

# SCAND 230 A / CLIT 230 A: INTRODUCTION TO FOLKLORE STUDIES

## Syllabus, Winter Quarter 2019

Class meetings Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:30-3:20 pm, in Condon Hall 109

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A folklorist is interested in describing and understanding **living people** and their **traditions**. Every item of **folklore** (a story, song, custom, or material culture) exists in **variants**: As it passes from person to person, from generation to generation, from place to place, folklore adapts to new contexts. Because folklore is **common**, **widespread**, and **long lived**, it is THE KEY to understanding who human beings are!

### This class will focus on **traditional literature**:

- **Folktales** (sometimes called fairy tales) – stories about a fantasy world
- **Legends** – believable stories, set in the real world
- **Funny stories** (including for example jokes and anecdotes)
- **Proverbs** and **songs** (oral poetry)
- We will read and listen to folklore “**texts**” (the words), and connect them to their “**contexts**” (the people who said the words in specific situations): What does folklore **mean** to the people who perform it? What **function** does folklore have in these people’s lives?
- We will learn about **folklorists**, the people who have studied folklore from the late 1700’s to today. **How** did they collect the folklore texts we’re reading? **Why** did they study folklore? **What ideas** did they propose about humans and their traditions?

### Course objectives

- **Learn classic examples** of folklore: folktales such as “Cinderella” and “Dragonslayer” along with their variants; legends about witches, ghosts, and folk heroes; the Finnish epic “Kalevala” and Lithuanian “dainos” (songs), etc.
- **Learn classic interpretations and research methods** related to the above examples. How did Grimm, Aarne, Thompson, Dorson, Dégh, Brunvand and others analyze folklore?
- **Read a classic book** in the international study of folklore: Richard Dorson’s **Bloodstoppers and Bearwalkers**. Identify his methods of documenting and understanding people and their traditions.
- **DO folklore studies**: Collect traditional stories and an oral poem. Transcribe oral texts, and add the contextual information that will make them come alive for future readers of your essays.

### Grades

- (40%) **four tests** (3 midterms and a final exam) on assigned readings and lectures. The midterms will be written in assigned groups
- (10%) Participation in **class discussions** - both in person and online
- (40%) four short **writing assignments** during the quarter, revised and resubmitted in the final week.
- (10%) peer reviews of classmates’ writing assignments

### Required Readings

- **Folklore Rules**, by Lynn McNeill [[online book](#); login needed at UW Library website; hard copy also on sale at UW Bookstore]
- **Bloodstoppers and Bearwalkers**, by Richard Dorson [on sale at UW Bookstore]
- Selected readings posted on Canvas website.

## How to succeed in this class:

See UW grading guidelines at [\[Link\]](#). What grade do you plan to get?

## Reading Assignments and Lecture Notes

**Write notes as you read** (Some assigned readings will not have all of the information listed below):

- **Remember folklore texts:**
  1. Note some typical examples of folklore; summarize in one sentence.
  2. How do these folklore texts relate to other items discussed today and this week?
- **Remember folklore contexts:**
  1. Who performed this text to a folklorist?
  2. What was this text's "natural context"? (traditional time & place, audience)
- **Remember folklorists:**
  1. Who is the folklorist? (Who collected, edited, and printed the text that you're reading?)
  2. How did the folklorist collect, edit and present folklore texts?
  3. Sometimes a reading assignment includes a folklorist's commentary. Does she or he describe texts and contexts? Compare variants? Analyze function and/or meaning? What is the folklorist's analytical "point"? Do you agree? (is the discussion of social and cultural contexts complete)?

**Bring your reading notes to class.** Revise and expand them with lecture materials. After the lecture, review the revised notes. What are some "takeaways" from today's lecture? While reading before class, did you miss something important?

## Class Participation (10%)

- In class: **Short "quizzes"** and discussions afterwards will ask you to respond to assigned readings, checking if you remember key examples and ideas (study your reading notes, described above).
- Online: Participate in **discussions posted after classes**. You should participate **at least four times**, distributed over the quarter.

## Four tests (40%)

- These exams will check if you remember basic concepts and examples of folklore
- Tests 1 to 3 (short-answer), will be written **in groups** assigned on the day of the exam
- The **final exam** (multiple-choice), will be comprehensive, covering all ten weeks of material. The final exam will be done **individually**, not in groups.

