

Theorizing Folklore 1: Tradition and Transmission

English 7350.01 and 7350.11; CompStd 7350.01 (section code 7410)

WeFr 9:35AM - 10:55AM

Derby Hall 0038

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This course examines the transmission of cultural forms through time and space across social networks. Reviewing some of the principal approaches in folklore and related disciplines, we pay special attention to the tension between conservation and innovation, fixity and process. We look also at the interplay of conscious intentions and valuations with more inattentive or habitual forms of practice. As an extension of this dynamic, we look at the concept of tradition itself as a keyword of Western modernity, which circulates between general and scholarly usage and picks up ever more ideological baggage in the process. (We will do this first in order to clarify the stakes involved in speaking of tradition at all.) Finally, we'll run through a quick history of the "traditional" in modernity: its proliferations, codifications, reifications, revitalizations, and appropriations.

Readings include theoretical texts as well as ethnographic case studies from a variety of cultural and social settings. They are intended to open up avenues of inquiry for you rather than to give you mastery of a particular theoretical tradition. Students will share in sustaining discussion and write a research paper on a topic relevant to their own interests. This course fulfills the core theory requirement of the Graduate Interdisciplinary Specialization in Folklore. For more information, see http://cfs.asc.ohio-state.edu/grad_options.

REQUIRED READINGS

Please bring the readings with you to class as far as possible!

Books ordered at SBX:

Vladimir Propp. *Morphology of the Folktale*, 2d. ed. Austin: University of Texas Press. 1968 (1928).

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

Foster, Michael Dylan. *Pandemonium and Parade: Japanese Monsters and the Culture of Yokai*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. 2009.

Michael F. Brown. *Who Owns Native Culture?* Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press. 2003

Online readings:

Most readings will be found online through the journal or book title in the OSU library catalogue. (Note that journals are sometimes in multiple repositories depending on the year of publication.) Readings marked CARMEN are in fact in Carmen, under Content.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

All assignments must be completed as described below for a passing grade. Students enrolled in English 7350.02 will do all the required work *except for* the individual research project.

1. Course participation. 50%

- being present and on time and awake in class, having relevant contributions to make in discussion. This entails having read the assigned texts and having read, considered, and occasionally contributed to the discussion on Carmen beyond the required minimum:
- opening discussions on *three* class dates by posting three points for discussion on Carmen by 9 PM on the evening *before* the relevant session. (Please email me with your three chosen dates; first come first serve.)
- sustaining discussions on *three* class dates by posting a substantive comment/followup *after* the relevant session, by midnight of the same date. What struck you and how might you clarify it? What did we miss and what questions remained open? Where might we go from here?
- responses on Carmen to other students' posted project drafts. You must comment with ideas or suggestions to *three* students after each of the *three* draft postings, responding to different students each time. (You're welcome to do more, of course.) Due the Friday after the Monday posting of drafts.

2. Individual project. 50%

A report on the career of a cultural object as it is constructed, transmitted, and valorized. (See pp. 9-10 for details.)

- 9/3. One page introducing your object as precisely as you can and laying out what makes it interesting to examine in the framework of tradition. Post to Carmen discussion page.
- 10/1. First iteration: ca. 5 double-spaced pages. Post to Carmen discussion page.

- 11/5. Second iteration: ca. 10 double-spaced pages. Post to Carmen discussion page.
- 12/7. Final version: ca. 12 double-spaced pages of well-shaped and stylish prose plus appendix and bibliography. In Carmen dropbox.

SCHEDULE

I. CLEARING THE AIR

8/22 Introduction

8/24 Tradition as keyword

Read Dorothy Noyes, "Tradition: Three Traditions." *Journal of Folklore Research* 46: 233-268. 2009.

Raymond Williams. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, rev. ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983. Introduction, 11-26; Tradition, 318-320. CARMEN

For refce [A companion to folklore \[electronic resource\] / edited by Regina F. Bendix and Galit Hasan-Rokem](#), Malden, MA : Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

Chapter 1. Dorothy Noyes, "The Social Base of Folklore," 13-39.

