

**DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES
AND CULTURAL STUDIES**
<https://uofa.ualberta.ca/modern-languages-and-cultural-studies>

2016-2017 MLCS 399 B1 *Folklore and the Internet*
(Winter Term)

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Time: MWF 14-14:50
Place: HC L-4
Office Hours: MWF 11-11:45
or by appointment
Course Website: on eClass

Course Prerequisite: none

Course-based Ethics Approval in place regarding all research projects that involve human testing, questionnaires, etc.?

Yes No, not needed, no such projects approved.

Community Service Learning component

Required Optional None

Past or Representative Evaluative Course Material Available

Exam registry – Students' Union

<http://www.su.ualberta.ca/services/infolink/exam/>

See explanations below

Document distributed in class

Other (please specify): web material produced by previous students uploaded to ukrainealive.ualberta.ca, indiaalive.ualberta.ca, and chinaalive.ualberta.ca

NA

Additional mandatory Instructional fees (approved by Board of Governors)

Yes No

Course Description and Objectives: Folklore is the artistic expression of regular people. And folklore is expression that knows no boundaries. Folklore is told orally as people exchange everything from jokes to ghost stories. But folklore is not restricted to oral transmission. In the recent past one of the fastest growing areas of folk expression has been the digital world. Everything from blog posts to fan fiction to photoshopped images uploaded to social media sites can be analyzed as folklore. The transmission of crafts is now often done on YouTube.

There are **two main objectives** of the course. One is to understand the rich resources of digital folklore and how they can be used to communicate contemporary issues and concerns. Presenting folklore online is not the same as expressing it orally. The course will examine how

online presentation affects the delivery of folk material. Online jokes, for example, cannot use the communicative possibilities of voice modulation, but they do use visual resources such as picture humour. Having understood digital folk expression, students will identify folklore online and analyze it to extract the thoughts and feelings that are being communicated.

The other objective is to develop the capacity to produce formal presentation of folklore in digital form. This course, like others, teaches the skills of paper-writing and oral presentation. It also teaches the humanistic aspects of creating digital materials. Students will work on producing text that works well online and on combining text with visuals and/or sound. The options are to contribute a small unit to one of the existing folklore websites aimed at elementary education (ukrainealive.ualberta.ca, indiaalive.ualberta.ca, chinaalive.ualberta.ca, or perualive.ualberta.ca) or to critique and suggest modifications to an existing website that presents folklore online.

Learning outcomes: by the end of the course students should be able to:

- 1) identify those items on the internet which are folklore, produced by users and not produced by commercial interests
- 2) analyze online folklore to determine its meaning and function
- 3) create a small folklore unit of quality sufficient for posting on a professional digital site such as a ukrainealive.ualberta.ca, or indiaalive.ualberta.ca, or chinaalive.ualberta.ca.
- 4) test and assess the communicative effectiveness of existing folklore websites
- 5) improve speaking and writing skills through oral presentations and written assignments

Texts: Required:

- 1) Trevor Blank, ed. *Folk Culture in the Digital Age* Utah State Press, 2012
- 2) *Journal of American Folklore*, Summer 2015 issue on Digital Network Hybridity

Resource texts:

- Trevor Blank and Robert Glenn Howard, eds. *Tradition in the 21st Century*. Utah State University Press, 2013.
- Bryan Alexander, *The New Digital Storytelling: Creating Narratives with New Media*. Praeger, 2011
- Russell Frank, *Newslore: Contemporary Folklore on the Internet*. University Press of Mississippi, 2011.
- Lynne S. McNeill, *Folklore Rules*. Utah State University Press, 2013.
- Michael Kinsella, *Legend-Tripping Online and the Search for Ong's Hat*. University Press of Mississippi, 2011.
- Trevor Blank, ed. *Folklore and the Internet*. Utah State University Press, 2009.

Most of the above are available as electronic resources through the library. Additional materials (both links and articles) will be provided on eClass.

Course Schedule:

The course will have 3 units.

The **units** are arranged by time and there is a January unit, a February unit, and a March unit, plus a concluding section.

Unit 1) readings and research. This month will be devoted to studying folk expression online. The readings will cover definitions of folklore and analyses of internet folklore. Lectures by the instructor will be combined with discussion of assigned readings. Small written assignments (in the 100 word range) will be used as preparation for discussions. These will draw on readings and on assigned internet research.

Unit 2) study not of the lore itself, but of the ways that folklore has been presented. We will examine existing professional websites, those produced by academics, those produced as resource sites such as Wikipedia, and those produced by interest groups such as Neo-Pagans. Students will write short critiques of existing sites and they will practice writing text for online delivery of information and combining it with visuals and/or sound. Those students who chose to work on one of the Alive series of sites may add the option of Community Service Learning (CSL) credit if they work with an elementary school teacher and/or a community organization. Their goal will be to produce a small unit for one of the Alive websites and to present it in the elementary classroom or to their community organization. CLS requires 20 hours of volunteer work in addition to normal course work.

Unit 3) work on projects combined with lectures and readings from the resource texts. These will be selected to correspond to student projects.

