

Dr. Angus Kress Gillespie
Mon/Thr 12:35 to 1:55 pm
RAB 001, Douglass Campus

Rutgers University
Index Number 17333
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American Folklore **American Studies 01:050: 263:01**

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Learning Goals:

- Learn what folklore is and learn to identify different types of folklore
- Study critical theories relevant to folklore studies
- Employ folklore to gain insights into everyday life including popular culture

Academic Integrity Policy:

Students are responsible for understanding the principles of academic integrity fully and abiding by them in all their work at the University. Students are also encouraged to report alleged violations of academic integrity to the faculty member teaching the course in which the violation is alleged to have occurred.

List of Required Books:

Lynne S. McNeill, *Folklore Rules : A Fun, Quick and Useful Introduction to the Field of Folklore Studies*. Logan : Utah State University Press, 2013

James McCloy and Ray Miller, Jr., *The Jersey Devil*. Moorestown, New Jersey : Middle Atlantic Press, 1976.

Course Synopsis

Folklore is the traditional, unofficial, noninstitutional form of culture. It encompasses knowledge and beliefs transmitted in traditional forms by word of mouth or by customary examples. In the first part of the course we deal with the major genres of folklore including myth, legend, folktale, ballad, and folksong. Later in the course, we briefly take up Haitian Voodoo, a syncretic religion that originated in the Caribbean country of Haiti. It is based upon the merging of the beliefs and practices of West

African peoples and Roman Catholic Christianity. Still later in the course, we take up cryptozoology, the study of animals that may or may not exist. .

Course Requirements and Expectations

This is a reading-intensive course. Although only two books are assigned for the course, here are required readings for every class meeting, some of which is found on the Internet. Specific page numbers are assigned day by day. You are expected to do the reading for a given day before coming to class so as to be prepared to discuss that reading intelligently. Failure to do the readings will most likely lead to failure on exams and papers. Students who find this reading load excessive might want to seek out other academic pursuits.

There will be a midterm and a final exam. The exams will test your ability to identify key names, places, and phrases from the texts we have read and the documentary films that we have viewed. Regular attendance will be essential to your success in this course.

You are expected to have an active Rutgers email account @eden.rutgers.edu. You should have regular access to the internet. You will be expected to check Sakai several times a week.

Absence Policy

Time has meanings that speak loud and clear in any organization. It tells the organization whether you care or not. Efficient operation of the class and optimal educational results depend on all students being on time for class and maintaining a good attendance record. Excessive tardiness and/or absenteeism are grounds for a substantially lowered grade, no matter how well you do on the exams. An outstanding attendance record, on the other hand, along with vocal participation in class discussion, can augment a student's final grade. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of class. Please come up to the front of the room and check in before you take your seat. If you arrive late, be sure to check in after class before you leave.

Weather Emergency Information

In the event of adverse weather conditions, the number to call is 732.932.7799. This is the official recorded message for school closings at Rutgers University. Please be advised that the University is rarely closed except under severe conditions such as hurricane or blizzard. If the University is open, both residents and commuters are expected to attend all scheduled classes and exams. If you are not present when the University is officially open, it will be counted as an UNEXCUSED ABSENCE. Please make your travel plans accordingly.

Office Hours

My office is in the basement of the Ruth Adams Building on the Douglass Campus, Room 024. The departmental telephone is 848.932.9174. My office hours are on Mondays and Thursdays from 2:00 to 3:00 pm.. If you cannot reach me at this time, please leave a message on my direct line at 848.932.1630, and I will contact you or you can email me (agillespie@amst.rutgers.edu).