Chapter 3. Amy Shuman and Galit Hasan-Rokem, "The Poetics of Folklore," 55-74.

8/29 Tradition versus modernity

Read Tylor, E. B. "The Science of Culture." *The Origins of Culture*, 1-25. Gloucester MA: Peter Smith. 1970 (1871). CARMEN

R. Bauman and C. Briggs. *Voices of Modernity: Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality*. Cambridge: CUP, 2003. "Introduction," 1-18. CARMEN

T. Hofer "The Perception of *Tradition* in European Ethnology." *Journal of Folklore Research* 21 (1984):133-148.

Extra For comparative cases--China, Turkey, Kenya, India, see *Indian Folklife* no. 19.

[Folklore Abroad: On the Diffusion and Revision of Cultural Categories](#), 2005.

Schmitt, Jean-Claude. "On Superstition." *The Holy Greyhound*, 14-24. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1983. CARMEN

8/31 Tradition versus authorship and creativity

Read D. Hymes, "Folklore's Nature and the Sun's Myth" *Journal of American Folklore* 88 (1975): 345-369.

Valdimar Tr. Hafstein, "The Politics of Origins: Collective Creation Revisited." *Journal of American Folklore* 117 (2004): 300-315.

Extra Contemporary artists' views on complex authorship and co-creation:

[Push-me pull-you. Questions of co-authorship. Pew Center for Arts and the Heritage](#), 2012.

9/3 Project topic due by 9 AM

9/5 Tradition versus alienation

- Read** R. Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity*. Madison: UW Press, 1997. Ch 1. Poetry, History, and Democracy, 25-44
E. Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing traditions" in E. Hobsbawm & T. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, 1-14. Cambridge: CUP, 1983. CARMEN

9/7 Tradition versus history

- Read** R. Handler and J. "Tradition, Genuine or Spurious," *Journal of American Folklore* 97:385, (1984) pp. 273-290.
A. Portelli. *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History*. Albany: SUNY University Press, 1991. Ch. 1. "The Death of Luigi Trastulli." CARMEN
- Due** *Project comments*

II. HOW FORMS WORK

9/12 The robustness of forms

- Read** Propp
Extra Dorothy Noyes, "Fairytale Economics: Scarcity, Risk, Choice." CARMEN

9/14 Generating texts: the oral-formulaic approach

- Read** John Miles Foley. *Immanent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1991. Introduction, xi-xvi, and ch. 1 "From Traditional Poetics to Traditional Meaning," 1-37. CARMEN
- Extra** Lothar Ledderose. *Ten Thousand Things: Module and Mass Production in Chinese Art*. Princeton: PUP, 2001.

9/19 From entextualization to inscription

- Read** Abrahams, Roger D. "The Complex Relations of Simple Forms." In Ben-Amos, ed. *Folklore Genres*, 193-214. Austin: U of Texas Press. 1976. CARMEN
G. Urban and M. Silverstein, *Natural Histories of Discourse* "The Natural History of Discourse" pp.1-17. CARMEN
C. Briggs. "Metadiscursive Practices and Scholarly Authority in Folkloristics." *Journal of American Folklore* 106 (1993): 387-434.
- Extra** Susan Stewart. "Notes on Distressed Genres" in *Crimes of Writing*, 66-101.

9/21 The historic-geographic method

- Read** C.L. Von Sydow. von Sydow, Carl W. "On the Spread of Tradition." In *Selected Papers in Folklore*, 11-43. Copenhagen: Rosenkilde & Bagger. 1948 (1932). CARMEN
"Cupid and Psyche" from Apuleius to Afghanistan. Texts and commentaries on CARMEN
- Extra** Bengt Holbek, "On the Comparative Method in Folklore Research," *NIF Papers* No.3, 1992, Turku: Nordisk Institut for Folkedigtning. 3-20.

