

ENGL 352: Topics in Appalachian Studies West Virginia Folklore & Folklife

Spring 2024

Tuesdays & Thursdays 10-11:15 AM

CRN 16739

Instructor: Hathaway



To many both inside and outside Appalachia, the word “folklore” evokes little more than thoughts of Mothman, quilts, and apple butter. But West Virginia’s cultureS and folklore are far richer, more complex, and more contemporary than those few examples.

The class will begin with a crash course on folklore itself: what it is (and isn’t) and what its theories and methodologies look like. Then we’ll move on to look at what folklore studies in Appalachia and West Virginia have looked like, both past and present, and how the study of folklore has both contributed to and challenged stereotypes about the state and the Appalachian region.

Throughout the semester, we’ll read about West Virginia’s long folk history, talk with folklorists and folk practitioners about their work, and learn how to do ethnographic fieldwork. You’ll have a chance to apply your growing knowledge to a project of your own.

Major course objectives are to complicate notions about both folklore AND Appalachia by examining the incredible range of living traditions in the state and region; to put those traditions into historical and political contexts; and to introduce students to the public applications of folklore study.