FOLK 101-900:
Introduction to Folklore (Online)
Summer Session 2019, W 7:00-8:55pm
Canvas site:
https://canvas.upenn.edu/courses/1445936

Linda J. Lee
Email: lindalee@sas.upenn.edu
Office Hours: In person or via videoconference, by appointment

This online course introduces students to the study of Folklore, its occurrence in daily life, and the scholarly analysis of its use in culture. As a discipline, Folklore explores expressive cultural forms in both traditional and modern societies, in small-scale groups where people interact face-to-face, as well as in large-scale, often industrial societies in which traditional themes, symbols, and forms occupy new positions in everyday life. We will study contemporary applications of folklore as they relate to the formation and maintenance of individual and group identity, belief, tradition, performance, stereotypes, and public display. These issues will emerge in our study of several folklore genres, including folk speech, jokes, superstitions, folktales, contemporary legends, material culture, and musical traditions. Through fieldwork and research assignments, students will gain the skills necessary to conduct an ethnography study and develop an understanding of the relationship between folk groups, folklore genres, and the issues they express.

The goals of this course are: 1) To understand key concepts in folkloristics and the study of folklore. 2) To recognize, identify, and analyze the forms of verbal, customary, and material folklore that you encounter in daily life. 3) To learn about folklore research methods, including comparative research, folklore collecting, documentation, and interpretation.

This course fulfills the Humanities & Social Sciences sector requirement.

Required Texts
You may purchase the required texts through the Penn Book Store or online retailers like Amazon. Ebook versions are available of both.


All other course materials will be available through Canvas. Some readings will be available on the Canvas site through Penn Library course reserves; others will be available on external Websites. You will find links to those articles and resources on Canvas.
Course Requirements
This course will be a mixture between synchronous and asynchronous activities. Synchronous means interacting in “real-time” with other students and the instructor through the online videoconferencing platform Zoom. Attendance at these sessions is required. The synchronous time will be approximately 2 hours per week. Asynchronous means watching the video lectures, participating in VoiceThread discussions, contributing to the discussion boards, and other activities within Canvas. The asynchronous time will be approximately 2 hours per week.

Our course is organized into 11 weekly modules. It is paced weekly to recreate the feeling of the traditional course setting. Each weekly module will have some components due before the synchronous session on Wednesday evenings and others due before midnight on Saturday. Many of the course activities can be viewed or completed on mobile devices like iPads and tablets.

If you add the course late, you must make up missed work by the end of week 3.

Grading Breakdown:

The grade breakdown will be as follows:

- **40%** Ongoing Involvement (participation in synchronous sessions, discussions, quizzes, #FolkloreThursday project, and other minor assignments)
- **25%** Short projects: Folklorist/Collector Biography, Digital Folklore Project
- **25%** Folklore Collection
- **10%** Folklore Collection Annotations
- **100%** Total

Ongoing Involvement (aka old-school attendance and participation) – 40%: The highest correlation to getting good grades in college is attendance! In addition to our synchronous sessions on Wednesday evenings, I expect you to participate in online course activities at least twice a week – once before the Wednesday session, and once after the Wednesday session. I can track your use of digital materials through Canvas, so I will take attendance based on your response to materials and assignments each week. Consequently, there are **no excused “absences”** in this course. Thus, missing a full week of online comments, quizzes, synchronous session participation, etc. will affect your Ongoing Involvement grade by 4 points. **If you miss more than two weeks of posting, for any reason, you may not pass this course.** If you experience technical difficulties, or a genuine emergency, you must contact me as soon as possible to discuss your status in the class.

You will be required to participate in the online course lectures, discussions, quizzes, and other activities. Participation will be evaluated by the frequency and depth with which you respond to the course materials. All weekly work should be completed by midnight Saturday; some assignments may have due dates earlier in the week.

- **Video lectures:** You are expected to view the video lectures **before** the synchronous session on Wednesdays. Each weekly module will have approximately three short video lectures. Some lectures will be delivered through VoiceThread, which will provide you
with the opportunity to respond to and ask questions. You will not be expected to respond to every question; however, regular contributions will improve your participation grade.