- 9/26 Recentering comparativism** (No class meeting-I am in Turkey)
Read J.B. Jackson. "[The Story of Colonialism: Rethinking the Ox-Hide Purchase in Native North America and Beyond.](#)" *Journal of American Folklore* in press.
- 9/28 No class**--will be made up with film night
Read Read Paredes and prepare your draft for Monday
- 10/1 1st project iteration due by 9 AM*
- 10/3 Comparison from above and below**
Read Paredes, Américo 1958. *"With His Pistol In His Hand": A Border Ballad and Its Hero.* Austin: University of Texas Press.
Extra C. Briggs. "What We Should Have Learned From Américo Paredes: The Politics of Communicability and the Making of Folkloristics." *Journal of American Folklore* 125 (2012): 91-110.
- 10/5 Identity and intimacy**
Read Ivan Colovic. "Who Owns the Gusle? A Contribution to Research on the Political History of a Balkan Musical Instrument." In *The Balkans in Focus: Cultural Boundaries in Europe*, ed. Sanimir Resic and Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, 59–81. Lund: Nordic Academic Press. 2002. CARMEN
Film Adela Peeva, dir. *Whose Is this Song?* 2003.
- 10/10 Comparing instances, tracing trajectories**
Read Urban, Greg. "The Role of Comparison in the Light of the Theory of Culture." In John R. Bowen and Roger Peterson, eds. *Critical Comparisons in Politics and Culture*, pp.90-109. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1999. CARMEN
 Urban, Greg. *Metaculture: How Culture Moves Through the World*. Minneapolis: U Minn Press, 2001. Intro and ch. 1. CARMEN
- 10/12 Sedimented conversations and other baggage in motion**
Read Morson, Gary Saul, and Caryl Emerson. *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics*. Stanford: Stanford U.P. 1990. Ch. 1. "Global concepts: Prosaics, Unfinalizability, Dialogue," 15-62. CARMEN
 Vaz, Francisco. "Tradition Without End." Ch. 2 of [A companion to folklore \[electronic resource\] / edited by Regina F. Bendix and Galit Hasan-Rokem](#), Malden, MA : Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.
- 10/17 Custody and authority**
Read Briggs, Charles. "Treasure Tales and Pedagogical Discourse in Mexicano New Mexico." *Journal of American Folklore* 86 (1985): 287-314.
 Herzfeld, Michael. *The Body Impolitic: Artisans and Artifice in the Global Hierarchy of Value*. Chicago 2004. Ch. 3. "Hostility and Cooperation." CARMEN
Extra Bourdieu, Pierre. "Authorized Language." *Language and Symbolic Power*, 107-116. Polity Press, 1991.
 Urban, Hugh. "The Torment of Secrecy: Ethical and Epistemological Problems in

the Study of Esoteric Traditions." *History of Religions* 37(1998):209-248.
Kaplan, Merrill. "Curation and Tradition on Web 2.0." *Tradition in the 21st Century: Locating the Role of the Past in the Present*, ed. R.G. Howard and T. Blank. Logan: Utah State University Press. 2013 forthcoming.

10/19 Resources for resistance

- Read** Gramsci, Antonio. "Observations on Folklore." *International Folkloristics*. Alan Dundes, ed. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield. 1999 (1930s) CARMEN
Williams, Raymond. "Dominant, Residual, and Emergent." *Marxism and Literature*, 121-127. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1977. CARMEN
Ramanujan, A.K. "Towards a Counter-System: Women's Tales." In Appadurai, Arjun Frank Korom and Margaret Mills, eds. *Gender, Genre, and Power in South Asian Expressive Traditions*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 1991. CARMEN
- Extra** Lombardi-Satriani, Luigi. "Folklore as Culture of Contestation." *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 11 (1974), 99-121.

10/24 Under and over the radar

- Read** P. Bourdieu. "Belief and the Body." *The Logic of Practice*, 66-69. Stanford. 1990 (1980)
R. Cantwell "Habitus, Ethnomimesis: A Note on the Logic of Practice." *If Beale Street Could Talk: Music, Community, Culture*. Urbana: Illinois, 2008. 246-264. CARMEN.
Noyes, D. "Aesthetic is the Opposite of Anaesthetic: On Tradition and Attention." Under submission to the *Journal of Folklore Research*. CARMEN

10/26 No class: American Folklore Society Annual Meeting.