Last week and a half of class: all students make formal presentations of their work

Course paper due April 20

Grade Distribution (see “Explanatory Notes”):

There are no exams in this class, but the due date of the final paper is determined by the exam schedule. See:

<http://www.registraroffice.ualberta.ca/Examinations/Fall-2016-Winter-2017-Exam-Planner.aspx>

Date of Deferred Final Exam (if applicable): not applicable

Explanatory Notes on Assignments:

Please see the schedule under Grade Distribution

- 1) Two papers, approximately 2-3 pages each. One will be based on readings and due at the end of January. One will be based on internet research and due at the end of February. The papers will be worth 10% each for a total of 20%.
- 2) A series of short (approximately 100 word) response assignments. These will be due throughout the course. There will be approximately 10 of these and they will be worth 10%
- 3) Two exercises comparing communicative strategies, 1-2 pages each. One will be an oral/written comparison and be due mid-February. The other will compare academic writing to writing for online presentation and be due early March. Each exercise will be worth 5% for a total of 10%
- 4) Digital unit, either the creation of an addition to one of the Alive websites or an analysis

- with suggestions of an existing website that presents folklore, worth 10% and due at the end of March
- 5) Participation in discussions – 10%
 - 6) Project proposal – due in the middle of March and worth 10%
 - 7) Oral presentation of project – last week and one half of class – 10%
 - 8) Final paper: a write-up of the project – due April 20 and worth 20%

Required Notes:

“Policy about course outlines can be found in Section 23.4(2) of the University calendar.”

Academic Integrity:

“The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at <http://www.governance.ualberta.ca/en/CodesofConductandResidenceCommunityStandards/CodeofStudentBehaviour.aspx>) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.”

Learning and Working Environment:

The Faculty of Arts is committed to ensuring all students; faculty and staff are able to study and work in an environment safe and free of discrimination and harassment. It does not tolerate behaviour that undermines that environment. The Department urges anyone who feels this policy has been or is being violated to:

- Discuss the matter with the person whose behaviour is causing concern; or
- If that discussion is unsatisfactory, or there is concern that directs discussion is inappropriate or threatening, discuss it with the Chair of the Department.

For additional advice or assistance regarding this policy you may contact the student ombudservice (<http://www.ombudservice.ualberta.ca/>).

Information about the University of Alberta Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures is described in UAPPOL at <https://policiesonline.ualberta.ca/PoliciesProcedures/Pages/DispPol.aspx?PID=110> .

Academic Honesty:

All students should consult the information provided by the [Office of Judicial Affairs](#) regarding avoiding cheating and plagiarism in particular and academic dishonesty in general (see the [Academic Integrity Undergraduate Handbook](#) and [Information for Students](#)). If in doubt about what is permitted in this class, ask the instructor.

Students involved in language courses and translation courses should be aware that on-line “translation engines” produce very dubious and unreliable “translations.”

Students in languages courses should be aware that, while seeking the advice of native or expert speakers is often helpful, **excessive editorial and creative help** in assignments is considered a form of “cheating” that violates the code of student conduct with dire consequences.

An instructor or coordinator who is convinced that a student has handed in work that he or she could not possibly reproduce without outside assistance is obliged, out of consideration of fairness to other students, to report the case to the Associate Dean of the Faculty. See the [Academic Discipline Process](#).

Recording of Lectures:

Audio or video recording of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the content author(s) or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Recorded material is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s).

Attendance, Absences, and Missed Grade Components:

Regular attendance is essential for optimal performance in any course. In cases of potentially excusable absences due to illness or domestic affliction, notify your instructor by e-mail within two days. Regarding absences that may be excusable and procedures for addressing course components missed as a result, consult sections [Attendance](#) and [Examinations](#) of the University Calendar. Be aware that unexcused absences will result in partial or total loss of the grade for the “attendance and participation” component(s) of a course, as well as for any assignments that are not handed-in or completed as a result.

In this course Students are expected to participate actively in all aspects of the course. Much of the work will be done with a partner or in teams. Students must treat their classmates and team mates or partners with due consideration.

Policy for Late Assignments:

When students work in teams, everyone must contribute in a timely fashion. Adjustments can be made if the instructor and the teammates are notified at least 24 hours in advance of the time when work is due. Otherwise, students will have their grade lowered by 1/3 for every day that an assignment is late. In other words, what would have been A work will be graded as A- if it is one day late, B+ if it is 2 days late, and so forth.

Student Accessibility Services:

If you have special needs that could affect your performance in this class, please let me know during the first week of the term so that appropriate arrangements can be made. If you are not already registered with [Student Accessibility Services](#), contact their office immediately (1-80 SUB; Email sasrec@ualberta.ca; Email; phone 780-492-3381).

Grading:

Assessment of the individual course components may be in the form of numerical marks or letter grades. The final letter grade will be based on "a combination of absolute achievement and relative performance in a class" (University Calendar, [Evaluation Procedures and Grading System](#)). The University Grading Procedure mandates that "a student's level of achievement of the goals/outcomes of a course, their grade, and the descriptor of that grade must be aligned" (<https://policiesonline.ualberta.ca/>). The following guidelines have been adopted by the Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies:

“MLCS Undergraduate Grading Scale”

Descriptor	Letter Grade	Grade Point Value	%
Excellent. A+, A or A- is earned by work which is superior in content and form and demonstrates an exceptional grasp of the subject matter. The grade of A+ designates work that far exceeds course expectations. Grades in the A range are normally achieved by a small number of students.	A+	4.0	97-100
	A	4.0	93-96
	A-	3.7	90-92
Good. B+, B or B- is earned by work that demonstrates a thorough comprehension of the course material and a good command of relevant skills. Grades in the B range are normally achieved by the largest number of students.	B+	3.3	87-89
	B	3.0	83-86
	B-	2.7	80-82
Satisfactory. C+, C or C- is earned by work that demonstrates an adequate grasp of the course material and relevant skills. Grades in the C range designate work that has met the basic requirements of the course.	C+	2.3	77-79
	C	2.0	73-76
	C-	1.7	70-72
Poor/Minimal Pass. D+ or D is earned by work that demonstrates minimal familiarity with the course material. Grades in the D range generally indicate insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the subject matter.	D+	1.3	65-69
	D	1.0	60-64
Failure.	F	0.0	0-59