

### Course Description

This course provides an introduction to the discipline of folklore – the unique space it occupies between literary and anthropological study, and how it can be used as a critical lens for examining literature. We'll begin by discussing the history of the discipline and the ways in which that history has intersected with and diverged from the disciplines of literary and cultural studies. We'll discuss “traditional” forms of folk narrative, such as folk tales, fairy tales, and legends, but we'll also interrogate the notions of “text” and “traditionality” themselves, discussing the many kinds of “texts” contemporary folklorists study, and the ways their work expands and challenges ideas about what is “traditional.” We'll also talk about the ways that shifts in how folklorists do their work over the years has complicated the boundaries between ethnography and fiction. Ultimately, the course aims to demonstrate how folkloric approaches can open up new ways of understanding literary texts and other kinds of cultural productions.

### Contact Information

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Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Wednesdays 2:00-3:30 p.m. (except for Wednesdays when there is an English Department faculty meeting), and by appointment

### Required Texts

Feintuch, Bert, ed. *Eight Words for the Study of Expressive Culture*

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Mules and Men* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Speigelman, Art. *The Complete Maus* (or the separate volumes, *Maus I: My Father Bleeds History* and *Maus II: And Here My Troubles Began*)

Tatar, Maria, ed. *The Classic Fairy Tales: Second Norton Critical Edition*

Additional required readings on eCampus

### Attendance Policy and Daily Procedures

*Attendance* – Since this is a seminar, most of the learning will happen via class discussion. There will be few, if any, lectures – therefore, your success depends heavily on class participation and attendance. Since we only meet once a week, I expect you to be here for every class, and for the full meeting each time. Please let me know in advance if you know you will have a conflict on any of the evenings we're scheduled to meet.

### Course Requirements

The major assignments for this course include several short assignments (see syllabus for details); preparing discussion questions and leading class one evening; an annotated

bibliography based on research into your seminar paper topic; and a the final seminar paper. These assignments will be weighted as follows:

Short assignments	30%
Discussion questions & leading class discussion	10%
Project proposal	10%
Annotated bibliography	20%
Seminar paper	30%

### Late Papers/Assignments, Make-up Work, and Extensions

All assignments are due at the beginning of class the day they are due. Because blog posts and discussion questions will be integral to class discussion, they must be ready on the due dates indicated in the day-to-day schedule. If you feel you will be unable to meet a particular deadline for the other assignments, please let me know as soon as possible. I'm very happy to grant extensions, but you'll need to request one *before* the assignment's due date, and give me a written request indicating your new due date at that time.

### Inclement Weather

It wouldn't be "spring" semester without the threat of bad weather and roads. Obviously, if the University is closed, we won't meet. But if you're personally unable to get to campus due to road conditions, please let me know in advance. And I'll notify you by e-mail ASAP if I decide to cancel class due to weather.

### Inclusivity Statement

The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion.

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in your classes, please advise your instructors and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Services (<https://accessibilityservices.wvu.edu/>). More information is available at the Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (<https://diversity.wvu.edu/>) as well. And of course, please feel free to talk with me about how I can best be of assistance.

### Sexual Misconduct Statement

West Virginia University does not tolerate sexual misconduct, including harassment, stalking, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, or relationship violence. It is important for you to know that there are resources available if you or someone you know needs assistance. You may speak to a member of university administration, faculty, or staff; keep in mind that they have an obligation to report the incident to the Title IX Coordinator (<https://titleix.wvu.edu/staff>).

If you want to speak to someone who is permitted to keep your disclosure confidential, please seek assistance from the **Carruth Center**, 304-293-9355 or 304-293-4431 (24-hour hotline), and locally within the community at the **Rape and Domestic Violence Information Center** (RDVIC), 304-292-5100 or 304-292-4431 (24-hour hotline).

For more information, please see <https://titleix.wvu.edu/confidential-resources>.