Film Study

We shall be screening a number of important nonfiction documentary films. We will discuss the cultural contexts for these films (why they were made and what they tell us about the social concerns of the period) and the theoretical questions they raise, including drawing the line between fiction and non-fiction. Most importantly, we will ask the question: Is there such a thing as unbiased presentation? Since the quality of your written work will crucially depend upon first-hand knowledge of each film, we encourage you to view each film twice--once in class and later at the media room of the Douglass Library where the films will be placed on reserve after being shown in class. In addition, use of videotapes or DVD's on your own is encouraged (insofar as the films are available in these formats). Some of these you may wish to purchase or to borrow from your local public library. You should always try to view a film twice, since you pick up many subtleties the second time. In most cases, we will prepare a take-home study guide that will be put online. These study guides may prove useful in preparing for the examinations. They will not be turned in or graded, but they should be answered completely.

Grading

There will be a midterm exam halfway through the course which counts for 40% of your grade and a final exam during the exam period, which counts for 60% of your grade. However, attendance is also a factor. If you need to be absent from class for a legitimate reason, notify me either in advance or with proper documentation after the fact. Beyond this, however, you miss class at your own risk. Note that "legitimate reasons" include medical problems, family emergencies and the like; they do not include broken vehicles, scheduling problems at work, or late trains. Life sometimes does get in the way of attending class, but if you think you may be absent more than two or three times during the semester then it would be better if you took a different course.

Examinations

The midterm covers the first half of the course with a number of objective questions. The final covers the second half of the course. In addition to a number of objective (multiple choice) questions, the final will also give you a chance to write two essays to demonstrate your skill at handling ideas. Attendance at both the midterm and final examinations is mandatory and required. This obligation must have top priority if you expect to receive credit for the course. Be sure to arrange your work schedule and your personal schedule accordingly. If you do not take the exams, you will not get credit for the course. The exams will be given *at the scheduled time only*. There are no alternate dates or make-ups. You may be excused only for illness that requires hospitalization or a documented death in your immediate family. Unless there is a drastic emergency of this nature that can be substantiated and documented, we expect you to attend and take the exams on schedule.

In the belief that proper crib preparation is indistinguishable from studying, I have institutionalized and legalized the crib sheet for *both the midterm and the final exams* in this course. You are allowed to use a legal crib sheet. My purpose is to reduce exam

anxiety and to encourage good study habits. The rules are as follows:

- @ Both sides of a single 8 1/2" X 11" piece of paper may be used.
- @ Cribs must be written by hand--not typed--and signed.
- @ The crib sheet is to be turned in with the exam.

Term Paper

Papers will be evaluated on their merit--extra credit is not given merely because papers were completed. Papers must be generated on the computer or typewritten. Use Times New Roman in 12-point type with one-inch margins all around. No cover sheet please. Simply type your name, the course name, the instructor's name, and the date, each item on its own line, single-spaced, in the upper right hand corner of page 1. Double space down to the paper's title. Double space thereafter. Follow either the MLA (Modern Language Association) or Chicago Manual of Style guidelines for the manuscript, citations, and works cited (bibliography). Grading will be based on content, organization, development, style, and correctness. Carefully proofread for spelling, typography, punctuation, and grammar.

We are looking for a 1750 word paper (about 7 typewritten pages) that meets the criteria below. Papers are due at the start of class on the last day of class. Late papers will not be accepted. Papers will be graded and returned to you at the final exam. A print version of your paper is required. An electronic submission may not be substituted. In other word, you cannot email your paper to me as an attachment.

If you are not aware of this already, one of the primary goals of the course is to make you realize that folklore applies to yourself. You already have it; it is a part of your life. Whether at school, in the workplace, around the house, during the calendar year, in the foods you eat, or in the stories you tell, you express yourself and participate in a variety of cultural practices and beliefs such as those described in the course.

You may wish to take up some ethnic custom or practice of your own, or you may have good luck in collecting a particular urban belief narrative from a friend or neighbor. Others may prefer to observe and record a traditional music performance. Still others may collect anecdotes about bizarre events, perhaps, for example, a sighting of the Jersey Devil. In any event the basis for your paper should be *data drawn from your own observations and fieldwork, not something from a book or the Internet*. Whatever tyour topic, you should record the data carefully and cite your sources. Rather than summarize the ideas of your informants, it is always best to work with *direct verbatim quotations*. It is recommended that you make use of small portable voice recorder for this purpose.

