

UNIVERSITY OF MARY WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

HISP 206-01 INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN FOLKLORE
Fall Semester 2014

Mr. Stanton
MWF 11:00-11:50
Combs Hall, 139

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Historic Preservation 206, *Introduction to American Folklore* surveys the unwritten traditions of the United States and the theories that folklorists have developed to explain the continuation of ancient oral traditions in a culture that is highly literate. The course is a survey of the genres of folk tradition both historically significant and currently vital in American culture. Oral traditions and material culture as well as the use of oral history interviewing will be examined with examples and analysis and discussion of how both the cultural traditions and the techniques of fieldwork are important for historic preservation professionals.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- (1) Foster a basic understanding and awareness of American Folklore and the discipline's content, purposes, methods, and philosophy.
- (2) Foster basic knowledge of the complimentary actions of historic preservation and folklore.
- (3) Acquire a working familiarity with techniques of oral history interviews in relation to the study and interpretation of American history and culture.

This class is designated speaking intensive. This approach to learning focuses on the techniques of oral performance that improve your ability to form and deliver effective oral presentations. Another consequence of focusing on the act of oral presentation is that one better understands the processes and decisions that people whom we study use to create their oral performances.

CLASS REQUIREMENTS

TEXTS

The following books are required and will be available in the College Bookstore:

Barre Toelken, *The Dynamics of Folklore*. Revised and Expanded. Logan: Utah State University Press, 1996.

Valerie Raleigh Yow. *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*. Second Edition. Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press, 2005.

TESTS

The student is responsible for all required readings and lecture materials. Any handouts in class with the exception of lecture summaries should be considered materials that will be tested. Examinations will test your knowledge concerning basic terms, concepts or significant examples from in-class discussions, films, or required readings. The tests will include fill-in-the-blank and short answer questions. Students who wish to learn more about a lecture topic may wish to explore the additional readings listed in the 'Bibliographic Notes' at the end of each chapter of the *The Dynamics of Folklore*. Or, come talk to me, I can recommend other materials. There will be two tests: Test 1, Wednesday October 8th and the Final Examination, Wednesday, December 12th from noon-2:30p.m.

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

In class assignments

From the first day until the last day of class we will be thinking, speaking, and writing about talk. This class focuses upon preparation for verbal interaction and improvement of your ability to speak effectively both in a personal interview and in public presentation. To this end our class will involve your total participation and a portion of your grade directly relates to how thoroughly you participate and how well you prepare to participate. There are three in-class presentation activities that are directly speaking-related.

In the first assignment the effort is being an effective interviewer not on holding forth before an audience. Notice the assignment does not seek the text as a prescriptive ingredient that a performer may deliver well, or not, but had few degrees of freedom to manipulate. In this assignment you will collect information about a personal experience of your informant, something that happened to them and which they may describe in many different levels of detail and narrative forms. Your task is to make them feel at ease and to ask the question in an open way that allows them the greatest flexibility of response and will, with your help, generate the fullest response. We will be breaking into teams of two (the party of the first part and the party of the second part). You will receive the "question" or interview topic the class period before the interview. The topic for one group might be "The time I almost died!" or "The funniest thing I ever saw!" During your interview you'll want to do four things: set the equipment up correctly, slate the audio recording with all the appropriate information, introduce the topic, and ask follow-up questions to more fully explore the topic. You'll have about five minutes for the interview. Both the interviewer and the interviewee will complete an evaluation form. Then the tables will be turned and you'll be the person interviewed by one of your classmates (on a different topic) and we'll give time to complete the evaluation forms from that encounter. I'll ask you to transcribe the recording (good practice) and then briefly write about both your strategies going into the interview and how effective your questioning techniques and approaches were using the evaluation sheet from your informant and your own response. You'll be turning in the interview transcription, the evaluations and your commentary for a grade. The grade is based upon completing the assignment (following instructions), evidence of preparation, use of good questioning technique, and analysis for improvement.

In the second assignment you will prepare and present a favorite poem before the class. Your

presentation will tell us why the poem is special for you, where you first heard the poem, and what messages the poem reinforces for you. This is a mandatory assignment, but not graded on what you choose, rather how you prepare and present the piece. We will each stand to perform our poem and we'll videotape these performances. In the next class period we'll discuss as a group both what we felt and the differences between our self-image of the performance and the videotaped version. This corporate critique is not about embarrassing anyone and you will be viewing yourself on tape outside of class. Rather the goal of this interaction is to give us all the opportunity to experience the power and the trepidation of public performance. Inevitably, someone will ask "how long the poem must be?" It will be best if the poem is at least three stanzas (just like a good country song), but if you can take us through a longer rhymed work like "The Cremation of Sam McGee," "Richard Cory," or "Ode to a Grecian Urn," we'll gladly listen. Many songs make quite good recitations and you may have a favorite song that works just as well without music. You may want to include the theme of dangerous collusions, we'll be performing our poetry right after Halloween, Friday, October 31st.

