

Course Outline (go to <http://tinyurl.com/folk201>)
FOLK 201: Oral Literature
Storytelling and Other Verbal Genres

Sept. 13 – Dec. 3, 2010
M & W, 4:00-5:15
CE 309

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Calendar Description

Analysis of storytelling, myths, folktales, legends, personal experience narratives, jokes, riddles, rhymes, and proverbs.

What this means:

The main purpose of Folk 201 is to help students understand the genres and sub-genres of folk literature. Upon completion of this course you should be able to effectively identify, analyze and interpret folk literature texts collected within your own culture and internationally. Furthermore, the course hopes to show how elements of folk literature are still used today in popular culture.

Required Texts (at the bookstore)

Propp, Vladimir. *Morphology of the Folktale*. 2nd ed. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971.

Zipes, Jack, ed. *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*. 3rd Edition. New York: Bantam, 2003.

Please note: apart from the introduction there are few specific readings from this book: however, it is the book from which you draw the tale for your first assignment and you will be expected to have read a substantial number of tales to get a sense of 'folk literature.'

Other Required Readings (on reserve at the library or available online)

Go to <http://tinyurl.com/folk201> for live links to the online sources (marked with an * below)

- * Bascom, William. 1965. "The Forms of Folklore: Prose Narratives." *Journal of American Folklore* 78.307: 3-20. (online)
- * Blache, Martha. 1999. "The Anecdote as a Symbolic Expression of the Social and Cultural Milieu of Journalists." *Folklore* 110: 49-55.
- Brodie, Ian. 2004. "Einstein's Pants and Dr. X's Comps: Straddling the Line Between Gossip and Legend." *Culture & Tradition* 26: 11-25.
- * Cody, Cornelia. 2005. "'Only in New York': The New York City Personal Experience Narrative." *Journal of Folklore Research* 42.2: 217-244.
- Ellis, Bill. 2001. "What is a Legend?" and "When is a Legend?" *Aliens, Ghosts and Cults: Legends We Live*. 5-25; 58-74. Jackson: UP of Mississippi.
- Holbek, Bengt. 1989. "The Language of Fairy Tales." *Nordic Folklore: Recent Studies*. Ed. Reimund Kvideland and Henning K. Sehmsdorf. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP. 40-62.

- McDavid, Jodi and Ian Brodie. 2005. "Vladimir Propp, Meet Happy Gilmore: Adam Sandler and Vernacular Cinema." *Culture & Tradition* 27 (2005): 7-23.
- * Mukerji, Chandra. 1978. "Bullshitting: Road Lore among Hitchhikers." *Social Problems* 25.3: 241-52.
- * Mullen, Patrick B. 1972. "Modern Legend and Rumor Theory." *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 9.2-3: 95-109.
- Olrik, Axel. "The Epic Laws of Folk Narrative." *The Study of Folklore*. Ed. Alan Dundes. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965. 129-141.
- * Stahl, Sandra K.D. 1977. "The Personal Narrative as Folklore." *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 14.1-2: 9-30.
- * Stone, Kay. 1975. "Things Walt Disney Never Told Us." *Journal of American Folklore* 88.347: 42-50.

Evaluation

(See detailed descriptions below)

Analysis assignment	40%	October 25
Second assignment	40%	November 24
Final Exam	20%	TBD [In the scheduled exam period]

Assignments

Analysis Assignment (40%) – due October 25

Drawing from Zipes, you will select a particular *märchen*. First, you are to identify it using the *Tale Type Index and the Motif Index*. Then, you will find three other variants of the tale from three different cultures (see listings next page). These variants will then be compared and contrasted: how are they similar? how are they different? You will then use the *Morphology of the Folktale* to analyse the structure of the *Märchen*. When you are done, you will have a thoroughly annotated tale. Finally, you will present your tale in a short in-class presentation on October 25th.

A portion of class time on **September 22nd** will be devoted to discussing the assignment.