## Ethnographic projects (40%)

1. **Due Friday, Jan 18:** (1-2 pages) Record and transcribe the text of an orally told, entertaining story (joke, anecdote, or folktale). Describe the “texture” of the spoken text: How is this oral story different from written literature? Describe the narrator: Who is the teller or tellers? Are they an active or passive bearer of the tradition? Do they have more stories in their repertoire? Document contexts in which they heard and told this story. Describe audience: Was it followed by laughter or “unlaughter”? How is the story related to the teller’s and listeners’ world and worldview?
2. **Due Friday, Feb 8:** (1-2 pages). Comparative folktale analysis. Describe the text of a folktale that you encountered in a recent storytelling occasion (not necessarily “oral”). It could be in a storybook read to children, a poem, a film, etc. Compare the text to the **tale type**, and to another variant of that type, to identify unique details. What do we know about the storytellers and audiences of the variants? How was the tale **adapted to different contexts**, and how do meanings change from variant to variant?
3. **Due Friday, March 1:** (1-2 pages) Document a traditional legend you have encountered in the natural context. Using the Motif-Index, identify a **traditional motif**, to prove it is traditional. If you have encountered variants, describe them. Describe context: Who performed it, where, when? Are there more legends in the person’s repertoire? How is this legend related to the teller’s **beliefs**?
4. **Due Friday, March 15** (1-2 pages) Function and meaning of oral poetry. Document a **song, rhyme or proverb** you’ve heard in unofficial oral tradition. **Transcribe the words**, compare variants if appropriate. Describe **natural context**: Who performed it, where, when? Are there more songs (or proverbs) in the person’s repertoire? Describe poetic form (texture). Analyze **function** (what does oral poetry do for the performer?) and **meaning** (what does the performer think about while performing?)
5. **Due before the final exam on March 22:** Folklore portfolio. Revise projects #1-#4, and combine everything into one file. Write a one-page introduction: What is folklore, and why do folklorists study it? Summarize your four projects, and state what you are contributing to folklore studies.

## Peer Reviews (10%)

A day after a written ethnographic project is due, you will be assigned a peer review. Post a short critique of your classmate’s project. Begin with a one-sentence summary of the project. Then critique: (Did they follow directions? Do you see connections to ideas from readings or lectures not mentioned by the author? Do you see meanings or functions not mentioned?).

- Your goal is to help improve your colleague’s project. Good ethnography is never “finished” – it can always be improved.
- Over the four assignments, you will critique four different persons’ work.

