



### Course Description

English 251 is kind of a “sampler platter” of the variety of cultural productions that comprise folklore studies these days. First, we’ll establish some working definitions of folklore, and then we’ll analyze the productions of a variety of folk groups as well as a variety of folklore genres in order to explore and challenge those definitions. You’ll be introduced to the history of the discipline of folklore, some basic concepts of that discipline, and have the opportunity to collect and interpret folklore materials on your own. And we might even have some fun along the way.

### Contact Information:

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Office Hours: Mondays & Fridays 10-11 a.m., Wednesdays 2-3:30 p.m., and by appointment

### Required Texts

Jan Brunvand, *The Vanishing Hitchhiker: American Urban Legends and Their Meanings*.

Elliott Oring, *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres: An Introduction*

Sims & Stephens, *Living Folklore*

Selection of required readings on eCampus

### Social Justice Statement

West Virginia University is committed to social justice. I concur with that commitment and expect to maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Our University does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veterans status, religion, sexual orientation, color or national origin. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration.

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Disability Services, G-30 Mountainlair (phone: 304/293-6700; voice/TDD: 304/293-7740; e-mail: [access2@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:access2@mail.wvu.edu)). And of course, feel free to talk with me about how we can work together most effectively.

### Attendance Policy and Daily Procedures

It should go without saying, but ***please turn off cell phones and put them away during class***. If you’re expecting an important call, please set your phone to vibrate and take the call in the hallway.

**Attendance**—Since the discipline of folklore can only be fully understood through interactive learning, I expect you to attend every class. Should you miss a class, I trust that you’ll check in to find out what you’ve missed, and that you will get notes from another class

member. *Missed quizzes or other in-class work must be made up before the next class meeting—no exceptions.*

*Late arrivals*—We will start class on time, and quizzes will almost always be given at the start of class, so please plan to be here at 11:30 a.m. Late arrivals are really disruptive, and if you arrive after a quiz is underway, you will not be permitted to take it.

*Leaving early*—Please let me know before class begins if you need to leave early, and what time you will need to leave. In this situation, I'd also appreciate it if you'd sit close to the door so that you can slip out without disrupting the class.

*End of class*—I know that some professors have a bad habit of going way over the scheduled ending time for their classes (I had some of them myself in college)—but I do keep track of the time and promise to always let you out at the class' scheduled ending time. Frequently, the end of the period will be devoted to summarizing material or making announcements, so please refrain from packing up books, etc., so that you don't miss anything yourself or distract others. I will verbally dismiss the class after this wrap-up, and promise to do so on time so that you can get to your next class.

### Course Requirements

Major assignments for this course include periodic quizzes (both announced and unannounced), three short papers, a midterm, and a final exam. Your grade will be calculated as follows:

Midterm		15%	
Quizzes	<sup>1</sup>		20%
Three papers		45%	
Final exam		20%	

### Grades

Most long assignments (papers and exams) will be graded on a 100-point scale, with 90-100 being an A, 80 to 89 a B, 70 to 79 a C, 60 to 69 a D, and anything below 60 an F. Quizzes will generally be five or ten points each, and at the end of the semester, your lowest quiz score will be dropped.

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

All assignments are due in class, at the beginning of class, on the day they are due. Papers submitted by e-mail or put in my mailbox instead of in class will have 10 pts. deducted from the paper's final score, and papers turned in in any form after class will lose 5 pts. per day. (So, a paper turned in on the day it is due but after class will lose 5 pts., a paper turned in the following day will lose 10 pts., and so on.)

I'm very willing to grant extensions, but you must talk to me about this and then submit your request for an extension to me, in writing, before the assignment is due. I will ask you to set your own revised due date, subject to my approval, and you will be held to that due date (afterwards, it will be subject to the above penalties).

### Plagiarism

My policy regarding plagiarism is zero tolerance: plagiarize even one part of one

<sup>1</sup> Quizzes" include short in-class quizzes, both announced and unannounced, as well as at-home quizzes that will be posted to eCampus, in-class writing activities, and participation quizzes (see separate assignment).

