

## **American Regional Cultures in Transition: Appalachia, Louisiana, and the Texas Border Country**

English 4597.02  
Spring 2014  
Mendenhall 0175

Prof. Dorothy Noyes  
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TuTh 11:10-12:30

This course will introduce you to the folklore of three American regions. Each is famous for its traditional culture, but each is often thought of as deviating in a distinctive way from the national culture: Louisiana is “creole,” Texas is “border,” and Appalachia is “folk.” While exploring these differences, we’ll also observe the commonalities: positive and negative stereotyping from outside, complex racial and class composition, heavy in- and out-migration, environmental distinctiveness and stress, extraction economies, tense and often violent relationships with both government and business. We’ll look at historical change through the prism of celebrated folklore forms such as Louisiana Mardi Gras, Appalachian fairy tales, and the Tex-Mex *corrido*. We’ll also explore the impact of Hurricane Katrina and the reconstruction of the Gulf Coast, mountaintop-removal mining and the energy economy in Appalachia, and the cross-border trafficking of people, drugs, and capital. A general question arises: what counts as America?

### **REQUIRED TEXTS**

You will need to bring the texts to class, either in hard copy or on an easily manageable device. You'll also need pen and paper in case we decide to write something.

#### Books ordered at SBX

Lindahl, Carl, Maida Owens, and C. Renee Harvison (Eds.). *Swapping Stories: Folktales from Louisiana*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997.

Roberts, Leonard W. *Up Cutshin and Down Greasy: Folkways of a Kentucky Mountain Family*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1959.

Paredes, Américo. *"With His Pistol In His Hand": A Border Ballad and Its Hero*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958.

#### Other readings and films

Links are provided for readings directly available on the Web. Others, marked “Carmen,” will be under Content on the course site. Those marked “Library” can be found online through the library catalogue by searching the journal title. (Note that journals are sometimes in multiple repositories depending on the article’s publication year.) The readings come from a wide range of sources and some will seem opaque. Don’t panic. We will talk them through. When words and references are unfamiliar, try looking them up! But read through for the gist first.

Occasionally I will ask you to prepare for class by watching a film. These will be available streaming online, either through [drm.osu.edu](http://drm.osu.edu), a public website, or a Library database. The titles of these films are on the syllabus so that you can also procure them through Netflix, the public library, etc., for better-quality viewing if you prefer.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

*All requirements must be completed for a passing grade.*

Showing up-preparing-participating 25%

Short writings and Baggie of Death 15%

Exam 1 15%

Exam 2 20%

Exam 3 25%

**Showing up.** You won't pass the exams without doing so. If you must miss a class, you should arrange to get the notes from a fellow student. You *may not make up work missed due to absence* except in documented cases of illness, etc. As per department policy, *five absences automatically result in a final grade of F.*

**Preparing.** You're responsible for *reading this syllabus* and for *checking both Carmen and your OSU email* regularly. I will post updates for each session under Discussions in Carmen before each class, including advice on accessing the readings, a general précis of what we'll be doing, and Baggie of Death discussion points. Readings marked "Extra" on the syllabus are optional, for those of you wishing to pursue a topic further.

The Ohio Board of Regents prescribes a 2:1 ratio of out-of-class work to formal instructional time. In other words, you should expect to devote an average of 5 1/2 hours a week of study time to this course. Give the readings adequate time: some may be deceptively simple, but the details matter, and some are scholarly and challenging. Given the complex timetables we all observe under semesters, it would be an excellent idea to schedule regular blocks of time to study for this course.

It's also a good idea to keep up with the national news: the course will provide context for current debates on citizenship and national identity, environmental change, disaster cleanup, immigration, labor, and pop culture, among others.

**Participating.** Class time on semesters is precious. You need to be on time. (If you have a tight connection between classes, please let me know this so I can bear it in mind.) You need to be awake. You need to be engaged. It is advisable to take notes both on the readings and on class discussion! You should have relevant contributions to make in discussion and should feel free to pose questions: others will share them. A successful course is a group effort.

Students in English 4597.02 typically come from the full range of Arts and Sciences majors, even beyond the usual folklore course mix of humanities, arts, and social and behavioral science majors. I don't expect you to have a background in folklore studies, and will help with humanistic conventions for interpreting cultural practices in context. In addition, I hope you'll contribute your own disciplinary expertise and personal experience towards the group's understanding of these regions.