Having collected you data (your own fieldwork), the next step is to figure out in your own words what it means (analysis). You have to think about what you have collected and come up with a point of view, an argument, a thesis about its meaning. *You should not have to do research in the library or on the Internet*. The information obtained through class readings and lectures should have provided you with everything

you need to come up with a thoughtful and meaningful *personal essay*.

In evaluating your paper, we will ask a number of questions. Did you record enough data—especially quotations—to make your document useful? What is there about this lore that is pleasing? What makes it artistically powerful or persuasive? How does the lore function in the lives of the people who possess it? What needs does it meet in their lives? What does the lore tell us about the values and attitudes of the individuals and the groups to which they belong? Does the essay's title clarify its specific focus?

Format. Papers should be word-processed, double spaced, in Times New Roman, 12-point font, and have one-inch margins. Your name and the name of the book you are analyzing should be placed in the upper right-hand corner of your first page. Be sure to place page numbers on each page. Please staple all pages together. Please do not use folders or binders, since they are too bulky.

Sources and Plagiarism. The paper should reflect your own analysis of the film in your own words. I do not expect you to use any outside sources. It should be easy to avoid copying the words of others because this is basically a fieldwork assignment, not a research assignment. You do not have to use footnotes or a bibliography. This paper should be purely your own work. If you do use any sources for words or ideas, you must give them full credit in footnotes or endnotes. Plagiarism is a serious offense in this course and according to Rutgers University regulations. If you appropriate another person's ideas or words in any manner whether by restatement or direct quotation without acknowledging your source, you will commit plagiarism. The penalties for plagiarism in this course are as follows: a zero on any plagiarized writing, which may result in failure of the course and a report to the dean.

Classroom Etiquette

You should be considerate of your instructors and classmates. For your own benefit you should try to arrive on time for each class. If you are unavoidably late, please enter by the rear door so as not to disrupt everyone else's viewing. Again for your own benefit you should stay for the complete screening of each film. If something comes up such that you must leave early, speak to me about the situation beforehand, and leave by the rear entrance. Please turn off all cell phones, watch alarms and pagers and put them away during class. Please do not use cell phones to send or receive text messages during class.

The use of laptop computers during class is only for taking notes in this course. If you wish to use a laptop, *you must first get permission from me*. Then you must agree not to use your laptop to work on other courses, check your email, or engage in other distracting activities. I reserve the right to forbid laptop usage if it is abused or if it distracts me or other students.

Advising

I will do my best to keep an eye on you and to call you out if I think you look like you need help, but there are a lot of you and just one of me. It is therefore really up to you to come to me if you need help--on anything. I come to class early not just to take

attendance but also to be available to talk. I have brief office hours during the break, but we can set up appointments then for longer meetings at mutually convenient times. If you have course conflicts, I can arrange alternate meeting times, just ask. And don't be shy.

Advising is part of my job! I am happy to help you with course materials, paper and exam preparation, with planning your future, internships, picking a graduate school, and with navigating the Rutgers bureaucracy. Perhaps, most important, I'm a fairly good listener if you need someone safe to talk to, and I can help you find help if you

Notes about Computer Work

Assignments are due at the beginning of class. If you wait until the last minute to print out your paper, you rely on temperamental technology at your own risk. Be in control of the technology you use. "My computer (or pirnter) broke" and "I lost my flash drive" are not valid excuses. Back-up, print in a timely manner, and work far enough in advance that you have time to spare. Retain a back-up copy of work you turn into me.

