

**DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES  
AND CULTURAL STUDIES**

www.mlcs.ca

**2015-2016 MLCS 204 (Fall Term)  
Forms of Folklore**

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Class Time: MWF 14-1450

Place: Tory basement 87

Office Hours: MW 11-1150

*or by appointment*

Course Website: On e-Class

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**Course Prerequisite:** none

**Course-based Ethics Approval** in place regarding all research projects that involve human testing, questionnaires, etc.?

Yes       No, not needed, no such projects approved

**Community Service Learning component**

Required     Optional     None

**Past or Representative Evaluative Course Material Available**

Exam registry – Students' Union  
<http://www.su.ualberta.ca/services/infolink/exam/>

See explanations below

Document distributed in class

Other (please specify)

NA

**Additional mandatory Instructional fees (approved by Board of Governors)**

Yes       No

**What is folklore:** Folklore is all around us. Humans naturally strive toward expression and seek beauty. They create stories, songs, toys, foods, festivals, jokes, dances, games. Folklore is traditional expression. It is those stories, songs, houses, games that have been around for a long time. It is also very modern and folklore is constantly created and adapted to meet the expressive needs of the here and now. This course will acquaint students with the forms of folklore and encourage them to examine artistic expression in everyday life.

The study and documentation of ethnic and heritage traditions is particularly encouraged, especially for students who select the community service learning option.

**Course Objectives:** Folklore governs how we see the world. It is a central aspect of our identity. To help students understand folklore and how it works, students will be led through a series of exercises which will build toward a final collection project. Course goals include:

- 1) Learning to apply a critical and analytical attitude toward everyday life phenomena, phenomena that often go unnoticed, but govern much of what people feel and do
- 2) Being able to identify folklore, learning to isolate artistic expression and to analyze its meaning
- 3) Learning fieldwork techniques. Most courses ask students to deal with data compiled by others. In this course students will gather their own data, learn the techniques of interviewing and recording information, and work on data systematization and management
- 4) Learning analytical techniques. Critical study is seldom applied to everyday phenomena, though these phenomena offer the best path to understanding people. Students will learn how to analyze folklore data and how to present the analysis effectively in written and in oral form.

Canada prides itself on its multiculturalism and indeed this is one of the dominant features of Edmonton. Students will learn how ethnicity is constructed, how to identify what is important in the construction of ethnicity and how to elicit this information with care and sensitivity. They will learn how to document heritage and build a basis for heritage management. As noted above, this is especially important for students selecting the community service learning option.

**Texts:** Martha C. Sims and Martine Stephens, *Living Folklore, Second Edition*

**Schedule:** I am listing the topics by week, along with appropriate readings – mostly chapters in the Sims and Stephens book. There will be some additional reading on fieldwork and ethics.

Fridays will be discussion days. There will be no exams, but students will do written assignments that cover all of the concepts listed above. The assignments will be on eClass and students will have some flexibility as to completion times. This is not quite a self-paced course, but students will have the opportunity to turn in an assignment ahead of the due date to get feedback. Written assignments will be preceded by opportunities for discussion. The discussions will take place on Fridays.

The **concepts** covered will include, but not be limited to:

**Folk groups:** types of groups, how they are formed, how they are viewed (esoteric and exoteric perspectives)

**Tradition** and its conservative and dynamic features; the questions of authenticity connected to tradition and considered of crucial importance by folk groups, especially ethnic groups

**Ritual and ritual types;** how tradition is expressed through ritual and how ritual instills beliefs and concepts in future generations.

**Performance and Aesthetics:** how performance is different from other behaviours, what makes performance effective and how performance adapts to fit community needs and values.

Aesthetics are value judgements – what is considered good or beautiful and why.

**Analytical approaches and techniques.** Humanistic data is notoriously “fuzzy.” How does one deal with fuzzy data and present one’s findings effectively.

**Week of Sept. 2:** Introduction. What is folklore and what are the types of folklore? What are the traits of folklore? How have definitions of folklore changed?

Reading assignment: Sims and Stephens, chapter 1.