**Courtesy.** Please bear in mind that your behavior affects those around you. The banging doors, shuffling in, and settling down of late arrivals are extremely disruptive. Texting and surfing distract your neighbors and are rude to everyone who is making an effort to contribute, to say nothing of a waste of your tuition money. Remember also that we will be talking about difficult issues on which reasonable people can disagree. Respond respectfully to other speakers, and make an effort to understand "where they are coming from"--a relevant metaphor for this course.

I too may unintentionally put forward views or use language that offends someone. In this course I will be ventriloquizing many points of view, and of course I have my own blind spots and points of ignorance. I hope that you will speak or write to me if you are disturbed by something I say: I am grateful to be made aware of my mistakes, or to learn when I need to provide more context. If you wish, you can always leave an unsigned note in my English department mailbox.

**Short writings and Baggie of Death.** We will do a few in-class or before-class ungraded short writings. In addition, before most class sessions I'll ask you to prepare one or two brief points of discussion in relation to the reading. At the beginning of each class I'll pull two names out of the BoD and ask these people to present their observations or questions. In all these exercises I'm of course making sure that you are doing the reading and engaged in the course; beyond that you should feel free to delight us with your energy and insight.

**Two take-home and one in-class essay exams,** one for each region, asking you to synthesize readings and class discussion in relation to major regional issues and cultural forms. Ca. 1500 well-chosen words for the first take-home; what you can do in the second in-class; ca. 3000 for the final take-home.

**Extra credit.** There are several talks and films relating to our topic on campus this spring. I have noted a few of them on the syllabus. For a thoughtful 500-word response that integrates your observations of any of these events with our readings and class discussions, I will bump your participation grade up by 1/2 grade (e.g. B- to B). If you would like to observe some event I am not aware of, or report on something happening off-campus, that is welcome, but please ok it with me first. You can send me such responses by email: I'd like to receive them within a week of the relevant event.

**Seeking my help when you need it.** Stuff happens: if you need accommodation owing to personal upheavals, let me know--sooner rather than later--and we will find a way to help you manage the course. If I hear on the last day of class that you've been in crisis, there is not much I can do.

More generally, if you find yourself confused or concerned about material in the course, approaches and assignments, my feedback, or my intermittently legible handwriting, please come to office hours or approach me after class--again, sooner rather than later. Often a few words can clarify the situation and keep a small problem from ballooning. Of course you are also welcome to come talk further about issues that interest you!

## SCHEDULE

### Introduction

1/7	Introduction and overview: representing and comparing regional cultures
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### I. Southwest Louisiana: A Creole Culture

1/9	Introduction to Louisiana history and French Louisiana
Read	<i>Swapping Stories</i> , xxv-xlvi

1/14	Imagining modernization in Cajun country. How to read a film.
Pre-class film	<i>Louisiana Story</i> , dir. Robert Flaherty 1948. 1 hr 18 mins. Streaming on <a href="#">Ethnographic Video Online</a> , database accessible through the library catalogue.
<b>Due noon 1/13</b>	Response to <i>Louisiana Story</i> (400-500 words)
Extra	Boatright, Mody 1961. "The Oil Promoter as Trickster." In <i>Singers and Storytellers</i> , ed. Boatright et al., 76-91. Dallas: Texas Folklore Society

1/16	Rural tension and reciprocity: Cajun Mardi Gras
Read	Lindahl, Carl. "The Presence of the Past in Cajun Mardi Gras." <i>Journal of Folklore Research</i> 33 (1996):125-153. Library
Film	<a href="#">"Dance for a Chicken,"</a> dir. Patrick Mire, 1993.  Watch the trailer before class; we'll see excerpts of the film in class.
Extra	Lindahl, Carl. 2001. "A Note on Blackface." <i>Journal of American Folklore</i> 114: 248-254. Library  Ware, Carolyn E. 2001. " Anything to Act Crazy: Cajun Women and Mardi Gras Disguise." <i>Journal of American Folklore</i> 114: 225-247. Library

1/16	<b>Extra credit event</b>  <a href="#">Hollow</a> , an interactive documentary. Screening and discussion w/Director Elaine McMillion. 3:30-5:30 PM, Barbie Tootle Room, Ohio Union.  The stories of residents of McDowell County, West Virginia, as they cope with small-town job loss and brain drain.
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1/21	Race and class in New Orleans Mardi Gras
Read	Smith, Michael P. 2003. "Buffalo Bill and the Mardi Gras Indians." In <i>Mardi Gras, gumbo, and zydeco: readings in Louisiana culture</i> , ed. Marcia Gaudet and James C. McDonald, 16-25. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.
Film in class	"The New Orleans Black Indians: A Study of Arts," <i>Faces of Culture</i> , #23, PBS. 1983.