Week	Tuesday	Thursday
Week 1 (Jan 8-10)	<p>Introduction: What is folklore? How do folklorists study it? Who are folk?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Examples mentioned in this lecture are not required reading, but may be useful when you study for the exam:</li> <li>Children's counting-out rhymes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bolton, "Counting out Rhymes of Children," <i>Journal of American Folklore</i> 1 (1888), 31-37 [Link]</li> <li>Kenneth Goldstein, "Strategy in Counting Out: An Ethnographic Folklore Study" (1971) [e-book at UW Library]</li> </ul> </li> <li>Dialect stories in Dorson, <i>Bloodstoppers &amp; Bearwalkers</i>, 333-360.</li> </ul>	<p>Introduction: What is folklore? How do folklorists study it? Texture, Text, Context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>McNeill, "What is Folklore" in <i>Folklore Rules</i> [e-book at UW Library], 1-19.</li> <li>Dorson, "Savolainen Jokes" and "Finnish American Dialect Stories," in <i>Bloodstoppers and Bearwalkers</i> (B&amp;B), 147-149 and 356-360.</li> <li>Leary, Yah, Hei (1991) <i>Scandinavian jokes</i></li> </ul> <div> <b>Group exercise, Field assignment #1 (groups assigned today)</b>  If you have voice recorder on your phone, bring it to class! </div>
Week 2 (Jan 15-17)	<p>Entering the field. What are the storytelling traditions?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>McNeill, "What do folklorists do?" in <i>Folklore Rules</i> [e-book @ UW Libraries]: <i>Collecting Folklore</i>, pages 20-36.</li> <li>Dorson, "Background of this Book," B&amp;B 1-12</li> <li>Dorson, "Tall Tales" in B&amp;B, 143-146</li> <li>Funny stories told by Norwegian narrator Olav Austad [class website]</li> </ul>	<div> <b>Exam 1: Basic Concepts in Folklore Studies (groups assigned today)</b> </div> <p>International Stories: Introducing folklore genres; the ATU Index, and Motif-Index</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dorson, "Finns," in B&amp;B, 123-149, and notes, 287-291</li> <li>A tool for folk narrative research: <a href="#">The Motif-Index</a></li> <li>A tool for folktale research: Aarne-Thompson-Uther, <a href="#">Types of the Folktale</a></li> <li>Resource for folktale research: D.L. Ashliman, <a href="#">Folklore and Mythology e-texts</a></li> </ul>
<b>Due Friday evening, Jan 18: Fieldwork Assignment #1: Documenting a Funny Story</b>		
Week 3 (Jan 22-24)	<p>Individual and International Traditions. Functions and meanings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Polish Wonder Tales of Joe Woods," in B&amp;B, 313-333</li> <li>Boris &amp; Yuri Sokolov, "In Search of Folktales and Songs," in <i>International Folkloristics</i>, 73-82 [class website] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Texts: Stories by Grigori Medvedev (recorded by Sokolovs) and Natalia Osipovna Vinokurova (recorded by Mark Azadovsky)</li> </ul> </li> <li>Zsuzsanna Palko, "Snake Husband"</li> </ul>	<p>Comparative study of folktales: One tale or many?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dorson, <i>Canadien contes</i> (=folktales), in B&amp;B, 91-99 and notes, 284-285.</li> <li>Grimm #60, "Two Brothers"</li> <li>Swedish folktale, "Three Swords" [class website]</li> <li>Pages 61-65 in Byock, Jesse L. <i>Saga of the Volsungs The Norse Epic of Sigurd the Dragon Slayer</i>. Univ. of California Press, 2012. [e-book]</li> <li>Tool for analysis: Stith Thompson, Type 300 [class website]</li> <li>Tool for analysis: Vladimir Propp, "Morphology of the Tale" [class website]</li> </ul>
Week 4 (Jan 29-31)	<p>Interpreting folktales</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Danish folktale, "<a href="#">King Lindorm</a>"</li> <li>Ancient Indian folktale from <i>Panchatantra</i>, "<a href="#">Enchanted Brahman's Son</a>"</li> <li>Lithuanian tale, "<a href="#">Egle Queen of Snakes</a>"</li> <li>Bruno Bettelheim, <i>Uses of Enchantment</i> (excerpts)</li> <li>Background: Holbek, "Quest for Meaning" [Link]</li> </ul>	<p>From Oral to Literary to film tales</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finnish folktale, "The Pig Girl" [class website], and Cinderella variants by <a href="#">Perrault (1697)</a> and <a href="#">Grimm (1812)</a></li> <li>Cinderella, a movie <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reference: <i>International Fairy-Tale Filmography</i>, [Link]</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <div> <b>Group exercise, Field assignment #2 (groups assigned today)</b> </div>
Week 5 (Feb 5-7)	<p>Children's stories? How?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Winther, <i>Introduction and Pancake House</i> [class website]</li> <li>Grimms, "Hansel and Gretel" [class website]</li> <li>Jane Muncy, "Merrywise" [sound recording and written transcript]</li> <li>Optional extra work: Latvian (children's?) film, <i>Golden Horse</i> (85 min.)</li> </ul>	<div> <b>Exam #2: Folktales and Society (groups assigned today)</b> </div> <p>Stories and people, real, fake and imagined</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>McNeill, "Types of Folklore" in <i>Folklore Rules</i> e-book, especially "Things we Say," pages 38-43 and "Things we believe", 56-61</li> <li>Dorson, "Indians Stuffed and Live" B&amp;B 15-25</li> <li>Dorson, "Lumberjacks" B&amp;B 186-210</li> </ul>
<b>Due Friday evening, Feb 8: Fieldwork Assignment #2: Comparative folktale analysis</b>		