Schedule of Classes

Thr Sept 4	INTRODUCTION TO FOLKLORE I In-Class PowerPoint Presentation
Mon Sept 8	INTRODUCTION TO FOLKLORE II In-Class PowerPoint Presentation Read McNeill, Chapter 1, "What is Folklore?"
Thr Sept 11	INTRODUCTION TO FOLKLIFE In-Class PowerPoint Presentation Read McNeill, Chapter 2, "What Do Folklorists Do?"
Mon Sept 15	INTRODUCTION TO MYTH In-Class DVD "The Greek Gods" (50 minutes) Complete Worksheet Read McNeill, Chapter 3 "Types of Folklore"
Thr Sept 18	INTRODUCTION TO LEGEND In-Class DVD "John Henry" (54 minutes) Complete Worksheet
Mon Sept 22	URBAN LEGENDS, PART ONE In-Class PowerPoint Presentation
Thr Sept 25	URBAN LEGENDS, PART TWO In-Class PowerPoint Presentation

- Mon Sept 29 THE FOLKTALE, PART ONE
In-Class DVD “Hansel and Gretel” (50 minutes)
Complete Worksheet
- Thr Oct 2 THE FOLKTALE, PART TWO
In-Class DVD “Rapunzel” (50 minutes)
Complete Worksheet
- Mon Oct 6 THE BALLAD
Study of Classic Narratives Set to Music
Selected Recorded Examples in Class
- Thr Oct 9 FOLKSONGS OF THE SEA
American Sea Songs and Shanties
Selected Recorded Examples in Class
Read McNeill, Chapter 4, “Types of Folk Groups”
- Mon Oct 13 FOLKSONGS FROM THE RAILROADS
Work Songs, Story Songs, and Wrecks
Selected Recorded Examples in Class
Read McNeill, Conclusion, “What Do I Do Now?”
- Thr Oct 16 WOODY GUTHRIE
American Singer-Songwriter and Folk Musician
Selected Recorded Examples in Class
Review for Midterm Examination
- Mon Oct 20 MIDTERM EXAMINATION
- Thr Oct 23 FOLKSONGS OF THE COAL MINERS
Work Songs, Bar Songs, and Tragedies
Selected Recorded Examples in Class
- Mon Oct 27 FOLKSONGS OF THE COWBOYS
Songs of Cattle, Horses, and Men
Selected Recorded Examples in Class
- Thr Oct 30 FOLK RELIGION, PART ONE
In-Class DVD “Voodoo Rituals” (50 minutes)
Complete Worksheet
- Mon Nov 3 FOLK RELIGION, PART TWO
In-Class DVD “Voodoo Secrets” (50 minutes)
Complete Worksheet

Thr Nov 6	LEGENDARY BLUES FIGURE “The Search for Robert Johnson” (72 minutes) In-Class DVD Narrated by John Hammond
Mon Nov 10	UNEXPLAINED MYSTERIES, PART ONE In-Class DVD, “The Lost City of Atlantis” (50 minutes) Complete Worksheet
Thr Nov 13	UNEXPLAINED MYSTERIES, PART TWO In-Class DVD, “The Devil’s Triangle” (50 minutes) Complete Worksheet
Mon Nov 17	FOLK BELIEFS In-Class DVD, “Zombies” (50 minutes) Complete Worksheet
Thr Nov 20	CRYPTOZOLOGY, PART ONE In-Class DVD, “The Jersey Devil” (50 minutes) Complete Worksheet
Mon Nov 24	CRYPTOZOLOGY, PART TWO In-Class DVD, “American Werewolf” (50 minutes) Complete Worksheet
Tues Nov 25	CRYPTOZOLOGY, PART THREE In-Class DVD, “American Loch Ness” (50 minutes) Complete Worksheet
Mon Dec 1	CRYPTOZOLOGY, PART FOUR In-Class DVD, “Bigfoot” (50 minutes) Complete Worksheet
Thr Dec 4	CRYPTOZOLOGY, PART FIVE In-Class DVD, “Sasquatch” (50 minutes) Complete Worksheet
Mon Dec 8	CRYPTOZOLOGY, PART SIX In-Class DVD, “Chupacabra” (50 minutes) Complete Worksheet Term Papers Due Review for Final Examination
Tues Dec 16	FINAL EXAM 1:00 to 3:00 pm There are no alternates dates or makeups. Exam must be taken at the scheduled time.