1/23	Creolization, language, and narrative
Read	<i>Swapping Stories</i> , 3-26 and part I (especially Mitchell, Abbey, and Matthews)
Film in class	<i>Swapping Stories</i> , selections

1/28	Stereotypes and cultural revival: music and food
Read	<p>Mark Mattern, <i>Acting in Concert: Music, Community, and Political Action</i>, 79-117. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998. Carmen</p> <p>Gutierrez, G. Paige. "The Social and Symbolic Uses of Ethnic/Regional Foodways: Cajuns and Crawfish in South Louisiana." In <i>Mardi Gras, Gumbo, and Zydeco: Readings in Louisiana Culture</i>. 134-149. Ed. Marcia Gaudet and James C. McDonald. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2003. Carmen</p>

1/30	After Katrina: environments of uncertainty
Read	Lindahl, Carl 2012. "Legends of Hurricane Katrina: The Right to Be Wrong, Survivor-to-Survivor Storytelling, and Healing." <i>Journal of American Folklore</i> 125: 139-176. Library.
Extra	<p>Rich, Nathaniel 2012. "Jungleland. The Lower Ninth Ward in New Orleans Gives New Meaning to Urban Growth." <i>The New York Times Magazine</i>, March 25. Library.</p> <p>Button, Gregory 2010. <i>Disaster Culture</i> "Damaged by Katrina, Ruined by Murphy Oil.," 89-107. "What We Don't Know Can't Hurt You," 127-147. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press. Carmen</p>
	Exam 1 distributed

2/2	Exam 1 is <b>due Sunday night</b> (or early Monday morning, just so long as it is there by the time I get up on Monday)
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2/4	Discuss Exam 1
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## II. Texas: A Border Culture (with a bit of California...)

2/6	Intro to Texas and border society
Read	Paredes, Américo. " <i>With His Pistol In His Hand</i> ," ch. 1.

2/11	A border hero and his songs
Read	Paredes, chs. 2-5; skim the last chapters.

2/13	Conflicts of memory
Read	Flores, Richard 2000. "The Alamo: Myth, Public History, and the Politics of Inclusion." <i>Radical History Review</i> 77: 91-103. Library

2/18	View <i>Lone Star</i> (dir. John Sayles, 1996) on own time.
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2/20	<i>Lone Star</i> analysis <b>due by midnight</b>
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2/25	Class and change in Mexican-American society
Read	<p>Reyna, José R. and María Herrera-Sobek. "Jokelore, Cultural Differences, and Linguistic Dexterity: The Construction of the Mexican Immigrant in Chicano Humor" In David R. Maciel and Maria Herrera-Sobek, eds. <i>Culture Across Borders: Mexican Immigration &amp; Popular Culture</i>, 203-226. Tucson: University of Arizona Press. 1998. Carmen.</p> <p>Limón, José E. "The Folk Performance of 'Chicano' and the Cultural Limits of Political Ideology." In Richard Bauman and Roger D. Abrahams, eds. <i>"And Other Neighborly Names": Social Process and Cultural Image in Texas Folklore</i>, 197-225. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981. Carmen.</p>

2/27	The Chicano movement in music and mural
Read	Latorre, Guisela. 2010. <i>Walls of Empowerment: Chicana/o Indigenist Murals of California</i> , ch. 2. Austin: University of Texas Press. Carmen.

3/4	Mutations of the corrido: migration and narcotrafficking Exam 2 distributed
Read	Herrera-Sobek, María. " <i>Corridos and Canciones of Mica, Migra, and Coyotes: A Commentary on Undocumented Immigration.</i> " In Stephen Stern and John Allan Cicala, eds. <i>Creative Ethnicity</i> , 87-104. Logan: Utah State University Press. 1991. Carmen
Pre-class film	"Al Otro Lado (To the Other Side)," dir. Natalia Almada, 2006. Streaming at <a href="http://drm.osu.edu">drm.osu.edu</a> .
Extra	See related website <a href="http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2006/alotrolado/">http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2006/alotrolado/</a>

3/6	Exam 2 in class
Read	Prepare for the exam. You may bring in your marked-up copy of the exam prompt plus one page of notes to turn in.