# ENGL 251: American Folklore & Culture

assignment, and fail the entire course. Period. If I can document the plagiarism, I will also turn the materials over to the Dean of Students and the Academic Review Board. If you are in any doubt about how to document sources, please see me—I'm very happy to help you figure out how to cite others' work correctly, since that's one of the most important skills a college student must acquire. But please see me with questions *before* you turn the assignment in.

## DAY-TO-DAY SCHEDULE

("Oring" = Oring's *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres: An Introduction*; "LF" = Sims & Stephens' *Living Folklore*; "Hitchhiker" = Brunvand's *The Vanishing Hitchhiker*; "EC" = eCampus article)

### WEEK ONE—INTRODUCTION

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|---|--------|--|
| M | Jan 10 | Introduction to course—What we talk about when we talk about folklore  |
| W | 12     | READ: <i>Living Folklore</i> (LF) Chapter 1<br>IN CLASS: Introduction, continued (micro-history of folklore studies and approaches)  |
| F | 14     | IN CLASS: Continued discussion of folklore history & definitions<br><b>DUE: At-home quiz:</b> As you review chapter 1 and look through your notes for this week, jot down all the things mentioned that you wouldn't previously have considered folklore, and on the class' eCampus blog, post a brief (1-2 paragraph) explanation about why you wouldn't have considered them "folklore." Please post before our class meeting today. |

### WEEK TWO—DEFINING "FOLK" AND "LORE"

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|---|----|---|
| M | 17 | NO CLASS—Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday  |
| W | 19 | READ: LF Chapter 2 to p. 56 (stop at the heading "Groups & Belief")<br><b>DUE: At-home quiz:</b> As you read Chapter 2, jot down all the folk groups you can think of that you belong to, and post your list on the class' eCampus blog. Please post before our class meeting today.<br>IN CLASS: Discussion of folk groups |
| F | 21 | IN CLASS: Continued discussion of folk groups; introduction to Paper 1  |

### WEEK THREE—TRADITION AND TRADITION-BEARERS

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|---|----|--|
| M | 24 | READ: EC, Bascom, "The Four Functions of Folklore"<br>IN CLASS: Presentation/discussion of the uses of folklore and the concept of context |
| W | 26 | READ: LF Chapter 3 ("Tradition")<br>IN CLASS: Discussion of the definitions and implications of "tradition" in folklore studies            |
| F | 28 | IN CLASS: Continued discussion of tradition; <b>participation quiz</b>   |

# ENGL 251: American Folklore & Culture

## WEEK FOUR—FAMILY FOLKLORE

- M 31 EC, Zeitlin's "The Forms of Family Lore" and "Family Stories"  
IN CLASS: Discussion of the forms and concepts underlying family folklore
- W Feb 2 READ: Handout, transcription from Jason Tullius' folklore project  
IN CLASS: Discussion and activity
- F 4 **DUE: Paper 1**, the Folk Group/Inventory paper  
IN CLASS: Wrapup of family folklore; introduction to material culture and Paper 2

## WEEK FIVE—MATERIAL CULTURE

- M 7 READ: Oring's *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres* Chapter 9 ("Folk Objects")  
IN CLASS: Continued discussion of material culture
- W 9 READ: LF, Saum's "Roadside Memorials" (pp. 250-265)  
IN CLASS: Continued discussion of material culture and tradition
- F 11 IN CLASS: **Participation quiz** on material culture

## WEEK SIX—RITUAL, FOODWAYS

- M Feb 14 READ: LF Chapter 4 ("Rituals")  
IN CLASS: Introduction to rituals as a specific form of tradition
- W 16 IN CLASS: Continued discussion of rituals  
**DUE: At-home quiz:** Having read Chapter 4 and discussed rituals in class on Monday, identify a ritual you've participated in and write a short (1-2 paragraph) description/explanation of it. Please post to the class' eCampus blog before our class meeting today.
- F 18 IN CLASS: Introduction to foodways, video

