



Folklore Program

Folklore Courses Academic Year 2023-2024

Fall 2023

FOLK 100 **Global Folklore**

Examines folklore from cultures around the world. Applies folklore studies concepts to explore folklore in students' everyday lives. Limited to three attempts.

ENGH 202 **Food and Folklore**

Students will examine the cultural contexts behind the food we eat (and the food we don't). Through examining definitions, reading online resources and articles, and observing the Folklore of Food all around them, students will gain an appreciation for the pervasiveness of this fascinating subject and the ways their own perception of foods influences their cultural lives and the lives of others. This course will make you ask questions, challenge preconceived notions and think critically about the role of food in human society.

ENGH 315 **Folklore and Folklife**

This course provides an introduction to different forms of vernacular culture, including oral/verbal, customary, and material folklore, and considers various interpretative and theoretical approaches to the examples of folk culture discussed. We will explore how folklore is both an unofficial body of cultural knowledge and aesthetic practice and a communicative process that shapes and reflects everyday experience. We will also learn methods of ethnography and field collection that we can use to uncover structures, functions, and meanings in expressive culture.

ENGH 316 **Changelings and Fairies**

Studies how traditional mythologies are reflected in English and American literature and other texts as themes, motifs, and patterns.

ENGH 591 / FOLK 501 **Adv. Introduction to Folklore and Folklife**

This course provides an introduction to different forms of vernacular culture, including oral/verbal, customary, and material folklore, and consider various interpretive and theoretical approaches to the examples of folk culture discussed. We will explore how folklore as both (1) an unofficial body of cultural knowledge and aesthetic practices and (2) as a communicative process shapes and reflects everyday experience. We will also learn methods of ethnography and field collection that we can use to uncover structures, functions, and meanings in expressive culture.

ENGH 412 / ENGH 591 / FOLK 550 Public Folklore

This course explores the theory and practice of arts and cultural programming in the public sphere. Readings, guest speakers, and focused discussions will illuminate a range of professional opportunities available to cultural workers of varied backgrounds: folklorists, museum specialists, community arts managers, or arts advocates. Readings, guest speakers from local non-profits and state and federal agencies, focused discussions, and hands-on assignments will augment skill building and provide opportunities for networking and professional development.

FOLK 560 / ENGH 415 / ENGH 591 Folk Arts and Artists

Examines the traditional arts of everyday life, such as festive foods, mementos and other objects of memory, textile arts, pottery, carving in wood and stone, roadside shrines, and more. Explores the folk aesthetics of group-based creativity through the lenses of biography, history, literature, and folklore studies. Considers traditional objects as narratives in material form. Examples drawn from multiple cultures as well as traditions in students' own lives.

Winter 2023/2024

TBD

Spring 2024

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ENGH 414 Folklore and the Supernatural

This course attempts to chart the uncanny—the inexplicable, the numinous, the spiritual—in our everyday lives. We'll think about ghosts, spirits, hauntings, visions, communion with the dead, monsters, encounters with the divine, UFOs, dream interpretation, magic, and more, not with the object of proving or disproving their existence or veracity, but rather to understand people's lived experiences and how individuals attempt to make sense of the uncanny around them. We'll interrogate the distinctions between belief/disbelief, discuss supernatural narrative genres, investigate the spaces/places where the supernatural erupts, and explore the relationships between the supernatural, technology, and popular culture.

ENGH484 Writing Ethnography

Ethnography has famously been termed "writing about culture." Over the course of the semester, students will write about places, communities, or individuals who share common experiences, interests, and concerns. They will conduct close research with some local culture, likely one of which the students are already a part. Students will learn how to design and conduct ethnographic fieldwork. This includes forming a research proposal, observing, interviewing, writing fieldnotes, transcribing interviews, securing permissions, reading secondary literature about the chosen field site and topic, collecting cultural artifacts, analyzing ethnographic data, and more.

FOLK 550 / ENGH 591/ENGH 412 Folklore and Festival Management

The first of a new two course sequence, Folklore and Festival Management is a collaboration between Mason's Folklore and Arts Management Programs and the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage. The spring course offers instruction in the history and methods of folklore and the production of cultural festivals. It is a prerequisite for the summer course that will give students hands-on training while working the Smithsonian Folklife Festival 2023.

FOLK 560/ENGH 591 Sense of Place

Sense of Place is a field of folklore scholarship that examines the relationship between material culture (i.e. homes, mementos, souvenirs, furniture) on the human perception of everyday experience. We all know when we feel that we are in place or at home, similarly, most Americans have had to struggle with feeling ill at ease after moving from one city to another or when traveling abroad. Sense of place scholarship considers how the material world influences human experiences and shape our perceptions of the world around us. This course will examine sense of place as it pertains to the development of social relations and community identity. We will consider how sense of place is shaped in fiction, and will read novels and short stories where place is privileged over plot and character development. We'll also explore ethnographic studies of communities where sense of place is grounded in a mythical/historical past and is actively promoted by community members. Many of our readings explore how the tensions between memory and modernity are played out in the construction of the sense of place. Thus we will consider collective and individual memory, viewed not only as recollections of past traditions and experiences, but as a means of actively engaging the contemporary, and by extension situating place in the landscape of modernity's paradoxes and contradictions.

FOLK 570/ ENGH 412/ ENGH 591 Appalachian Folklore

More than a century ago scholars, writers and journalists began capturing the national imagination with accounts of a largely fictive realm set in the southern mountains. This course explores the production of folk culture in American society from two perspectives: first, as a cultural practice of "othering," whereby elite or dominate groups marginalize particular populations in space and time by assigning "folk" attributes to them; and second as a continually emerging body of tradition that resists that social location and marginalization. We will use phenomenological theory, along with neo-Marxist models of culture and society to examine the case of Appalachia.