SPRING BREAK

3/18	Discuss exam 2
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**III. Appalachia: A Mountain Culture**

3/20	Introduction to Appalachia: representing the region
Read	Roberts, <i>Up Cutshin and Down Greasy</i> . Read part 1; browse part 2, which we'll come back to.

3/20	<p><b>Extra credit event</b></p> <p><a href="#">José E. Limón, "Critical Regionalism, Popular Culture, and the Uses of Literacies"</a></p> <p>4:30pm - 6:00pm, Thompson Library 165</p> <p>Comparative and autobiographical talk from a major scholar of Chicano culture, looking at education, popular culture, and regional identity in Appalachia and Mexican-American south Texas</p>
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3/25	Outsiders, aspirations, and propriety
Read	Arnow, Harriette Simpson. "The Goat Who Was a Cow." In <i>The Collected Short Stories of Harriette Simpson Arnow</i> , 19-30. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2005 (originally written ca. 1924). Carmen

3/27	Fairy tales and family relations: ogres, witchy women and fighting men
Read	<p>Sobol, Joseph Daniel. "Jack in the Raw: Ray Hicks." In <i>Jack in Two Worlds</i>, 3-26. Ed. William Bernard McCarthy. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. Carmen</p> <p>Lindahl, Carl. "Two Versions of "Rawhead and Bloodybones" from the Farmer-Muncy Family." <i>Journal of Folklore Research</i> 38(2001, 1/2): 55-57. "Rawhead and Bloodybones" as told by Glen Muncy Anderson, May 4,</p>



	1997. <i>Journal of Folklore Research</i> 38(2001, 1/2): 57-60. "Rawhead and Bloodybones" as told by Jane Muncy Fugate, June 3, 2000. <i>Journal of Folklore Research</i> 38(2001, 1/2): 60-67. (all three in the library in the same issue of JFR)
Extra	Lindahl, Carl. "The Uses of Terror: Appalachian <i>Märchen</i> -Telling, Folklore Methodology, and Narrator's Truth." <i>Fabula</i> 47 (2006): 1-13. Carmen

4/1	Labor and struggle in mining communities
	Portelli, Alessandro. "No Neutrals There: The Cultural Class Struggle in the Harlan Miners' Strike of 1931-32." In <i>The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories</i> , 216-240. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991. Carmen
Extra	<i>Harlan County, USA</i> , dir. Barbara Koppel, 1990. Streaming at <a href="http://drm.osu.edu">drm.osu.edu</a>

4/3	Music and migration, once more
	Rosenberg, Neil. "Bluegrass." In <i>Encyclopedia of Southern Culture</i> , eds. Charles Wilson and William Ferris, 993-994. Chapel Hill: UNC Press. Carmen  Williams, Michael Ann and Larry Morrissey 2000. "Constructions of Tradition: Vernacular Architecture, Country Music, and Auto-Ethnography" <i>Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture</i> 8: 161-175. Library
Extra	Cantwell, Robert. <i>Bluegrass Breakdown: The Making of the Old Southern Sound</i> , ch.3. 60-90. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. 2d ed., 2003. Carmen

4/5	<b>Extra credit event</b>  <a href="#">Alex Chávez talk on Mexican-American pop music.</a> Time TBA, Ohio Union  Talk by hot young ethnomusicologist -- keynote address for the Folklore Students Association Conference (check out the performances of your fellow students as well!)
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4/8	Moving people
	Williams, Michael Ann 2002. "'When I Can Read My Title Clear': Anti-Environmentalism and Sense of Place in the Great Smoky Mountains." In <i>Culture, Environment, and Conservation in the Appalachian South</i> , ed. Benita J. Howell, 87-99. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003. Carmen
Extra	Roberts, Katherine 2013. "The Art of Staying Put: Managing Land and Minerals in Rural America." <i>Journal of American Folklore</i> 126: 407-33. Library.

