

# Course Outline

## FOLK/FINA 113: Introduction to Folklore II

### Folk Genres and Analysis

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Jan. 5 – Apr. 5, 2011  
M & W, 10:05-11:20

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### Calendar Description

*This course surveys various genres and analytical approaches in folklore study. Maritime Canadian materials are emphasized.*

### Course Description:

Building on the questions, “What do folklorists study?” and “Why do they study it?” this course will introduce you to basic concepts, theories and genres related to the discipline of folklore. Students will gain an overview of the discipline and some of the questions it raises, exploring possibilities that are provided through folklore study. We will cover some of the major genres within folklore as a subject. Another goal of the course will be to develop reflective and critical thinking as well as academic writing skills. Fieldwork and course materials will enhance lectures given in class.

### This Outline:

Although this appears thick, please read this through: it describes all the assignments and expectations in remarkable detail. It should also prevent us from having untold additional handouts throughout the semester, saving trees, future generations, etc.

### Evaluation (for details, see page 3)

Feedback	10 @ 2% each	20%	Each Monday, starting January 17th
Paper		50%	March 28
Electronic Presentation		10%	March 28 & 30
Final exam		20%	TBD

### Textbooks (new and used copies are available at the bookstore)

Oring, Elliott. *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres: An Introduction*. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1986.

Oring, Elliott. *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres: A Reader*. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1989.

### Facebook Group

I have created a Facebook group, “FOLK/FINA 113 - Winter 2011.” There will be links to copies of the syllabus and assignment handouts, and that is where answers to the feedback questions will need to be posted (see below). Once everyone has joined the group I will make it ‘secret’ so it need not be seen by the entire planet.

If you do not have a Facebook account, get one.

## Reading Schedule and Course Breakdown

The two texts work in concert: the *Introduction* provides a basic overview, while the corresponding section in the *Reader* is chock-a-block with illustrative articles. So, for Mondays we read the chapter from the *Introduction*, and for Wednesdays we read a selection from the *Reader*.

	Monday ( <i>Introduction</i> )	Wednesday ( <i>Reader</i> )
January 5		First day business
January 10 and 12	Chapter 1 On the Concepts of Folklore	Evans-Pritchard, "The Portal Case: Authenticity, Tourism, Traditions, and the Law"
January 17 and 19	Chapter 2 Ethnic Groups and Ethnic Folklore	Manning, "Carnival in Canada: The Politics of Celebration"
January 24 and 26	Chapter 3 Religious Folklore	Deshen: "Ethnicity and Citizenship in the Ritual of an Israeli Synagogue"
January 31 and February 2	Chapter 4 Occupational Folklore	Bell, "Tending Bar at Brown's: Occupational Role as Artistic Performance"
February 7 and 9	Chapter 5 Children's Folklore	Goldstein, "Strategy in Counting Out"
February 14 and 16	Chapter 6 Folk Narratives	Allen, "Personal Experience Narratives"
February 21 and 23	<i>A week's reprieve, spent reading, I am sure</i>	
February 28 and March 2	Chapter 7 Ballads and Folksongs	Barnie, "Oral Formulas in the Country Blues"
March 7 and 9	Chapter 8 Riddles and Proverbs	Oring, "Totemism and the A.E.F. Revisited"
March 14 and 16	Chapter 9 Folk Objects	Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Objects of Memory"
March 21 and 23	Chapter 10 Documenting Folklore	Oring, "Documenting Folklore: The Annotation"
March 28 and 30	Presentations ( <b>Papers Due</b> )	Presentations
April 4	Review / Evaluations	

## Course Requirements

### Feedback (20%)

Every week, on Wednesday (starting January 12<sup>th</sup>), I will be asking a question for reflection. These questions will be on the general theme of the following week's topics. By no later than the following Sunday, you are to submit a *brief* (50-100 word) written answer. These will be compiled and used as examples for the following lectures.

**How to submit:** After Thursday's class I will post the question as a discussion thread on the wall of the Facebook group: answer by posting a reply. Do so by midnight on the Sunday.

**This is an embarrassingly easy assignment:** Over the course of the semester, I expect ten answers from you, worth 2% each: doing it **on time** will earn one mark, and anything more than a half-assed effort will earn the second, so think of it as a (virtually) free 20%.

### Essay (50%)

For your major paper (due March 23<sup>rd</sup>) you should discuss the practices of a “**folkgroup**” of your acquaintance, although not one of which you are an immediate member, and identify an individual who is a “**tradition-bearer**” for that group. In your paper you should describe and delimit the folkgroup involved and what makes this individual a tradition-bearer in that group. It is helpful to use the broad categories suggested by Oring in the various chapters of the *Introduction*. You should do some sort of **fieldwork** (interview and ethnography), and use some **library** sources.

