

English 367.05: The U.S. Folk Experience

Memory and Place in the University District

Autumn 2008, MW 1:30-3:18, Denney Hall 245

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Course Overview:

The goal of all sections of English 367 is to practice skills obtained in English 110 and to further improve your critical thinking and expository writing. Among sections of 367, those labeled "367.05 The U.S. Folk Experience" generally focus on the experiences, traditions, and expressive and material culture of common Americans from a wide range of groups and subcultures. In this particular ".05" section we will come to better appreciate of memory, place, and community here in the University District of Columbus, Ohio. In order to do so, we will adopt methods and perspectives shared by folklorists, anthropologists, and oral historians. You will conduct fieldwork research, record interviews with University District residents, and transcribe these interviews. In addition to documenting your fieldwork, ethnographic writing assignments will include reflections on the fieldwork process, how the past is represented in the present and to what ends, how mere space is transformed into meaningful place through narrative, and how and to what extent the University District may be considered a community. Interview transcripts, fieldwork documentation, and analyses will be presented to the University District Organization for inclusion in their community archive. Copies will also be housed in the OSU Center for Folklore Studies Archives (suite 218, the Ohio Stadium).

Readings:

Two required books are available at SBX at 806 North High St. between 14th and 15th Ave

Tim Creswell, Place: A Short Introduction (2004)

Kent Ryden, Mapping the Invisible Landscape: Folklore, Writing, and the Sense of Place (1993)

All other readings will be posted on [Carmen](#).

Grading Breakdown:

20%

40%

40%

Participation and Preparation-includes attendance, readings responses, and positive contribution to in-class discussion

Graded Assignments:

- *Readings Responses.* For many but not necessarily all readings I will ask students to bring to class short written responses. In some cases I will ask for summaries of the author's thesis and main supporting points. In other cases I will ask you to respond to specific questions about the readings. Responses will receive a +, + check, check, check —, or —. I will not accept late readings responses. Your efforts responding to readings will figure into your overall Participation and Preparation grade
- *Oral History Portfolio* This portfolio is a collection of several forms of documentation, including a list of prepared interview questions, fieldnotes, the digital audio file of the interview, a chronological index of topics discussed (with time signatures), and a transcription of the interview. In addition you will write a paper reflecting on the interview process and analyzing the content of the oral history you collected. See assignment on Carmen for details.
- *Senses of Place Portfolio* This portfolio is a collection of several forms of documentation, including, potentially, a map, fieldnotes, photographs, interview audio and index. In addition you will write an analytical essay reflecting on senses of place and community in the UD. Students will complete this portfolio in teams and present their findings to the class in the final week. See assignment on Carmen for details.

Expectations:

Attendance. I expect you at every class session, barring significant illness or other unavoidable emergency. I will take attendance, and this will figure into your Participation and Preparation grade. In addition, please come on time. Lateness is disruptive and *inconsiderate* to your fellow classmates and to me. *Habitual absences and lateness will significantly lower your grade.*

Preparation and contribution. You must keep up with the readings and come prepared to discuss them. (See "Readings Responses" above). Likewise, positive participation in class discussion is expected and necessary; it ensures the best possible educational experience for all. Contributing is not necessarily about having the right answers. Discussion allows us to raise questions and critical concerns, try out new ideas and positions (even if we eventually abandon them), and help each other consider all sides of an issue. *Lack of preparation, unwillingness to contribute to discussion, and/or habitually unproductive or negative contributions to discussion will adversely affect your grade.*

Plagiarism. Plagiarism is the representation of another's work or ideas as one's own: it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas. All cases of suspected plagiarism, in accordance with university rules, will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. [See a more extensive discussion](#) of plagiarism and how to avoid it.

Due dates. Late work is a sure sign of indolence, shiftlessness, and moral turpitude. Contact me

ASAP if you have compelling, verifiable reasons to need an extension. Otherwise, *grades on late work will plummet one third of a letter (e.g., C- to D+) for each day it is late.*

University Resources and Services:

Center for the Study of the Teaching of Writing (CSTW)

The Writing Center staff can help you with general writing strategies as well as specific assignments. Visit www.cstw.org or call 688-4291 or 292-5607 for an appointment. See <http://cstw.osu.edu/writingCenter/handouts/default.cfm> for guides to many aspects of writing, from the general composition process to specifics of grammar and documentation.

The Ombudsman of the Writing Programs

Matthew Cariello, mediates conflicts between teachers and students in 110 and 367. His office is Denney Hall 12. You can contact him at 292-5778 or cariello.1@osu.edu. All conversations with the Ombud are strictly confidential.

The Office for Disability Services

Located in 150 Pomerane Hall, ODS offers services for students with documented disabilities. Contact ODS at 292-3307 if you wish to schedule an appointment or consult with staff there.

SCHEDULE

(subject to change)

Week One (9/24): Introduction to the Course and the University District

Week Two (9/29, 10/1): Introduction to Oral History, Folklore, and Fieldwork

In class: Hand out and discuss assignment for Oral History Portfolio

- Go to [The University District Web site](#). Follow the links and read all sections in the "District History" category ("Well Known Residents" through all the "Business Node Histories").
- ["Making Sense of Oral History"](#) (Shopes), read up to "Interpreting Oral History," p. 5.
- "Introduction" (Briggs)

Week Three (10/6, 10/8): Interviewing and Ethics

In class: Practice using audio recorders.

- ["Oral History Techniques"](#) (Truesdell)
- "Ethics" (Finnegan)
- [Statement of the American Folklore Society on Research with Human Subjects](#)
- Read all sections of the [University Area Enrichment Association Web site](#).

Week Four (10/13, 10/15): Interpreting Life Stories and Oral History

In class: demonstration of Express Scribe transcribing software.

- "The Call of Life Stories in Ethnographic Research" (Plummer)
- "Conducting a Life History Interview" (Angrosino)
- finish "Making Sense of Oral History" (Shopes)
- "Oral History as Genre" (Portelli)

Week Five (10/20, 10/22): Working on the Oral History Portfolios

Readings TBA, depending on where we are with the portfolio projects.

Note that class Wednesday 10/22 will be cancelled (I'll be at the American Folklore Society annual conference)

Week Six (10/27, 10/29): Transitioning to Senses of Place

**** 10/27: Oral History Portfolio due ****

In class: Debrief from oral history projects. Hand out and discuss assignment for Senses of Place Portfolio. Walking tour with Catherine Girves of the UAEA.

Week Seven (11/3, 11/5): Mapping the Invisible Landscape

- *Place: A Short Introduction* (Creswell), read chapter 1
- *Mapping the Invisible Landscape* (Ryden), read the Prologue and chapters 1 and 2, skim chapter 3, but slow down for pp. 113-116 and 198-207.

Week Eight (11/10, 11/12): Place-making and Contested Senses of Place

- *Isdom Sits in Places* (Basso), read Preface, chapter 1; chapter 2 is optional
- *Place: An Introduction* (Creswell), skim chapters 2 and 3, read chapter 4
- "Visions of Irish Nationalism" (Cashman)

Week Nine (11/17, 11/19): Fieldwork

Use this time to conduct field research. I will be in my office for drop-in consultation.

Week Ten (11/24, 11/26): Working on the Sense of Place Portfolios

*Readings TBA, depending on where we are with the portfolio projects.
Note that class Wednesday 11/26 is cancelled (Thanksgiving).*

Week Eleven (12/1, 12/3): Finale

In class: student presentations of Place Portfolios