Second Assignment: (40%) – due November 24

Choose ONE of the following

1. *Ethnographic Essay*: Following folklore collecting standards, you will collect an example of an oral performance (narrative or non-narrative, but not a musical performance), which you will then transcribe. You will analyse the collected text by identifying what genre it most closely resembles and what other genres it is related to, drawing your arguments from the readings. If possible, you will search the libraries and the Beaton Institute archives for variations of the text. You will also describe the context in which the text was performed: who was there, what was the occasion, how was it received, what other devices (gestures, etc.) were employed in the telling, etc. You will present the performer (the person from whom you collected the text) by giving a brief biographical sketch and a history of his or her role of "performer" of this and similar materials, and the folk group within which he or she is operating. Finally, you will write a short reflection on why this particular text was and is performed, by this particular performer and by others. The biographical sketch and the reflection may be informed by an interview with the performer, although there

should be evidence of your own interpretation as well. You will also present your text in a short in-class presentation in the last week of classes.

2. *Research Essay*: Taking a tale from folk tradition, you are to examine how that tale has been used in a popular culture mediation (popular novel, live-action film, animated film, cartoon series, parody, etc.). You have the option of either discussing the tale in one particular manifestation – for example, Little Red Riding Hood as depicted in Matthew Bright’s *Freeway* (1996) – or the use of a resonant motif in a number of manifestations – for example, the “kissing a frog to turn him into a prince” motif (D735.1) in cartoons. You should be asking structural questions (how does a non-oral version of the tale differ from the oral), contextual questions (what surface elements are presented to make the tale ‘relevant’ to the intended audience), and functional question (why is the tale or motif being (re-)used in the first place). For this assignment you should have a number of secondary sources on the tale itself, and on similar transpositions from oral to non-oral media. For the presentation in the last week of classes, you will present your tale and its mediation: you will be responsible for the AV materials, although standard equipment will be available in the classroom.

A portion of class time on **October 20th** will be devoted to discussing the assignment.

Final Exam: 20% – In the scheduled exam period

The exam will be a short essay based on the themes of the course.

Folktale collections at the Cape Breton University Library:

The following are almost all in the folklore section (Call Number GR, which, unfortunately for our purposes, is subsequently divided by geographic region, so they are spread around), and they all identify their märchen according to the Aarne Thompson Tale-type Index (AT for short, although some call it Aa-Th), and in a few instances refer to the Uther expansion (ATU). Most have an index of tale-types, although some bury the tale-type listings in the notes section. There are other collections, many of them popular but some which are academic yet choose not to use the AT(U) system: you may consult these if you would like, but it will require an extra step of tale-identification on your part. New holdings are added to the collection everyday, so this list is incomplete.

Abrahams, Roger D. *Afro-American folktales: stories from Black traditions in the New World*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985. GR 111A47 A38 1985

Briggs, Katharine Mary. *Folktales of England*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965. GR 141 B7

Bruford, Alan and Donald A. MacDonald. *Scottish traditional tales*. Edinburgh: Polygon, 1994. GR 144 S383 1994

Buchan, David. *Scottish tradition: a collection of Scottish folk literature*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984. GR 144 S37 1984

Christiansen, Reidar Thoralf. *Folktales of Norway*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964. GR 221 C4

Creighton, Helen. *A Folk Tale Journey Through the Maritimes*. Wreck Cove: Breton Books, 1993. GR 113.5 M37 C73 1993

Danaher, Kevin. *Folktales of the Irish countryside*. Cork: Mercier Press, 1982. GR 147 D33

Dance, Daryl Cumber. *Folklore from contemporary Jamaicans*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985. GR 121J2 D36 1985