The final speaking assignment in class will be a formal report that you give drawing on your Veterans oral history assignment. In order that we can all learn from your experiences in interviewing you are asked to make a five-minute presentation to the class on either the 1st or the 3rd of December. Make your presentation from notes prepared specifically for the assignment. Explain who your informant was, and how you contacted the informant, along with the what, why, where, and how of the military experience that you focused upon in the interview. Provide an assessment of emphasizing the strengths of the interview were and what you learned from about the veteran's experiences and your experience doing the interview. Because this is a timed performance, you'll want to practice before the day of your presentation. Pictures or maps may be useful in describing the location where the military experience took place, but these support materials are not essential to the presentations. The oral report is part of your grade for the class and these presentations come in the closing days of our class, so there will not be time for a rescheduling. Students who are not present when their name is called to present will receive a failing grade the assignment. If you know you have a conflict with one of these dates tell me as soon as possible.

Out of class Assignments

Two writing assignments are required for the course. The first is the written evaluation from your in-class interview.

For the second project our class is participating in the Veterans History Project. The American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress has developed a program to collect and preserve audio- and video-recorded oral histories from America's war veterans of World War I, World War II, and the Korean, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf Wars, and Afghanistan. Each student will identify and request an interview with a veteran, men and women, those who served in war or in support of combat operations, all ranks in all branches of service--the Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, and Navy, as well as the U.S. Coast Guard and Merchant Marine interview about their experiences. Before completing the interview send me an email with the informant's name, branch of service and time frame of military participation (there will be a biographical form provided in the Assignment #2 web page). Prepare for your interview by reading the guidelines and resources

located on the American Folklife Center's webpage at <<http://www.loc.gov/folklife/vets/kit.html>>. Develop general questions that you wish to ask, before you conduct the interview. Tape record the interview and transcribe the interview completely. The transcription of interview material is often problematic and guidelines will be provided in class. Finally, prepare a short paper (two--four pages) about the varieties of defining activities, stories, equipment, crafts--that were described by the informant during the interview about their military experiences. Please also critique your interview techniques, point out where you found strengths and weaknesses in your preparation and completion of the interview. How effective were your questions and follow up responses? Reflect on what you would do differently in the next interview that you undertake. This paper **and** the transcribed interview is due Monday, November 17th at the beginning of class. I will return your work with my comments Monday November 24th.

Final copies of the project should be *typed, double spaced*, using a computer. I will provide an electronic location upon which you will save a copy of the transcription. The electronic copy along with a clean copy of the transcription (corrected typographic errors and formatting problems), the signed release forms and supporting materials (pictures, maps, etc.) will be forwarded to the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress as part of your submission of the interview. Your summary paper will not be forwarded to the Library of Congress and should be treated as any student work. I take the Honor Code very seriously and insist that all written work that you submit for my evaluation include the Honor Pledge and be signed.

GRADING

All assignments must be completed to receive a passing grade in this class. I mention this for individuals who are taking the class in Pass/Fail mode and consider skipping an assignment.

The Honor system is the best investment that you will make at UMW. I consider our mutual agreement not to lie, steal, create, or plagiarize as one of the cornerstones of our system of education. This system insures that you will get the education for which you are paying. It is what you learn and can use in the future that is most important. There are no class assignments for which student collaboration is allowed. In all written and testing during this class you **will not** ask for answers nor use the work of others in your graded work. If you have a situation in which there is a question, ask me, not your friend or peer. Cutting and pasting from a website, book, or any other source is never acceptable, except with appropriate references.

In an effort to be open about the scoring of writing projects so that we are all clear about how a grade is achieved the following comments are provided:

Grades have two parts, (1) an evaluation of the content and the considerable intellectual effort that goes into the creation of a student project, and (2) the skill with which this material is integrated into a coherent thoughtful presentation that reflects student control of the subject. With each graded assignment the scoring will be done with a grading sheet that will be available to you before the assignment is due.

The Office of Disability Services has been designated by the University as the primary office to guide, counsel, and assist students with disabilities. If you receive services through that office and require accommodations for this class, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss your approved accommodation needs. Bring your accommodation letter with you to the appointment. I will hold any information you share with me in the strictest confidence unless you give me permission to do otherwise.

If you need accommodations, (note taking assistance, extended time for tests, etc.), I would be happy to refer you to the Office of Disability Services. They will require appropriate documentation of a disability.

FINAL GRADE

Please note: **No passing grade** can be achieved in this course without completion of *all* examinations and out-of-class graded assignments. Your final grade will be based on the following scores--Test I, 25%; In-class oral interview project 10%; Recitation 5%; Project Two 25%; final oral presentation 10%; Final Examination 25%. The Out-of-Class Assignments will be marked down by ten (10 points) for each day later than the beginning of class on the date due.

MY OFFICE HOURS

Tuesday and Thursday 10 a.m. to Noon.

OFFICE

Combs 133
Phone: 654-1313
e-mail: gstanton@umw.edu

I will be in my office for *set* office hours (that is, I'll be there and you can drop in whether you have an appointment or not) every weekday, as noted above. If I must attend a meeting with a faculty committee during one of those periods, I will announce this in class. I will also be in the office at many other hours (including some evening hours each week). I am happy to make an appointment to see you at some specific time that suits your needs.

SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS, TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS

This class schedule tells you how we will proceed with our discussion of American Folklore. I reserve the right to alter the topic of any lecture, but the day on which tests, papers and books are scheduled will not be changed. Study guides are provided for each topic.

Week #1 Into Folkloristics with Gun and Camera
Required Reading: *Dynamics*: Preface and Pp. 1-18

Monday 25 August 2014
What is American Folklore?

Wednesday 27 August 2014
The disco-ball of American Folklore

Friday 29 August 2014
You are how you talk: Dialect in America

Film: American Tongues

Week #2 Doing Oral History

Monday 1 September 2014

Doing Oral History Fieldwork

Required Readings: Recording Oral History, Pp. 1-23.

Film: An Oral Historian's Work

Wednesday 3 September 2014

Learning How to Ask

Required Reading: Oral History, Pp. 92-116.

Friday 5 September 2014

Preparation and conducting the oral interview

Required Reading: Oral History, Pp. 68-88.

Know your equipment, use it well—Handout

Week #3 The Folklore Process

Required Readings: Dynamics: Pp. 19-54

Monday 8 September 2014

In-class interviews, assignment 1

Wednesday 10 September 2014

The Educative Matrix

Describing Folklore

Friday 12 September 2014

Mode and Movement in Folklore

Cultural Selection and Change

Week #4 Dynamics of the Folk Group

Required Readings: Dynamics: Pp. 55-115

Monday 15 September 2014

The Live Context

Wednesday 17 September 2014

The Multiplicity of Tradition

Friday 19 September 2014

Musical traditions in the Family Context: Folksongs, and Dance Tunes

Film: Sprout Wings and Fly

National Heritage Fellowship Concert at the George Washington University's Lisner

Auditorium. 730 21st Street NW in Washington, DC. Program begins at 8:00pm.

Week #5 The Folk Performance

Required Readings: Dynamics: Pp. 117-156

Monday 22 September 2014

Performance in Place

Wednesday 24 September 2014

Tina's Proverb

Friday 26 September 2014

Audience

Week #6 Dimensions of the Folk Event

Required Reading: Dynamics: Pp. 157-182

Monday 29 September 2014

Folk Events: An Overview

Wednesday 1 October 2014

The Seamlessness of Life Experience

Friday 3 October 2014

Putting Folklore to Use: Building Reputation

Week #7 Aesthetics and Repertoire

Required Reading: Dynamics: Pp. 183-239.

Monday 6 October 2014

Concepts of Genre and Focus

Wednesday 8 October 2014

Midterm examination--Y'all Come!

Friday 10 October 2014

Multilateral Learning and Multiform Folk Ideas and Aesthetics

MID-SEMESTER BREAK BEGINS AT 5 P.M. AND ENDS AT 8 A.M.

Week #8 Folklore and Connotation

Required Reading: Dynamics: Pp. 241-262

Wednesday 15 October 2014

Playing with Language

Intentional Connotation: Imagery

Friday 17 October 2014
Connotative Structure

Week #9 Folklore and Cultural World View
Required Reading: Dynamics: Pp. 263-315

Monday 20 October 2014
Culture and Meaning

Wednesday 22 October 2014
Technology and Worldview

Friday 24 October 2014
From Craft to Art

Week #10 Surrounded by Folklore
Required Reading: Dynamics: Pp. 315-345

Monday 27 October 2014
Everyfolk

Wednesday 29 October 2014
The Intentional Folklorist and the responsibilities

Friday 31 October 2014
In class recitation

Week #11 Folklore Research
Required Reading: Dynamics: Pp. 347-387

Monday 3 November 2014
Folklore Fieldwork

Wednesday 5 November 2014
Folklore Archives

Friday 8 November 2014
Making Folklore available

Week #12 Applying Folklore to other Disciplines
Required Reading: Dynamics: Pp. 389-415
Claude Levi-Strauss "The Bricoleur" Reserve

Monday 10 November 2014
Folklore and Literature: The threshold of vernacular

Wednesday 12 November 2014
The Folk and the Engineer

Friday 14 November 2014
Folk Music and Folksingers

Week #13 Folklore in the Public Sector
Required Readings: Dynamics: Pp. 416-426

Monday 17 November 2014
Public Sector Folklore at the National Level: National Endowment for the Arts
Out of Class Assignment Two Due at Beginning of Class

Wednesday 19 November 2014
Folklore and Public Education

Friday 21 November 2014
The Folk Festival as a Public Folklore Context
Please review the Virtual Exhibition materials of the Smithsonian Folklife Program (**Reserve**)

Week #13 Celebrating with Food
Required Reading: Adler, Thomas. "Sunday Breakfast Was Always Special With Us: A Report on Foodways in South Central Georgia." *Folklore Preprint* 7:1(February 1979). **Reserve.**

Monday 24 November 2014
Studying American Foodways

Wednesday 26 November 2014
No Class Traditional American Festive Event

Week #15
Required Reading: None

Monday 1 December 2014
Student Reports on Final Projects

Wednesday 3 December 2014
Student Reports of Final Project

Friday 5 December 2014
Course Review

Friday 12 December 2014
Noon to 2:30pm Final Exam