Week	Tuesday	Thursday
Week 6 (Feb 12-14)	<p>Legends about shape shifters...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Richard Dorson, "Bearwalkers", in B&amp;B, 26-37</li> <li>Richard Dorson, "Canadiens" in B&amp;B, 69-102</li> <li>Scandinavian werewolf legends in <a href="#">Scandinavian Folk Belief and Legend</a>, p. 74-80</li> <li>Excerpt from Harry Potter, The Prisoner of Azkaban [class website]</li> </ul>	<p>Ghost and spirit legends, past and present</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two Irish fairy legends collected by Henry Glassie [texts and recordings on class website]</li> <li>Scandinavian ghost legends, 93-109 in <a href="#">Scandinavian Folk Belief and Legend</a></li> <li>Linda Degh, <i>Legend and Belief</i>, excerpts [class website]</li> <li>E. Bird, Playing with Fear: Interpreting the Adolescent Legend Trip <a href="#">[Link]</a></li> </ul>
Week 7 (Feb 19-21)	<p>Public Folklore and Fieldwork in the Upper Midwest Guest lecture, Marcus Cederstrom (University of Wisconsin)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dorson, "Tricksters &amp; Thunders" in B&amp;B 38-68</li> <li>(less reading assigned today—read ahead for Thursday's lecture!)</li> </ul>	<p>Believable stories: Legends</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Richard Dorson, "Bloodstoppers" B&amp;B 150-165</li> <li>Scandinavian witch legends (numbers 34.3, 36.1, 38.1, 38.6, 39.3, 43.1) in <a href="#">Scandinavian Folk Belief and Legend</a>, 157-200</li> <li>Linda Degh, about oral &amp; internet legends (excerpt from Legend &amp; Belief)</li> <li>Andrew Peck, "<a href="#">Tall, Dark and Loathsome</a>" (2015)</li> </ul>
Week 8 (Feb 26-28)	<p>Legend-telling in the modern world: Truth, fiction, entertainment?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dorson, "Sagamen", B&amp;B 249-272</li> <li>Justin Oswald, "Camel Spider Stories," pages 38-57 in <a href="#">Warrior Ways</a> (2012)</li> <li>Background: Jan Brunvand, "Introduction," pages xxiii-xxxiv in <a href="#">Encyclopedia of Urban Legends</a></li> </ul> <div>Group exercise, Field assignment #3 (groups assigned today)</div>	<div>Exam #3: Legend and Belief (groups assigned today)</div> <p>The Mission: History and Identity of a People</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dorson, "Townfolk"; special attention to "McDonald Boys" song on page 174. Look also at pages 5-6!</li> <li>Ivan Walton, Ballad of the McDonald Boys <a href="#">[Link]</a></li> <li>Selected Danish historical ballads</li> </ul>
	<b>Due Friday evening, March 1: Fieldwork Assignment #3: Legend and Belief</b>	
Week 9 (Mar 5-7)	<p>Oral poetry, from proverbs to songs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dorson, "Cousin Jacks" (note proverbs!)</li> <li>Five Proverbs of a Latvian Immigrant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reference Tool, <a href="#">International Proverbs</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>Folksong fieldwork in Latvia, 1991 [class website]</li> <li>Selected Finnish Lyrical Folk Songs</li> <li>Alan Lomax Goes North [class website]</li> </ul>	<p>A Heritage of folk poetry and music, in the field and beyond</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Kantele" (Finnish folksong) sung by Anni Kiriloff in 1922 [text and recording on class website] and "Steady old Vainamoinen", Finnish song #15 in <a href="#">California Gold online archive</a> [text on class website] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elias Lönnrot, <a href="#">Kalevala</a> (Rune XL, lines 221-264 in <b>Epub, scroll to 81%</b>);</li> </ul> </li> <li>Percy, Reliques of Ancient English Poetry (1775) <a href="#">[e-book at UW Libraries]</a>; read the "Dedication (v-x), Preface (xi-xiii) and "Edward" (59-61); Listen to variant sung by May Kennedy McCord (1958), <a href="#">in the online Max Hunter Collection</a> and a Danish Ballad, "Svend in the Rose Garden" [text on class website] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>and <a href="#">2010 recording by GNY on YouTube</a>).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Week 10 (Mar 12-14)	<p>Functions of Oral Poetry. What does singing do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Burns, "Where is Jody Now," pages 79-98 in <a href="#">Warrior Ways</a> (2012)</li> <li>Lithuanian Hay-Cutting Song [text and audio on class website]</li> <li>"Whiskey Johnny" in California Gold online archive.</li> <li>"Take me out to the ballgame"</li> </ul>	<p>Oral Poetry and Intangible Cultural Heritage of the world</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNESCO: <a href="#">What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?</a></li> <li>Livonian Stories (<a href="#">30 minute video on YouTube</a>) [song texts on class website]</li> <li>Songs at Latvian national song festival, [Links on class website]</li> </ul> <div>Group exercise, field assignment #4: Oral Poetry (groups assigned today)</div>
	<p><b>Due Friday, March 15: Fieldwork #4, Function &amp; Meaning of Oral Poetry</b></p> <p><b>Due any time before the final exam, March 22: Portfolio, Assignments 1-4.</b></p>	<p><b>Friday, March 22, 2:30-4:20 pm: Final Exam #4: Oral Poetry.</b> This individual, multiple-choice exam (<b>Bring a purple scantron sheet!</b>). The exam will also include questions on sections 1, 2, and 3 of the course.</p>