## WEEK SEVEN—ETHNICITY, ETHNIC GROUPS, AND FOODWAYS

- M 21 READ: Oring Chapter 2 ("Ethnic Groups and Ethnic Folklore")  
IN CLASS: Presentation/discussion of the concepts of ethnicity in folklore
- W 23 READ: EC, Theophano's "'I Gave Him a Cake': An Interpretation of Two Italian-American Weddings"  
IN CLASS: Discussion of how foodways express multiple aspects of family identity
- F 25 IN CLASS: Class potluck (**participation quiz**)

## WEEK EIGHT—OCCUPATIONAL FOLK GROUPS AND LORE; MIDTERM

- M 28 READ: Oring Chapter 4 ("Occupational Folklore")  
IN CLASS: Discussion of occupational folk groups and lore
- W Mar 2 NO CLASS
- F 4 IN CLASS: Midterm review  
**DUE: Paper 2**, the Material Culture/Foodways paper

## WEEK NINE—PERFORMANCE THEORY AND CHILDREN'S FOLKLORE

- M 7 **MIDTERM EXAM**

# ENGL 251: American Folklore & Culture

W 9 READ: LF Chapter 6 (“Performance”) to p. 145 (stop before section titled “Emergence”)  
IN CLASS: Discussion of performance theory

F 11 IN CLASS: Continued discussion of performance theory

## WEEK TEN—CHILDREN’S FOLKLORE, CON’T.

M 14 READ: Oring Chapter 5 (“Children’s Folklore”)  
IN CLASS: Introduction to children’s folklore and Paper 3

W 16 IN CLASS: Continued discussion of children’s folklore, **participation quiz**

F 18 IN CLASS: Discussion of strategies for collecting material for Paper 3

## SPRING BREAK. MARCH 21-25

## WEEK ELEVEN—FOLK MUSIC & BALLADS

M 28 READ: Oring Chapter 7 (“Ballads and Folk Songs”)  
IN CLASS: Introduction to ballad study and folk music

W 30 IN CLASS: Continued discussion of ballads and folk music

F Apr 1 IN CLASS: Continued discussion of ballads and folk music; participation quiz  
**DUE: Paper 3, the Children’s Games Paper**

## WEEK TWELVE—FOLK NARRATIVES

M 4 READ: Oring Chapter 6 (“Folk Narratives”)  
IN CLASS: Introduction to the three large categories of folk narrative, including fairy tales and legends

W 6 READ: LF pp. 167-173 (Section on “Personal Narrative in Performance”)  
IN CLASS: Discussion of personal-experience narratives as a genre of folk performance

F 8 IN CLASS: Audio/video on folk-narrative performance; **participation quiz**

## WEEK THIRTEEN—CONTEMPORARY LEGENDS

M 11 READ: *Hitchhiker* chapters 1 and 3  
IN CLASS: Discussion of rumors and legends as specific types of folk narrative

W 13 READ: *Hitchhiker* chapters 2 and 5  
IN CLASS: Discussion of the “iconography” of American urban legends

F 15 READ: *Hitchhiker* chapters 4 and 7  
**DUE: At-home quiz:** If you’ve received an e-mail legend recently, forward it to me and post a brief description and analysis of it on the eCampus blog before class today.  
IN CLASS: Discussion of contamination legends and corporate rumors

# ENGL 251: American Folklore & Culture

**WEEK FOURTEEN—LEGEND & CUSTOM**

- M 18 READ: ER, Bird's "Playing with Fear"  
IN CLASS: Discussion of local legends and folk belief
- W 20 Video on legend-related customs; **participation quiz**
- F 22 NO CLASS—Easter Break

**WEEK FIFTEEN—EMERGING FOLKLORE FORMS: "E-LORE"**

- M 25 READ: EC, Hathaway's "Life in the TV"  
IN CLASS: Introduction to electronic folklore
- W 27 IN CLASS: Continued discussion of e-lore and other emerging forms of folklore
- F 29 IN CLASS: Wrapup of e-lore discussion; final exam review and course evaluations

**FINALS WEEK**

**Tuesday, May 3rd: FINAL EXAM from 8-10 a.m. in our regular classroom**

**Please note: No early exams or makeup exams will be given—no exceptions. Check your schedule now and plan accordingly.**