### WEEKLY SCHEDULE

#### WEEK ONE

W Jan 9 Introduction to course

#### WEEK TWO: GENRE, TEXT, AND “CLASSIC” APPROACHES TO FOLKLORE & LITERATURE

W 16 READ: Chapters 3 and 4 (on “Genre” and “Text”) in Feintuch’s *Eight Words*; section on Cinderella (pp. 139-181) from Tatar’s *Classic Fairy Tales*, plus the excerpts from Uther and Propp in Tatar (pp. 491-506)  
IN CLASS: Tale type/morphology exercise

#### WEEK THREE: FROM THE BROTHERS GRIMM TO THE POSTMODERN

W 23 READ: From Tatar’s *Classic Fairy Tales*, read sections on Little Red Riding Hood (pp. 5-29), Sleeping Beauty (pp. 117-138), and Bluebeard (pp. 182-228), plus essays by Tatar on pp. 446-456 and 454-467 and Baccilega on pp. 468-480 [you may also want to read the Grimms’ “Juniper Tree” on pp. 245-252 if you’re not familiar with it, since Tatar discusses the tale in her first essay]

**WEEK FOUR: LOCAL-COLOR WRITING – A CASE STUDY IN APPALACHIA**

W 30 READ: Chapters 1 and 8 (on “Group” and “Identity”) in Feintuch’s *Eight Words* and eCampus pieces by Frost (“Our Contemporary Ancestors in the Southern Mountains”), Murfree (“Dancin’ Party at Harrison’s Cove”), and Miles (“Some Real American Music”)  
 DUE: A more contemporary text (of any genre) about Appalachia/West Virginia that reflects or disrupts the ideas in today’s readings, along with a paragraph or two explaining how you think it does so

**WEEK FIVE: WEST VIRGINIA FOLKLORE COLLECTIONS**

W Feb 6 READ: eCampus, information about West Virginia & Regional History Center folklore collections  
 IN CLASS: Class meets in the West Virginia and Regional History Center this evening, on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of the library  
 DUE AT END OF CLASS: Archival research assignment

**WEEK SIX: INTRODUCTION TO FIELDWORK**

W 13 READ: Chapters 5 and 6 (on “Performance” and “Context”) in Feintuch’s *Eight Words*; eCampus, selection of fieldwork projects  
 IN CLASS: Mini fieldwork project

**WEEK SEVEN: FIELDWORK, CONTINUED**

W 20 DUE: Transcriptions of mini fieldwork project  
 READ: eCampus, Toelken’s “The Yellowman Tapes,” Lawless’ “I was afraid someone like you...an outsider...would misunderstand,” and Clifford’s “Partial Truths”  
 IN CLASS: Discussion of contemporary ethnographic methods and ethics

**WEEK EIGHT: THE COMPLEXITIES OF FOLK BELIEF AND NARRATIVE**

W 27 READ: eCampus, Mullen’s “Belief and the American Folk,” Ellis’ “Safe Spooks: New Halloween Traditions in Response to Sadism Legends,” and Hufford’s “Beings Without Bodies”

**WEEK NINE: FOLKTALES AND LEGENDS IN LITERATURE: A CASE STUDY**

W Mar 6 READ: eCampus, Sheila Kaye-Smith’s “Mrs. Adis,” Nella Larsen’s “Sanctuary,” and articles about this case by Wall and Hathaway  
 DUE: Seminar paper proposal

*SPRING BREAK MARCH 21-25***WEEK TEN: FOLKLORE IN THE “REAL” (?) WORLD: FAKE NEWS**

W 20 READ: eCampus, selections from *Journal of American Folklore* special issue on fake news

**WEEK ELEVEN: THE SPYGLASS OF ANTHROPOLOGY”: ZORA NEALE HURSTON’S FIELDWORK**

W 27 READ: Hurston’s *Mules and Men* and, on eCampus, Pierpont’s “The Measure of America”  
DUE: Annotated bibliography on final paper topic

**WEEK TWELVE: MIXING THE INSIDE AND THE OUTSIDE: ZORA NEALE HURSTON’S FICTION**

W Apr 3 READ: Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and, on eCampus, Lawless’ “What Zora Knew” and Yu’s “Food for Thought”

**WEEK THIRTEEN: WHILE WE’RE ON THE SUBJECT OF HURRICANES...**

W 10 READ: eCampus, Lindahl’s “Legends of Hurricane Katrina” and chapters 1 and 2 of Horigan’s *Consuming Katrina*

**WEEK FOURTEEN: GRAPHIC REFLEXIVITY AND THE ETHNOGRAPHIC POSTMODERN**

W 17 READ: Spiegelman’s *Maus I* and, on eCampus, selections from *MetaMaus*

**WEEK FIFTEEN: MAUS II; SEMINAR PAPER WORKSHOP**

W 24 READ: Spiegelman’s *Maus II*  
IN CLASS (second half): Revising workshop on seminar papers

**FINALS WEEK**

Seminar papers due by 4 p.m. on Wednesday, May 1<sup>st</sup>