- Dégh, Linda. *Folktales and society: story-telling in a Hungarian peasant community*. Expanded edition with a new afterword. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989. GR 154.7 K39 D4413 1989
- Dégh, Linda. *Folktales of Hungary*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965. GR 158 D413
- Eberhard, Wolfram. *Folktales of China*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965. GR 335 E4 1965
- Einarsson, Magnús. *Icelandic-Canadian oral narratives*. Hull, Quebec: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1991. GR 113 E46 1991
- Fowke, Edith. *Folktales of French Canada*. Toronto: NC Press, 1982. GR113.7.F73F64 1982
- Fowke, Edith. *Tales told in Canada*. Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1986. GR 113 T34 1986
- Halpert, Herbert and John D.A. Widdowson. *Folktales of Newfoundland: the resilience of the oral tradition*. (2 vols.). New York: Garland Pub., 1996. GR 113.5 N54 H35 1996
- Kvideland, Reimund and Henning K. Sehmsdorf. *All the world's reward: folktales told by five Scandinavian storytellers*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999. GR 205 A4 1999
- MacNeil, Joe Neil. *Tales until dawn: the world of a Cape Breton Gaelic story-teller*. Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987. GR 113.5 C36 M25 1987a
- Marwick, Ernest W. *The folklore of Orkney and Shetland*. London: B. T. Batsford, 1975. GR 145 O7 M37
- Noy, Dov. ed. *Folktales of Israel*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963. GR 285 N6
- Palkó, Zsuzanna. *Hungarian folktales: the art of Zsuzanna Palkó*. New York: Garland, 1995. GR 154.7 K39 P35 1995
- Ramanujan, A. K. *A flowering tree and other oral tales from India*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. GR 305 R358 1997
- Ranke, Kurt, ed. *Folktales of Germany*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966. GR 166 R37
- Seki, Keigo. *Folktales of Japan*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963. GR 340 S383.
- Shaw, John. *The Blue Mountains and Other Gaelic Stories from Cape Breton*. Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007. GR 113.7 S36 B58 2007
- Thomas, Gerald. *The two traditions: the art of storytelling amongst French Newfoundlanders*. St. John's, NF: Breakwater, c1993. GR 113.5 N49 T5613 1993
- Thompson, Stith. *The Folktale*. New York: The Dryden Press, 1946. GR 74 T47.
- Thompson, Stith. *Tales of the North American Indians*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966. E 98 F6 T32 1966
- Walker, Warren S. and Ahmet E. Uysal. *Tales alive in Turkey*. Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 1990. GR 280 W35 1990

Course Breakdown and Reading Schedule

[Readings in *italics* are on reserve or available online]

September 13		Introducing Folk Literature	
September 15	<i>Bascom</i>	Defining Folk Literature	
Märchen			
September 20	Zipes xxiii-xxxvi	An Introduction to the Brothers Grimm	
September 22	[No reading]	Motif and Tale Type	<u>Analysis Assignment Discussed</u>
September 27	<i>Orlik</i>	Analysing Märchen 1	
September 29	Propp 3-24	Analysing Märchen 2.1	
October 4	Propp 25-65	Analysing Märchen 2.2	
October 6	Propp 66-117	Analysing Märchen 2.3	
October 11	Thanksgiving	no class	
October 13	<i>Holbek</i>	Analysing Märchen 3	<u>Class will end early this day</u>
October 18	<i>Stone</i>	Challenging the Canon	
October 20	<i>McDavid & Brodie</i>	Contemporary 'folktale'	<u>Second Assignment Discussed</u>
October 25	Presentations		Analysis assignment due

Legend & Personal Experience Narrative

October 27		[Catch up breather day]	
November 1	<i>Ellis, "What"</i>	Definitions	
November 3	<i>Ellis, "When"</i>	Problematising the definition	
November 8	<i>Mullen</i>	Blurring lines 1	
November 10	<i>Brodie</i>	Blurring lines 2	
November 15	<i>Stahl</i>	Personal Experience Narratives 1	
November 17	<i>Cody</i>	Personal Experience Narratives 2	
November 22	<i>Mukerji</i>	Personal Experience Narratives 3	
November 24	<i>Blache</i>	Anecdote	Second Assignment Due

Presentations

November 29	Presentations		
December 1	Presentations		<u>Exam Discussed</u>