

**English 2270 / Comparative Studies 2350**  
**INTRODUCTION TO FOLKLORE**

**Instructor:** Cassie Bower

**Class Days/Times:** WF 9:35-10:55 a.m.

**Class Location:** University Hall 82

**Contact:** [bower.155@buckeyemail.osu.edu](mailto:bower.155@buckeyemail.osu.edu)

**Office hours:** Tues. 11 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Wed. 11:15 a.m. – 1:15 p.m.

Buckeye Bar in Thompson Lib.

(Other Times by Appointment)

**Course Description and Objectives**

The purpose of this class is to explore central issues in the study of folklore by introducing students to a range of traditional verbal art, custom, and material culture from a number of different regions and ethnic groups. Central issues include the dynamics of tradition, creativity and artistic expression, personal and group identity, and making everyday experience meaningful.

This course is required for the undergraduate folklore concentration and the folklore minor (for more information, go to <https://cfs.osu.edu/programs/undergrad-options> ). This course also serves as a GEC Arts and Humanities Cultures and Ideas Course. In GEC classes of this category, students evaluate significant writing and works of art, including oral literature and verbal arts. Such studies develop capacities for aesthetic and historical response and judgment; interpretation and evaluation; critical listening, reading, seeing, thinking and writing; and experiencing the arts and reflecting on that experience.

Expected Learning Outcomes include:

1. Students develop abilities to be informed observers or, or active participants in, the visual, spatial, performing, spoken, or literary arts;
2. Students develop an understanding of the foundations of human beliefs, the nature of reality, and the norms that guide human behavior; and
3. Students examine and interpret how the human condition and human values are explored through works of art and expressive culture.

No prior knowledge of folklore is assumed or required. What is instead important to a student's success in the class is a strong sense of curiosity and a willingness to share ideas, as well as the ability to keep up with the reading and written assignments.

**Required Materials for English 2367.01**

- Sims, Martha C. and Martine Stephens. *Living Folklore*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition.
- Brunvand, Jan Harold. *The Vanishing Hitchhiker*.
- Additional Course Readings (available on Carmen or through OSU's library website)

Note that students are required to bring all assigned reading materials to class in order to refer to them throughout the lecture. The text may either be a printed or electronic copy.

## Course Assignments and Requirements

Brief descriptions of the assignments you complete for English 2270 are provided below. Full-length prompts will be distributed when the assignments are introduced in class. Prompts will also be posted to Carmen.

Students will complete several shorter assignments throughout the semester that are geared towards completing a final paper. These assignments combine to form the Folklore Collection and Analysis Project, which will constitute the majority of the student's grade. There will also be one substantial graded test (a midterm exam). Additionally, students should expect periodic reading checks which will impact their participation grades. As such, regular attendance and participation are expected. Grades will be determined as follows:

Folklore Collection and Analysis Project (Totaling 80%)

Project Idea – 3%

Panel Proposal – 7%

Revised Panel Proposal – 10%

Interview and Transcription Paper – 15%

Panel Presentation – 15%

Folklore Collection and Analysis Paper – 30%

Midterm Exam – 15%

Participation – 5%

### ***Folklore Collection and Analysis Project***

As traditional for an introductory folklore course, students will complete a collection project rooted in individual fieldwork. Though this project constitutes a large percentage of the students' final grades, the project will be completed in small steps throughout the semester. The project in its entirety should offer students an opportunity to engage in unique research and contribute to OSU's archives as well as gain experience presenting findings in a professional setting.

#### ***3% - Project Idea (~1 paragraph)***

For this assignment, students will post a short description of their specific research interests for the collection project to Carmen. The class will be responsible for reading their peers' ideas and forming their own presentation panels. Each panel should have roughly four students.

#### ***7% - Panel Proposal (~1 ½ pages)***

Students will prepare a brief panel proposal. This proposal will indicate the group's overall research focus in an initial paragraph. Each individual on the panel will include a separate paragraph describing their own proposed project.

#### ***10% - Revised Panel Proposal (~2 pages)***

Later in the semester, presentation panels will revise their original panel proposals. This will be an opportunity to adjust their project abstracts to meet any changing research trajectories as well as begin developing titles for the panel and the individual papers.

**15% - Interview and Transcription Paper (varies)**

For this paper, students will begin their individual fieldwork by conducting an interview that is central to their projects. After completing the interview, students will transcribe a paper that describes the context of the interview setting. They will also incorporate a transcription of a text elicited during the interview.

**15% - Panel Presentation**

During the last two weeks of class, students will have the opportunity to share their research with their classmates. The panel presentations will resemble poster presentations at academic conferences.