- **Quizzes**: Each week has a short quiz on the lecture material to assess your comprehension. These quizzes are due prior to the synchronous sessions each week.
- **VoiceThread discussions**: Some VoiceThreads will be discussion focused. You are expected to provide a minimum of two (2) comments via voice or video on every VoiceThread discussion.
- **Discussions boards**: For each discussion board prompt, you will be expected to post a response, and then comment on at least two peers’ posts. Most weeks will have two discussions, and in most cases, you will not be able to see others’ posts until you post your contribution. Your initial contributions should be posted before noon on Fridays, and your replies should be posted by end of day on Saturdays.
- **#FolkloreThursday Project**: To become aware of the folklore around you, you will engage in a semester-long project connected to #FolkloreThursday, a global movement in which folklorists and folklore enthusiasts share all things folklore. Each week, you will share and comment on something you have found.
- **Self-assessment**: In week 5, you will submit a self-assessment and set of goals for your participation for the rest of the course.

Overall, be prepared to engage not just with the material but also with your classmates’ ideas. And try to have fun!

*Written Work*

Written work for the course will include several short assignments that will involve fieldwork and library research. You will engage in fieldwork with a folk group of your choice and, from that fieldwork, produce a short folklore collection. You will also do library research about a subset of your collected materials and produce extended comparative annotations for those items. Formal course work will also include two short essays (a biography of an influential folklore scholar or collector, and an examination of a digital folklore trend). Additional information about these assignments will be available on Canvas.

You will be expected to complete all assignments on time. No late work will be accepted without prior approval at least 24 hours in advance. If you anticipate circumstances that will prevent you from submitting an assignment on time, please be sure to get in touch with me in advance, when I will be more predisposed to be accommodating. Failure to submit an assignment without an approved extension will result in an automatic 0 for that assignment.

*Grade Dispute Policy*

If you do not understand the reason you received a specific grade on any assignment, I encourage you to discuss your concerns with me. Often, a brief conversation will be enough to clarify any ambiguity. If you believe that a grade should be reconsidered, please first take time to review my comments and then follow these instructions:

- Wait at least 24 hours after receiving the grade but no more than 1 week to talk to me.
- Write me an explanation, no more than 500 words, of the reasons why you believe you deserve a different grade (refer to the assignment instructions in order to best make your case).
• Include the original evaluation and all assignment materials with your explanation.

If you do these things, I will reevaluate your assignment. Please note, however, that there is no guarantee that your grade will improve, and every possibility that it will not.

**Plagiarism Warning**
The University of Pennsylvania defines plagiarism as “using the ideas, data, or language of another without specific or proper acknowledgement. Example: copying another person’s paper, article, or computer work and submitting it for an assignment, cloning someone else’s ideas without attribution, failing to use quotation marks where appropriate, etc.” *Plagiarism in any form will not be tolerated and will result in failure of the course and academic disciplinary action through the Office of Student Conduct.* Please familiarize yourself with the University’s Code of Academic Integrity ([http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/osl/acadint.html](http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/osl/acadint.html)). Please speak with me if you do not know how to cite sources correctly.

**Disclaimer**
All information on this syllabus is correct as of the beginning of the semester. Some things may change during the course of the semester. The only way that you can make certain that you will be aware of any changes is to regularly attend class meetings.
Schedule for FOLK 101: Introduction to Folklore

Week 1 (May 28-June 1): Introductions: What Is Folklore? And Who Are the Folk?
- Watch: Welcome to Intro to Folklore!
- VoiceThread: Introduce yourself!
- Readings:
  - “What is Folklore?” *The Folklore Wiki*, American Folklore Society
  - Alan Dundes, “What is Folklore?” in *The Study of Folklore*, 1-3
  - Lynne S. McNeill, *Folklore Rules*, preface, chapters 1, 4
  - Elliot Oring, “On the Concepts of Folklore”
- Lectures:
  - What is folklore?
  - Who are the folk?
  - What does folklore do?
  - Quiz week 1
- Discussions:
  - What is folklore?
  - Multiple existence and variation
- #FolkloreThursday project