**Week of Sept. 7:** Folk groups; the concept of group, folk group types, self-definition and identity construction

Reading assignment: Sims and Stephens chapter 2

**Week of Sept. 14:** Tradition; defining tradition. Dynamics of tradition, questions of authenticity

Reading assignment: chapter 3 of Sims and Stephens

**Week of Sept. 21:** Ritual: ritual forms and ritual types; differences between calendar and life rituals; what are “occasional” rituals and when are they needed

Reading assignment: chapter 4 of Sims and Stephens

**Week of Sept. 28:** Performance; types of performance, performance theory

Reading assignment: chapter 5 of Sims and Stephens

**Week of Oct. 5:** We have two tasks this week. One is to start preparing for fieldwork by discussing data collection approaches and techniques and the ethics of fieldwork. The other is to continue with the subject matter of the book, and topics such as emergence.

Reading assignment is a short chapter on Ethics and the Student Fieldworker which will be posted on eClass.

**Week of Oct. 12:** The Monday of this week is Thanksgiving. Happy Thanksgiving and no class. While you are enjoying the holiday, please do look at it with scholarly eyes and see if you can identify ritual and other folk elements in the celebration. In class on Wednesday and Friday – aesthetics and folk-based value judgements.

Reading assignment: chapter 6 of Sims and Stephens

**Week of Oct. 19:** Approaches to interpreting folklore, history of folklore scholarship.

Examining the way that folklore has been and is being analysed will help you with your projects.

Reading assignment: chapter 7 of Sims and Stephens

**Week of Oct. 26:** Data management. You will be getting a lot of “stuff” and processing it will be an issue. Just as the fieldwork part will give you valuable skills, so will this data processing part.

Reading assignment – you should be done and working on your project. There are sample projects in the book that you might find helpful at this point. On Friday of this week you will do an evaluation exercise where you work on each other’s proposals.

**Week of Nov. 2:** Project work. It is extremely important that you have your project selected and approved. For those of you doing Community Service Learning, your partner should be in place by this point and you should have made arrangements for your data collection session. This is the week that we will make sure you are set and ready to go.

On Friday of this week you will do an evaluation exercise where you work on each other's questionnaires and/or observation plans.

**Nov. 9-13:** Remembrance Day and fall break

**Starting Nov. 16 and going through Nov. 25: Mandatory individual consultations**

Instead of coming to class, you will have an individual appointment to discuss your data. You will receive further instructions that are geared to your specific project. You will bring the data that you collected with you and get help in organizing and systematizing your data.

**Nov. 27 through Dec. 7 –student presentations.** Oral presentations using a PPT or Prezi. Those students doing the Community Service Learning option will be doing their presentations to their community partner and the grade will come from the evaluation submitted by the community partner.

Write-ups of your research are due Dec. 14. The write-up should be a formal 5-10 page paper. Detailed instructions will be on eClass. Submit in my office, ARTS 441-C, by 2PM.

***Grade Distribution and important due dates:***

Written exercises covering the basic concepts of the course. One exercise will be due approximately every 2 weeks. Tentative due dates are Sept. 18, Oct. 2, and Oct. 16 All of the exercises together will be worth 30% of the grade.

Discussions that complement the written exercises: 10%.

Reminder – please note that the small papers and discussions take the place of exams. They carry the same weight as exams; in other words, they are important

Course project – this is worth 60% of the grade. The project will be subdivided as follows:

Project proposal: 5% - Due Oct. 26

Proposal evaluation 5%

Questionnaire or observation plan: 5% - Due Nov. 2

Questionnaire or observation plan evaluation 5%

Project data (presented to instructor during consultation): 10%

Project oral presentation: 10%

Project write-up: 20%, Due Dec. 14

*While there are no exams in this course, the due date of the paper is based on the University examination schedule. The Fall / Winter Exam Planner for the 2015-2016 academic year can be found at the following site:*

<http://www.registrarsoffice.ualberta.aca/en/Examinations/Fall-2015-Winter-2016-Exam-Planner.aspx>

**Required Notes:**

“Policy about course outlines can be found in Section 23.4(2) of the University calendar.”

### ***Academic Integrity:***

“The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at <http://www.governance.ualberta.ca/en/CodesofConductandResidenceCommunityStandards/CodeofStudentBehaviour.aspx> ) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.”