**30% - Folklore Collection and Analysis Paper**

This final paper is the culmination of all of the work completed throughout the semester. Students will present the material collected throughout their fieldwork experiences and offer thoughtful written analyses of the material. The paper and all accompanying fieldwork materials will be shared with the Center for Folklore Studies Archives as a contribution to other scholars who may benefit from the students' research.

**15% - Midterm Exam**

During the semester, there will be one midterm exam consisting of multiple choice and short answer questions concerning information covered up to that point in the semester.

**5% - Participation**

Because the class involves a great deal of discussion, participation is extremely important. Participation includes both in-class and out-of-class engagement (i.e. contributing to class discussions, attending office hours, successfully completing reading checks). Students are strongly encouraged to visit office hours at least once throughout the semester -- individually, with their panel, or both. Attendance during group presentation days and in-class group work days are also part of the participation grade.

**Grading Scale**

A	93	B+	87	C+	77	D+	67
A-	90	B	83	C	73	D	60
		B-	80	C-	70		

**Course Policies**

**Classroom Community:** In this class, discussions of readings, visual materials, and student ideas are at the center of everything we do. We may occasionally work with sensitive issues, such as belief and personal experience, and these issues demand that we discuss and interact with respect, maturity, and open-mindedness. Everyone should feel welcome, respected, and safe in our classroom.

**Attendance and Punctuality** are important to the success of this class. You are expected to attend each class session. You are allowed three unexcused absences. Each unexcused absence

beyond three will lower your final grade by 1/3 of a letter grade (i.e. a “B” will drop to a “B-”). Excused absences, such as those for documented illness, family tragedy, religious observance, or travel for inter-collegiate athletics, will not affect your grade; please notify the instructor if such events arrive. You are responsible for all material that you miss during an absence. You are also expected to arrive on time and to stay for the duration of each class session. Excessive tardiness will impact your grade.

***Student Work*** must be turned in at the beginning of the class period when they are due or to Carmen by the posted due date and time. Late submission of an assignment will result in the deduction of one full letter grade for each day past the due date (for example, “B+” to a “C+”). The grade will not be affected when an assignment is late for reasons that would result in an excused absence.

***Plagiarism*** is the unauthorized use of the words or ideas of another person. It is a serious academic offense that can result in referral to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. Please remember that at no point during the writing process should the work of others be presented as your own.

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the [Code of Student Conduct](#).

***Class Cancellation Policy:*** If class is cancelled due to emergency, I will contact you via email and request that a note be placed on the door of our classroom announcing the cancellation. I will contact you as soon as possible following the cancellation to let you know what will be expected of you for our next class meeting.

### **Departmental and University Resources**

***The OSU Writing Center*** is available to provide free, professional writing tutoring and consultation. You may set up an appointment by visiting <http://cstw.osu.edu/> or by calling 688-4291.

***The Office for Disability Services*** provides services to any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability. Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760

Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; [OSU Office for Disability Services Web Site](http://www.ods.osu.edu) www.ods.osu.edu

*Student Advocacy Center* (as they note in their mission statement) is committed to assisting students in cutting through campus bureaucracy. Its purpose is to empower students to overcome obstacles to their growth both inside and outside the classroom, and to help them maximize their educational experience while pursuing their degrees at The Ohio State University. The SAC is open Monday-Friday from 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM. You can visit them in person at 1120 Lincoln Tower, call at (614) 292-1111, email [advocacy@osu.edu](mailto:advocacy@osu.edu), or visit their website: <http://studentlife.osu.edu/advocacy/>

*Counseling and Consultation Services* provides a wide range of resources for undergraduate students. For more information call 292-5766.

### **Daily Course Schedule**

*Schedule subject to change. Additional readings will be posted at instructor's discretion.  
Any changes will be announced in class and posted to Carmen.*

#### **Week 1**

Wednesday, January 8 – Introduction to English 2270; Syllabus overview

Friday, January 10 – Defining Folklore

Reading Due: Schoemaker's "Basic Concepts of Folkloristics"

Optional: To expand on these concepts, browse *Living Folklore* Ch. 1-2

#### **Week 2**

Wednesday, January 15 – Folk Narratives; Discuss Myths

Reading Due: "Chapter 6: Folk Narratives" from Elliot Oring's *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres: An Introduction*, available to view through OSU's library as an e-book

Friday, January 17 – Historical Legends: Historical Accuracy v. Subjective Truth

Reading Due: Basso's "Stalking with Stories"