Week 2 (June 2-8): Folk Groups, Identity, and Collecting Folklore
- Readings:
  - Alan Dundes, “Defining Identity through Folklore”
  - William Hugh Jansen, “The Esoteric-Exoteric Factor in Folklore”
  - Diane Tye, “What’s under the kilt? Intersections of Ethnic and Gender Performativity”
  - Montana Miller, *FCDA*, “Face-to-Face with the Digital Folk: The Ethics of Fieldwork on Facebook” (212-31)
- Lectures:
  - Folklore and identity
  - Ethnic groups and ethnic folklore
  - Genres of folk speech
  - Quiz week 2
- Discussions:
  - Ethics in fieldwork
  - Ethnic folk groups and ethnic folklore
  - You know you’re from XXX when ….
- #FolkloreThursday project
Week 3 (June 9-15): Proverbs, Riddles, Jokes, and Humor

- Readings
  - Sheila Bock, “Ku Klux Kasserole and Strange Fruit Pies: A Shouting Match at the Border in Cyberspace”
  - Simon Bronner, *FCDA*, “The Jewish Joke Online: Framing and Symbolizing Humor in Analog and Digital Culture” (199-49)
  - Cathy Lynn Preston, “Folklorists Do It Orally: The Cultural Appropriation and Socio-Sexual Politics of Verbal Play”

- Lectures:
  - Interpreting folklore
  - Analyzing proverbs
  - Riddles and other joking genres
  - Quiz week 3

- Discussions:
  - Share a joke
  - Share a proverb

- #FolkloreThursday project
- Short paper 1: Folklorist/collector biography due

Week 4 (June 16-22): Performance, Tradition, and Folk Culture in the Digital Age

- Readings:
  - Simon J. Bronner, “Toward a Definition of Folklore in Practice”
  - Anthony Bak Buccitelli, *FCDA*, “Performance 2.0: Observations toward a Theory of the Digital Performance of Folklore” (60-84)
  - Lynne S. McNeill, *FCDA*, “Real Virtuality: Enhancing locality by enacting the small world theory” (85-97)

- Lectures:
  - From Xeroxlore to Digital Folklore
  - Performance and Tradition in the Digital Age
  - Digital memes and image macros
  - Quiz week 4

- Discussions:
  - Folklore in a digital context
  - Digital performance of folklore
  - Rethinking locality in digital folklore

- #Folklore Thursday project
Week 5 (June 23-29): Telling Stories 1: Prose Narratives, Folktales, and Myths

- Readings:
  - Vladimir Propp, excerpt, *Morphology of the Folktale*
  - Maria Tatar, “Sex and Violence: The Hard Core of Fairy Tales”
  - Jeana Jorgensen, “Sorting Out Donkey Skin (ATU 510B): Toward an Integrative Literal-Symbolic Analysis of Fairy Tales”
  - Kirin Narayan, Introduction and chapter 1, *Mondays on the Dark Night of the Moon*
  - William Bernard McCarthy, selections, *Cinderella in America*

- Lectures:
  - Prose forms of folk narrative
  - Creation Myths
  - Studying folk and fairy tales
  - Quiz week 5

- Discussions:
  - Analyze a folktale
  - Folktales in context: Himalayan foothill folktales
  - Gender in folktales

- #FolkloreThursday project

Week 6 (June 30-July 6): Telling Stories 2: Urban Legends, Fake News, and Ostensive Practice

- Readings:
  - Bill Ellis, “‘Fake News’ in the Contemporary Legend Dynamic”
  - Lynne S. McNeill, “‘My friend posted it and that’s good enough for me!’: Source Perception in Online Information Sharing”
  - Jeffrey Tolbert, “‘The sort of story that has you covering your mirrors’: The Case of Slender Man”
  - Diane Goldstein, “The Commodification of Belief”
  - Mariamne Whatley and Elissa Henken, excerpt, *Did You Hear About the Girl Who...?: Contemporary Legends, Folklore and Human Sexuality*

- Lectures:
  - What’s a legend?
  - Urban legends of contamination
  - Ostension and legend tripping
  - Quiz week 6