### ***Learning and Working Environment:***

The Faculty of Arts is committed to ensuring all students; faculty and staff are able to study and work in an environment safe and free of discrimination and harassment. It does not tolerate behaviour that undermines that environment. The Department urges anyone who feels this policy has been or is being violated to:

- Discuss the matter with the person whose behaviour is causing concern; or
- If that discussion is unsatisfactory, or there is concern that direct discussion is inappropriate or threatening, discuss it with the Chair of the Department.

For additional advice or assistance regarding this policy you may contact the student ombudservice (<http://www.ombudservice.ualberta.ca>).

Information about the University of Alberta Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures described in UAPPOL at <https://policiesonline.ualberta.ca/PoliciesProcedures/Pages/DispPol.aspx?PID=110> .

### ***Academic Honesty:***

**All students** should consult the information provided by the [Office of Judicial Affairs](#) regarding avoiding cheating and plagiarism in particular and academic dishonesty in general (see the [Academic Integrity Undergraduate Handbook](#) and [Information for Students](#)). If in doubt about what is permitted in this class, ask the instructor.

**Students involved in language courses and translation courses** should be aware that on-line “translation engines” produce very dubious and unreliable “translations.” **Students in languages courses** should be aware that, while seeking the advice of native or expert speakers is often helpful, **excessive editorial and creative help** in assignments is considered a form of “cheating” that violates the code of student conduct with dire consequences.

An instructor or coordinator who is convinced that a student has handed in work that he or she could not possibly reproduce without outside assistance is obliged, out of consideration of fairness to other students, to report the case to the Associate Dean of the Faculty. See the [Academic Discipline Process](#).

### ***Recording of Lectures:***

Audio or video recording of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Recorded material is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s).

### ***Attendance, Absences, and Missed Grade Components:***

Regular attendance is essential for optimal performance in any course. In cases of potentially excusable absences due to illness or domestic affliction, notify your instructor by e-mail within two days.

Regarding absences that may be excusable and procedures for addressing course components missed as a result, consult sections 23.3(1) and 23.5.6 of the University Calendar. Be aware that unexcused absences will result in partial or total loss of the grade for the “attendance and participation” component(s) of a course, as well as for any assignments that are not handed-in or completed as a result.

**In this course**, MLCS 204 students are expected to participate in the discussions that take place on Fridays. Students should have their reading done ahead of time and be prepared to participate actively to help them master and retain the material. Questions and discussion during lecture are welcome.

***Policy for Late Assignments:***

Students who consult in advance with an instructor regarding contingencies preventing the timely completion of an assignment may, at the discretion of the instructor, be granted an extension. Otherwise, a 33%-per-class-day penalty (one third of a grade, e.g. from B+ to B) will be assessed for each subsequent class-day of lateness.

***Student Accessibility Services:***

If you have special needs that could affect your performance in this class, please let me know during the first week of the term so that appropriate arrangements can be made. If you are not already registered with Specialized Support & Disability Services, contact their office immediately (2-800 SUB; Email [sasrec@ualberta.ca](mailto:sasrec@ualberta.ca); Email; phone 780-492-3381; WEB [www.ssds.ualberta.ca](http://www.ssds.ualberta.ca) ).

***Grading:***

Marks for assignments, tests, and exams are given in percentages, to which letter grades are also assigned, according to the table below (“**MLCS Undergraduate Grading Scale**”). The percentage mark resulting from the entire term work then produces the final letter grade for the course.

**“MLCS Undergraduate Grading Scale”**

Letter	%	Pts	Descriptor
A+	95-100%	4.0	<b>Outstanding:</b> Superior performance showing understanding and knowledge of the subject matter far exceeding expectations.
A	90-94%	4.0	<b>Excellent:</b> Superior performance showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.
A-	86-89%	3.7	<b>Very good:</b> Clearly above average performance with complete knowledge of subject matter.
B+	82-85%	3.3	<b>Very good</b>
B	75-81%	3.0	<b>Good:</b> average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.
B-	70-74%	2.7	<b>Good</b>
C+	66-69%	2.3	<b>Satisfactory:</b> Basic understanding of the subject matter
C	61-65%	2.0	<b>Satisfactory</b>
C-	58-60%	1.7	<b>Satisfactory</b>
D+	55-57%	1.3	<b>Minimal Pass:</b> Marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the subject matter.
D	50-54%	1.0	<b>Minimal Pass:</b> Marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the subject matter.
F	0-49%	0.0	<b>Fail:</b> Unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.