Read Foster for Monday

III. THE HISTORY OF TRADITION IN MODERNITY

10/31 From belief to knowledge to entertainment

Read Foster

11/2 Custom and codification

- Read** Kelley, Donald R. 1990. "'Second Nature': The Idea of Custom in European Law, Society, and Culture." *The Transmission of Culture in Early Modern Europe*, 131-172. Anthony Grafton and Ann Blair, eds. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. CARMEN
Cohn, Bernard. "Representing Authority in Victorian India." In Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge 1983. CARMEN
- Extra** Bourdieu, Pierre. "Codification." *In Other Words*, 76-86. Stanford 1990. CARMEN

11/5 2d iteration due

11/7 Self-fashioning, national and mobile

- Read** Bryant, Rebecca. "The Soul Danced into the Body: Nation and Improvisation in Istanbul." *American Ethnologist* 32(2005): 222-38.
- Williams, Andréa N. "African American Literary Realism, 1865-1914." In *A Companion to African American Literature*. Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture. Edited by Gene Andrew Jarrett. 185-199. Malden, MA: Blackwell. 2010. (See esp. discussion of "local color" literature.)

11/9 Expansion, choice, abundance

- Read** Herrmann Bausinger. *Folk Culture in a World of Technology*, tr. Elke Dettmer. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1990 (1961).. Chs. 3 and 4, "Temporal Expansion," "Social Expansion." CARMEN
- Due** *Comments on 2d drafts*

Somewhere in here: Film night to see Mondovino (Jonathan Nossiter, 2004)

11/14 Revitalization and revival

- Read** Jackson, Jason Baird. 2004. "Recontextualizing Revitalization: Cosmology and Cultural Stability in the Adoption of Peyotism among the Yuchi," pp. 183-205, in *Reassessing Revitalization Movements: Perspectives from North America and the Pacific Islands* (Michael E. Harkin, ed.). University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln. CARMEN
- Wilce, J.M. "[Sacred Psychotherapy in the "Age of Authenticity": Healing and Cultural Revivalism in Contemporary Finland.](#)" *Religions* 2 (2011): 566-589. <http://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/2/4/566>
- Extra** Gao, Bingzhong. "[Chinese Everyday Life and \(Post\)Modern Encounters: A Story of 'Cultural Survivals'.](#)" *Culture Archives and the State: Between Nationalism, Socialism, and the Global Market* (Working Papers of the Center for Folklore Studies, v. 1)

11/16 Heritagization: identity and profit

- Read** Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. "Intangible Heritage as Metacultural Production." *Museum International* 56 (2004):52-64.
- Hafstein, Valdimar Tr. "Cultural Heritage." [A companion to folklore \[electronic resource\] / edited by Regina F. Bendix and Galit Hasan-Rokem](#), Malden, MA : Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. Ch. 26.
- Extra** Utz Jeggle and Gottfried Korff, "On the Development of the Zillertal Regional Character: A Contribution to Cultural Economics," in *German Volkskunde*, ed. J.R. Dow and H. Lixfeld. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986. 124-39.

11/21 No class Tvgv break

11/23

- Read** Experience tradition! (Both large dinners and family dynamics are best left undeconstructed, c.f. Orvar Løfgren, "The Great Christmas Quarrel and Other Family Traditions.") Do also read Brown.

11/28 Appropriation and propertization

Read Brown (see also his website <http://web.williams.edu/go/native/>)

Extra Skyrdstrup, Martin. "Cultural Property." [A companion to folklore \[electronic resource\] / edited by Regina F. Bendix and Galit Hasan-Rokem](#), Malden, MA : Wiley-Blackwell, 2012 ch.

11/30 Containment strategies

Read Dorothy Noyes, "Heritage, Legacy, Zombie: How to Bury the Undead Past." *Intangible Rights: Cultural Heritage and Human Rights*, ed. Deborah Kapchan. University of Pennsylvania Press forthcoming.

12/3 Now what? Virality vs. stickiness; preserving vs. remixing; style vs. stigma.

