Rahkonen, Carl. 2000. "No Laughing Matter: The Viola Joke Cycle as Musicians' Folklore." *Western Folklore* 59.1: 49-63.

Topic three: Space and Place

- February 2 Brodie, Ian. 2005. "'The very environment militates against denial': Negotiating Place Through Material Culture." *Ethnologies* 27.2: 189-217.
- February 4 Gordon, Beverly. 2003. "Embodiment, Community Building, and Aesthetic Saturation in 'Restroom World,' a Backstage Women's Space." *Journal of American Folklore* 116.462: 444-464.
- February 9 Dehnert, Edmund J. 1985. "From Neighborhood Tavern to Parish Hall: An Evolution of Polish-American Folklife." *The Great Lakes Review* 11.2: 3-20.
- February 11 Rosenstein, Carole. 2002. "An Object in its Own Domain: How Hispano New Mexican Santos Are Situated In Space." *Ethnologies* 24.1: 161-182.
- February 16 Everett, Holly. 2000. "Roadside Crosses and Memorial Complexes in Texas." *Folklore* 111.1: 91-103.
- February 18 Adams, Elizabeth Tarpley. 1999. "Making the Sprawl Vivid: Narrative and Queer Los Angeles." *Western Folklore* 58.2: 175-193.

Topic four: Building, Constructing, and Eating Community

- March 2 O'Brien, Andrea. 1999. "'There's nothing like a cup of tea in the woods': continuity, community and cultural validation in rural Newfoundland boil-ups." *Ethnologies* 21.1: 65-83.
- March 4 Everett, Holly. 2007. "A Welcoming Wilderness: The Role of Wild Berries in the Construction of Newfoundland and Labrador as a Tourist Destination." *Ethnologies* 29.1-2: 49-80.
- March 9 Li Li. 2002. "Cultural and Intercultural Functions of Chinese Restaurants in the Mountain West: 'An Insider's Perspective.'" *Western Folklore* 61 3-4: 329-346.
- March 11 Del Giudice, Luisa. 2000. "Wine makes good blood: wine culture among Toronto Italians." *Ethnologies* 22.2: 209-35.

Topic five: Play, Games, and Sport

- March 16 Robidoux, Michael A. 2002. "Imagining a Canadian Identity through Sport: A Historical Interpretation of Lacrosse and Hockey." *Journal of American Folklore* 115.456: 209-225.
- March 18 Kruckemeyer, Kate. 2002. "'You Get Sawdust in Your Blood': 'Local' Values and the Performance of Community in an Occupational Sport." *Journal of American Folklore* 115.457-458: 301-331.
- March 23 Bronner, Simon J. 2004. "'This Is Why We Hunt': Social-Psychological Meanings of the Traditions and Rituals of Deer Camp." *Western Folklore* 63.1-2: 11-50.
- March 25 Harris Walsh, Kristin. 2008. "Irish-Newfoundland Step Dancing and Cultural Identity in Newfoundland." *Ethnologies* 30.1: 125-140.

Assignments

The Short Assignments

The following are the topics for the four writing assignments for the semester. Each should be about **600-800 words**, with emphasis on detailed description and folkloristic reflection. Each assignment coincides with topics 2 through 5: the readings for these respective sections can be used as rough guides. Library work is not required but always encouraged. Each is worth 15% of your final grade.

(Topic 2) Occupational Folklife. With respect to an “occupation” you have had (broadly understood: can include non-paid work, participation in crafting; even being a student), describe an (informal) activity that you and fellow workers participate in that reaffirms your shared identity. What kind of activity is it? What values and skills are stressed? How does this activity negotiate status within the group? How does this group contrast itself with others? What conclusions can you draw about this specific occupational group from this analysis? **(Due February 2nd)**

(Topic 3) Space and Place. What kind of place is it? Is it private or public? Is it indoors or outdoors? What name is given to the place? For what purpose is this place (ostensibly) primarily intended? What other uses does it serve? Who uses the place (primarily and secondarily)? Describe its permanent features (walls, doors, windows; landscape; whatever is relevant) and itemise the moveable/adjustable objects within it. What is the relationship between the permanent features and the moveable objects? How else can the objects been arranged? How is it decorated? What is the place’s relationship to other places in the vicinity? What conclusions can you draw about the users of this place from this analysis? **(Due March 2nd)**

(Topic 4) Building, Constructing, and Eating Community. Based on your experiences (local or abroad), provide an example of how food, eating, foodways, and menu repertoire are used to express cultural identity. How are various qualities of particular foods, or the manner in which they are served and consumed, claimed to be emblematic of particular elements within a culture? How is contrast with other groups emphasised? Through a variety of axes (familiar/exotic; edible/inedible; palatable/unpalatable) how are boundaries between groups maintained and how are they (purposefully) transgressed? **(Due March 16th)**

(Topic 5) Play, Games, and Sport. The leisure and play activities of a group of a culture often simultaneously reaffirm and transgress patterns within the culture at times of non-play. Describe the sport and/or leisure activity of a particular group. What is its history within the group? Who participates directly? Who (if anyone) observes? Are there elements within the play that seem to contravene prevailing attitudes? What does that activity suggest about the self-perception of the group? **(Due March 30th)**

The Long Assignment

Pick **one** of your short assignments (in consultation with me, if you like) and expand it into a longer piece: this will involve additional **research** (a **bibliography**, **library** research, and more detailed **ethnographic** work), require an attempt at **analysis**, and should be between **2000-2500 words**. Proper essay style is expected (I can provide information on this for those who are unsure what I mean. This paper will also form the basis for your in-class presentation scheduled for the last full week of classes. **(Due April 6th: marked and available by April 10th)**

Presentations

A ten minute presentation on your topic. Please keep audio-visual materials to a minimum. You should also be prepared to answer questions from me and fellow classmates. I recommend keeping it informal.