- Discussions:
  - Share an urban legend
  - Fake news
  - #FolkloreThursday project
  - Short paper 2: Digital Folklore Project due
Week 7 (July 7-13): Superstitions, Ritual, and Rites of Passage
- Readings:
  - George Gmelch, “Baseball Magic”
  - Alan Dundes, “Wet and Dry, the Evil Eye: An Essay in Indo-European and Semitic Worldview”
  - Bill Ellis, “Why Is a Lucky Rabbit’s Foot Lucky? Body Parts as Fetishes”
  - Alan Dundes, “April Fool and April Fish: Towards a Theory of Ritual Pranks”
  - Clover Nolan Williams, “The Bachelor’s Transgression: Identity and Difference in the Bachelor Party”
- Lectures:
  - Superstitions and folk belief
  - Forms of superstitions
  - Sympathetic magic
  - Quiz week 7
- Discussions:
  - Share a superstition
  - Lifecycle rituals and rites of passage
  - #FolkloreThursday project
- OPTIONAL: Draft of one or more items from your folklore collection

Week 8 (July 14-20): Festivals and Foodways
- Readings:
  - Roger D. Abrahams, “An American Vocabulary of Celebrations”
  - Stephen Winick, “Mum’s the Word: An Introduction to Mumming”
  - Jared Lee Schmidt, “‘May the Fourth Be With You’: Star Wars Day, the Mass Media, and a Vernacular Hybrid Fan-Holiday”
  - LuAnne Roth, “Sexing the Turkey: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality at Thanksgiving”
  - Kathy Neustadt, “‘Born among the Shells’: The Quakers of Allen’s Neck and Their Clambake”
- Lecture/videos:
  - Festive behavior
  - Texas Tavola (34 min.)
  - Quiz week 8
- Discussions:
  - Texas Tavola discussion
  - Festive behavior
  - #FolkloreThursday project
Week 9 (July 21-27): Material Culture, Bodylore and Body Adornment
- Readings:
  - Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “Objects of Memory: Material Culture as Life Review”
  - Jeana Jorgensen, “The Body in Folklore Keynote”
  - Pravina Shukla, “Evaluating Saris: Social Tension and Aesthetic Complexity in the Textile of Modern India”
  - Tom Mould, “‘Running the Yard’: The Negotiation of Masculinities in African American Stepping”
- Lectures/videos:
  - What is bodylore?
  - Painted Bride (25 min.)
  - Quiz week 9
- Discussions:
  - Object of memory analysis
  - Clothing analysis
  - Extra credit: Painted Bride response
- #FolkloreThursday project
- Folklore Collection due

Week 10 (July 28-August 3): Folk Music, Murder Ballads, and Protest Songs
- Readings:
  - Benjamin Filene, “‘Our Singing Country’: John and Alan Lomax, Leadbelly and the Construction of an American Past”
  - John Greenway, “American Folksongs of Protest”
  - Stephen Winick, “From Wit and Mirth to Secret Songs of Silence: A Brief Introduction to Bawdy Songs”
- Lectures:
  - When is a song a folk song?
  - Types of Folksongs and folk music
  - Ballads and broadsides
  - Quiz week 10
- Discussions:
  - Murder ballads and “The Hanging Tree”
  - Protest songs and music
- #FolkloreThursday project
Week 11 (August 4-9): Folklore, Activism, and Social Change

- **Readings:**
  - Debora Kodish, “Cultivating Folk Arts and Social Change” and “Folk Arts of Social Change” online exhibit, Philadelphia Folklore Project
  - Linda Pershing, “Peace Work out of Piecework: Feminist Needlework Metaphors and The Ribbon around the Pentagon”
  - Valdimar Tr. Hafstein, “Intangible Heritage as Diagnosis, Safeguarding as Treatment”
  - Kate Black, “Kentucky Garden Stories: Planting Resistance”
  - Christine Garlough, “Folklore and Performing Political Protest: Calls of Conscience at the 2011 Wisconsin Labor Protests”

- **Lectures/videos:**
  - Knitting in public
  - *Look Forward and Carry on the Past: Stories from Philadelphia’s Chinatown* (26 min)
  - Quiz week 11

- **Discussions**
  - Folk arts and social change
  - Response to *Look Forward and Carry on the Past*

- Folklore Collection Annotations due

- #FolkloreThursday project and final reflection