Read [A companion to folklore \[electronic resource\] / edited by Regina F. Bendix and Galit Hasan-Rokem](#), Malden, MA : Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. Ch. 1. Dorothy Noyes, "The Social Base of Folklore," 13-39, esp. final section

12/7 *Final project in Carmen dropbox*

COURSE POLICY BOILERPLATE

Office hours T 1:30-3:30, W 1:30-3:30 at the **Mershon Center**, 104A, 1501 Neil Ave. (corner of 8th and Neil), 292-8683. Or by appointment or by telephone. Because I run around between offices and have a manic meeting schedule, it is always best to try me first by email, and even during regular office hours it's helpful if you let me know when you're coming. But I am always glad to see you.

Attendance is up to you, but affects your grade both directly (via your participation grade) and indirectly (via your ability to do the written work effectively). We need you here in the spirit as well as in the flesh. Announcements made at the beginning of class will not be repeated for latecomers, so it is also in your interest to arrive on time.

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. All cases of suspected plagiarism, in accordance with university rules, will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. Especially when doing research on the Internet, be extremely careful to credit your sources appropriately (come to me if you are not certain how to do this). And bear in mind that it is much less work to do your own thinking than to plagiarize convincingly.

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.

Disability resources. The Office for Disability Services, located in 150 Pomerene Hall, offers services for students with documented disabilities. Contact the ODS at 2-3307. If you require accommodation to do the work of the course, please let me know immediately.

INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS

- 9/3. One page introducing your object as precisely as you can and laying out what makes it interesting to examine in the framework of tradition. Post to Carmen discussion page.
- 10/1. First iteration: ca. 5 double-spaced pages. Post to Carmen discussion page.
- 11/5. Second iteration: ca. 10 double-spaced pages. Post to Carmen discussion page.
- 12/7. Final version: ca. 12 double-spaced pages of well-shaped and stylish prose plus appendix and bibliography. In Carmen dropbox.

Pick out a cultural object/practice--a text, performance, artifact, technique, routine, etc.--of limited complexity (i.e. a work, not a whole genre). Your project is to trace the career of this object as it is constructed, transmitted, and valorized across social time and space. Note that as the paper evolves your focus will probably shift and narrow. I'd like you to begin by thinking broadly, but you may then hone in where your data is richest or the questions most interesting.

You're going to turn in successive drafts of a report on this object, gradually sketching it out and filling it in. You'll begin by laying out questions and plans in the parts where you don't yet have any information. Your grade depends on how completely, how energetically, and how insightfully you carry out the assignment. Each iteration will count towards the final grade.

With the final draft, please provide a 1-page appendix on the research and writing process. Where did you get stuck and how did you shift strategies? How did a focus emerge? What were you unable to figure out with the time and resources available, and what ideally would you like to do to go forward?

Here are some questions for you to play with:

What is it?

Describe it as a social practice and process in a specific milieu.

Describe it as an entity --a movable recognizable bounded pattern

What are the challenges of accommodating these two framings?

What are the stakes?

Who cares about it? What alliances and conflicts are created by their varied investments? Who doesn't seem to care but is imbricated in it anyway?

What lineage does the tradition itself claim through citations and other indices--how does it authenticate and contextualize itself? What mythologies are attached to this object in origin legends, artistic or literary depictions, and other kinds of representation? What kinds of value, positive and negative, are attached to the object and how are they made to stick?

What are the expected or observable effects of how the object is framed--what work is the object being made to do?

What social factors seem to condition which agenda prevails?

The career of the tradition

When and how does it crystallize into something recognizable as the current object? How was it made transmissible or, alternatively, resistant to circulation?

What is the relationship between the social label and the phenomenon (sometimes the name persists but the practice changes; sometimes the practice is socially relocated and persists in a new framework).

Does it have inherent properties that constrain its fortunes? How does its point of emergence and its subsequent history constrain it? What old baggage does it carry? What has been lost? What has been introduced?

How is it pushed towards codification, towards flexibility, towards transformation, towards fragmentation?

When does it break down or change into something else, or how might it do so?

Where is it headed?