The essay will be seven-eight pages long. The essay locates the folkloric activity you are studying within a larger tradition (informing influences) and in relation to similar activities (parallel examples); it offers new evidence (in folklore, we are assuming a new study with primary data based on fieldwork); it connects the new evidence to the larger tradition, allowing for either reaffirmation or challenge to what the tradition tells us; and it allows for a personal voice to speak both from and to that larger tradition, occasioned by the privileged perspective of being an 'expert' on the subject, even if the subject about which one is expert is a fairly narrow slice of the universe. Because you are the producer of primary data, you are the (or 'an') expert on whichever topic you have studied: someone has likely done a study on something similar before, but as you look at a distinct occurrence of that phenomenon, you have a particular contribution to make. A gajillion people have studied Halloween traditions before you, but they have not looked at the Valentine's Day Dance at the North Sydney Legion, 2011 (for example).

By the time it comes to writing the essay, you will have:

- looked around for an aspect of 'tradition' from your life/environment;
- read up on similar situations;
- read up on local context;
- framed a question;
- plotted a course of research;
- thought through the ethical implications of said research;
- done the original research; and
- begun the process of mining and organising said research.

And you are now in the position to write up your findings. You have been thinking about this for two months now, so it's practically just typing.

## A Suggested Outline

- **Introduction:** describe what you are going to do by
  - Identifying the group;
  - Naming some of the activities you will be describing in detail;
  - Identifying your source (the person you are interviewing) and their relationship to the group;
  - Describing how you are organising the materials (this can be chronological, or moving from smaller to larger groups, or something as simple as ‘I want to talk about this, then this, then finally this’: just impose some order.
- **The group:** tell me something more about the group; a history, a membership, etc. Sometimes groups are so large (in terms of ‘a community’ that you don’t know everybody, and some don’t lend themselves to a headcount, so be prudent.
- **The activities:** describe, using your own experiences and also the words or ideas of your source, the activities engaged in by the group. This is probably the bulk of your paper. These will be organised according to the principals you laid out in the introduction. You should be attempting to use the terms from the course (ritual, custom, narrative, *to name just a very few*) that you are encountering in the readings.
- **Synthesis:** what do these activities do? How do they shape the group? Are they specific to the group or do similar groups do similar things? This is where you would bring in secondary sources, comparing and contrasting you group to the groups other researchers have studied.
- **Conclusion:** more or less summarise what you have written.

**Handy tip:** Write your introduction last. This is the 21<sup>st</sup> century: writing in order is no longer necessary

**Please note:** A portion of the mark for the final paper (20% of the assignment, which equals 10% of your final grade) will be for the technical aspects of writing: organisation, spelling, grammar, etc. I highly recommend a visit to the Writing Centre ([www.cbu.ca/writing-centre/](http://www.cbu.ca/writing-centre/)) if you are uncertain about your strengths as a writer, or if you are uncomfortable writing in English.

## Electronic Presentation (on March 28<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>) (10%)

This is a new assignment this year: let’s see how it goes. Many students appear to hate giving oral presentations in class: they are also difficult to schedule, and they are not always fair to the chronically shy. And the larger my classes get, because I am so attractive, the more class-time needs to be devoted to them.

For the **Electronic Presentation**, you are to present some aspect of your paper (principally, the foreground about the group, less so the background about the type of activity) as a PowerPoint slide show, YouTube video, Flash animation, stand-alone webpage, popplet – whatever you think is appropriate, doable, and within your capabilities.

Here are the rules:

- It must describe the group that is at the centre of your paper;
- It must show the activity that is at the centre of your paper;
- It must use the technical vocabulary of the course to describe that activity;
- For dynamic content, it can be no more than four minutes long but no less than three;

- For static content (stand-alone webpage, etc.) it should have about 500 words of text;
- It must be largely original content, and give credit (citations) to anything taken from elsewhere;
- It must either be on some portable media drive (jump drive, CD-Rom) or posted online so that it can be shown in class. It must work on a PC, because that is what our smart classrooms are equipped with;
- If for some reason you can't make it to class that week, it must be posted on the Facebook page by March 30<sup>th</sup>. That might require converting it into a format that Facebook can read, which will be your responsibility.

Other than that, I leave it to your own devices. It would be nice if it can be creative and, dare I say, 'entertaining' as well as informative.

**Non-techie option:** if, for some reason, this really frightens you, then you can do a standard oral presentation. If both frighten you, well, I don't know what to say.

I am a nasty and miserable human being: **questions on the exam are actually based in part on the presentations** of your peers. (In years past I didn't tell my class about this, so I must be getting kinder in my doddering old age.) So, for self-preservation, do not think of presentation time as an opportunity to not come to class.

## **Final Exam: (20%)**

As a rule, I don't like exams, either writing them or marking them. For me, exams should only be used to measure that you have picked up the terminology of the discipline, and can use it correctly. As this is an introductory course, I want you to leave knowing the technical terms and historical developments of the study of folklore so you can be prepared for more advanced study. Therefore, the exam is based on terminology, definitions, some famous names, and so forth. Questions will be multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, or short answer (i.e. one sentence), along with two slightly longer essay-type questions (aimed at *synthesis*, not *regurgitation*, of material). Regular attendance and reading the material is all that is required to do well.

## **General Policies**

### **Attendance:**

After the first week or so I don't take attendance, because you are not seven years old. (I do it in the first week really only to learn your names.) However, regular attendance is expected. Although I will post the occasional note about class on the Facebook page, they are not an adequate substitute for attendance (since they assume that you knew what happened in class that day). You are responsible for any material you may have missed.