4/10	Moving mountains
	Hufford, Mary 2002. "Reclaiming the Commons: Narratives of Progress, Preservation, and Ginseng." In <i>Culture, Environment, and Conservation in the Appalachian South</i> , ed. Benita J. Howell. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. Carmen

4/15	Appalachian college students and Appalachian Ohio today  Guest speaker: Cassie Patterson, Assistant Director of the Center for Folklore Studies, co-principal investigator of The Appalachian Project, Ohio: How I Got to College.
Read	Portelli, Alessandro. "It was Supposed to Be Happening in Berkeley: The 1960s Meet Eastern Kentucky." In <i>The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue</i> , 199-231. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997. Carmen

4/17	Are we America? Appalachian images in circulation
Read	Krenn, Michael L. 2010. "Domestic Politics and Public Diplomacy: Appalachian Cultural Exhibits and the Changing Nature of U.S. Public Diplomacy, 1964-1972." In Kenneth A. Osgood and Brian C. Etheredge, eds. <i>The United States and Public Diplomacy: New Directions in Cultural and International History</i> , 315-343. Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff.

4/27	Final takehome exam due in Carmen dropbox
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## **AND SOME MORE DETAILS**

### **The General Education Requirement**

This course counts for the old G.E.C. Capstone requirement and the new G.E. Cross-Disciplinary Seminar. The "Expected Learning Outcomes" prescribed for the latter are as follows:

1. Students understand the benefits and limitations of different disciplinary perspectives.
2. Students understand the benefits of synthesizing multiple disciplinary perspectives.
3. Students synthesize and apply knowledge from diverse disciplines to a topic of interest.

This course fulfills the capstone requirement by asking you to synthesize both contributions from different disciplines—folklore, history, literary studies, ethnomusicology, anthropology, and others—in order to address issues of general importance in the contemporary world. We'll treat *all* sources as primary sources: that is, whether documentary film, analytical scholarship, or fiction, we'll consider not only the information imparted but the agendas, perspectives, and representational strategies of the source in question. Questions key to the GE experience include

- How do local traditions interact with national and global frameworks?
- How can we reconcile the insider's experience of local culture as unique and distinctive with the evidence of structural commonalities and borrowings among different regions?
- How do economic and political change affect cultural practices?
- Why and how do some regions and social groups become stereotyped, and how does this affect their status and rights in the nation-state?

### **The Folklore Minor**

This course also counts as an elective in the folklore [minor](#) (and in the folklore concentration in the Comparative Studies major). If you are interested in further folklore courses or activities, check out the Center for Folklore Studies [website](#).

## **Contact information and office hours**

I am of a certain age: email is my default mode of communication.

Office hours: 1-3 Tuesdays, 2-4 Wednesdays in Mershon 104A (1501 Neil Ave., corner of 8th). Or by appointment. Office direct line 292-8683.

I have an administrative position and am affiliated with multiple units on campus. In consequence I have a manic meeting schedule, occasionally needing to rearrange my office hours. Therefore it is a good idea to let me know you're coming, and when to expect you. Nonetheless I am always happy to make time for you!

## **Grading scale:**

F. You and/or your assignments failed to materialize at the necessary minimum; written work was not done, not relevant to the assignment, or not your own.

D. You've done just enough work to slide through: done some reading, turned in all major assignments with minimal attention to their requirements, and been present in body and occasionally in soul.

C. You've done the course reading and turned in all required work on time and in the spirit of the assignment. You've been present in both body and mind as a useful participant in the class. Your course assignments were of limited value, perhaps because of major problems with mechanics, organization, or logic in your writing, or perhaps because you have not thought very deeply about the material.

B. You've done everything required for a C, but have responded more fully to the demands of the course, both in class and in your writing. Your written work demonstrates your engagement with both the readings and class discussion. You've made progress in reading challenging material, drawing connections between different cultural forms and situations, and shaping your thinking through writing.

A. You've done everything required for a B. In addition, you've read actively, thought creatively, and written with style. I've learned something from you.

**Class Cancellation.** In the unlikely event of class cancellation due to emergency, I will contact you via email and request that a note on department letterhead be placed on the door. In addition, 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.

**Plagiarism.** Plagiarism is the representation of another's works 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. In accordance with university rules, all cases of suspected plagiarism will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. Be careful to credit your sources appropriately, especially when doing research on the Internet (come to me if you are not certain how to do this). And bear in mind that it is far less work to write the thing yourself than to plagiarize convincingly.

**Disability resources.** Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform me 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; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.