Alver's "Historical Legends and Historical Truth"

#### **Week 3**

Wednesday, January 22 – Supernatural Legends and Folk Belief

Reading Due: Hufford's "Beings Without Bodies"

Tucker's "Ghostly Warnings"

Friday, January 24 – Urban Legends: Modern Beliefs and Anxieties  
In-Class Viewing: *Urban Legends: Is It Truth? Is It Fiction?*  
Reading Due: *The Vanishing Hitchhiker* – Preface, Chapter 1 & 2  
Assignment Due: Project Idea

#### **Week 4**

Wednesday, January 29 – Urban Legends (cont.)  
Reading Due: *The Vanishing Hitchhiker* – Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, & 8

Friday, January 31 – Local Character Anecdotes and Tall Tales  
Reading Due: Mullen’s “Local Character Anecdotes” and “Tall Tales”  
\*\*E-Mail Instructor Group Selection and Panel Focus

#### **Week 5**

Wednesday, February 5 – Jokes, Riddles, & Proverbs; Midterm Prep  
Reading Due: Smith’s “Jokes and Practical Jokes”  
Oring’s “The Joke as Gloss”  
Green’s “Magnolias Grow in Dirt”

Friday, February 7 – Midterm Exam; Possible In-Class Group Work

#### **Week 6**

Wednesday, February 12 – Folktales  
In-Class Viewing: *Appalachian Journey*  
Reading Due: Gutierrez’s “The Jack Tale”  
Chase’s “Old Fire Dragaman”

Friday, February 14 – Analyzing Fairy Tales  
Reading Due: Selected Fairy Tales TBA  
Assignment Due: Panel Proposal

#### **Week 7**

Wednesday, February 19 – Songs and Ballads  
In-Class Viewing: *The Ballad of Frankie Silver*  
Reading Due: Paredes – “The *Décima* on the Texas-Mexico Border”

Friday, February 21 – Visit the Center for Folklore Studies Archives! (Date Subject to Change)  
No Readings  
Meet at the Ohio Stadium between gates 18 and 20

### **Week 8**

Wednesday, February 26 –Fieldwork Workshop1: Fieldwork Equipment & the Interview Process  
Reading Due: *Living Folklore* Chapter 7, p. 206-222

Friday, February 28 – Fieldwork Workshop 2: Texts in Context and Ethical Research  
Reading Due: *Living Folklore* Chapter 5 & Chapter 7, p. 222-231

### **Week 9**

Wednesday, March 5 – Introducing Folk Custom; Calendar Customs: Mardi Gras!  
In-Class Viewing: *Dance for a Chicken*  
Reading Due: *Living Folklore* Chapter 4  
Ancelet – “Mardi Gras”

Friday, March 7 – Festivals, Parades, and the Outsider

### **Week 10: Spring Break**

Wednesday, March 12 – No Classes

Friday, March 14 – No Classes

### **Week 11**

Wednesday, March 19 –Considering Folk Medicine  
In-Class Viewing: *Spirit Doctors*  
Reading Due: O’Connor and Hufford’s “Understanding Folk Medicine”

Friday, March 21 – Introduction to Folk Art and Material Culture  
In-Class Viewing: *Home Movie: An American Folk Art*  
Reading Due: *Living Folklore* Chapter 3  
Optional: Babcock’s “Pueblo Cultural Bodies”  
Assignment Due: Interview and Transcription Paper

### **Week 12**

Wednesday, March 26 – Memorials as Performance  
Reading Due: Tuleja’s “Yellow Ribbons & the Redemption of the Past”  
Cashman’s “Visions of Irish Nationalism”

Friday, March 28 – Finding Art in the Everyday  
In-Class Viewing: *I Always Do My Collars First*

### **Week 13**

Wednesday, April 2 – Folklore and Foodways

In-Class Viewing: *Hamburger and Dolma*

Reading Due: Lloyd's "Cincinnati Chili Culinary Complex"

Writing Due: Revised Panel Proposal

Friday, April 4 – Contemporary Worldview and the Future of Folklore

Reading Due: Dundes's "Thinking Ahead"

### **Week 14**

Wednesday, April 9 – In-Class Preparation for Presentations; Course Summary & Evaluations

Friday, April 11 – Conference-Style Group Presentations

### **Week 15**

Wednesday, April 16 – Conference-Style Group Presentations

Friday, April 18 -- Conference-Style Group Presentations

**Final Exam Period: Wednesday, April 23 10:00-11:45 a.m.**

The Folklore Collection and Analysis Paper, with all required documentation, due in hard copy form before the end of the exam period