### **Assignments:**

All assignments must be completed in order to pass this course. Furthermore:

#### **Paper format:**

Assignments must be typed: please use black ink and a standard font. Double-space throughout, and print on white paper. Folklorists typically use MLA style for assignments, but as long as you are consistent you may choose any style you wish (APA, Chicago, etc.). **If you do not understand**

**this, come see me.** Paper-clip or staple your pages together – in order, please! – or put in an appropriately sized envelope.

### **Submitting papers after class:**

Assignments can be dropped off at the Centre for Cape Breton Studies, or you may lovingly slide them under my office door. *Door-slider-unders: use an appropriately-sized envelope, or I can not be responsible for footprints.*

### **E-mailed papers:**

I will accept assignments by e-mail in Word (my preference) or as a PDF. They will not be printed off: instead, I will save them under a different name, mark them directly on the file, and return them to you by email. For some reason, the CBU mail system hates many addresses (hotmail especially), so it blocks messages with attachments but doesn't tell the sender or the anticipated recipient that it has done so. *If I don't send you a confirmation that I received it, I didn't receive it.*

### **Late or missed assignments:**

Assignments are expected in class on the dates given above: they are absolutely due by no later than 5pm on the day following. Anything later than that will be penalised at one mark per day. No paper will be accepted after two weeks: it will be considered incomplete and will result in a failing grade for the course.

Three feedback questions are due promptly. They are no good to me or the class if they are not answered by the time class discussion occurs. So, no answering them all in the last week and fishing for that twenty percent.

### **Missed exam:**

If you know you are going to miss the exam for a documented reason, please provide me with at least two weeks notice so that alternate arrangements can be made. If you miss the exam due to illness or personal emergency, you must provide a documented reason within five days so that alternate arrangements can be made.

### **About the Library...**

Go there. The Library of Congress Number for Folklore begins with "GR": hang out in that section.

### **About the Internet...**

Still for losers. If you must use it, at the very least use Google Scholar to start your searches. And remember, if you can find something, cut and paste it, and claim it as your own, I can certainly find it again and expose you. Academic integrity is like Britney Spears' underpants: in a perfect world, they are both always on.

### **Plagiarism:**

See the next page. I hope you find it offensive that I even feel the need to mention it.

## A word about plagiarism and essay-writing

Plagiarism is defined by the university calendar as follows:

*Plagiarism is the act of representing the intellectual work of others as one's own. Such misrepresentation is treated as a serious violation of academic standards and principles. When a student submits work for a course, it is assumed that the work is original except where the student properly acknowledges the use of other sources. Of course, good scholarship often requires drawing on the work of others, but any borrowed material – including words, ideas, data, statistics, graphics and other intellectual matter, whether drawn from print, electronic, or other non-print sources – must be fully acknowledged according to the accepted practices of the relevant discipline. (CBU Calendar)*

This means that when you use sources, whether they are from the library, from the internet, or (as is often the case in folklore) from interviews with people, you must clearly distinguish both (a) what are someone else's **ideas** as opposed to your own, and (b) what are someone else's **words** as opposed to your own.

I have found that many students leave themselves open to the charge of plagiarism by either doing little to clearly make the distinction between their own work and someone else's, or (more often) not quite grasping the concept of what the essay is. An essay is more than a number of sources interwoven with some linking material: it is an effort at expressing an original idea which is more often than not based *in part* on other peoples' own efforts at expressing similar or parallel ideas.

So, of course (as the policy says) you will be quoting and drawing ideas from other people, but remember:

- There is nothing wrong with quoting somebody, even quoting them extensively, **provided that** you recognise and indicate in the text that this is not your idea or words but those of someone else.
- There is nothing wrong with paraphrasing somebody, **provided that** you recognise and indicate in the text that, although they may now be your words, it is someone else's ideas.
- A list of references (bibliography, works cited, etc.) is simultaneously **both mandatory and insufficient** for citing.

Finally (and this is the critical part), the object of the essay is that you are **actually trying to say something**. An essay is not much different from saying:

*Let me tell you what I think. First off, so that we're clear, here's the thing I'm talking about, with some data I got from this guy and this guy. Second, here's what a couple of other people say about it: this guy says this, but this guy says that (and she says it so well that I'm not going to put it in my own words). Now, here's what I have to say about it: see how it's kind of the same but also kind of different from those other guys? So there, that's what I think.*

So, practice safe essay-writing: clearly indicate how you are using sources, and hand-in something that goes beyond an artful compilation of other people's ideas and aims at some kind of synthesis between what others have said and what you have to say. *It will make you strong like bull.*

I used to go through my day with the idea that no student ever intends to commit an act of plagiarism: it may have been naïve of me but I'm okay with that. But I have now been burned too many times, and I have had to change my tune to a **zero tolerance policy**.

**Any student who plagiarises will automatically receive a mark of zero on the assignment: he or she will not have the opportunity to resubmit; and the Dean of Arts and Community Studies and, if different, the student's Dean, will be informed.**