

## DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES AND CULTURAL STUDIES

<https://uofa.ualberta.ca/modern-languages-and-cultural-studies>

### 2017-2018 MLCS 204-A1: Forms of Folklore (Fall Term)

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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: 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. Particular emphasis will be on ritual expression.

The study and documentation of ethnic and heritage traditions is particularly encouraged.

**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. Students will learn 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.

**Learning Outcomes:** Canada prides itself on its multiculturalism and indeed this is one of the dominant features of Edmonton.

- 1) Students will be able to identify those features of cultural expression that are important in the construction of ethnicity.
- 2) Students will master the techniques of heritage documentation:
  - a. They will be able to conduct interviews with care and sensitivity.
  - b. Or they will be able to film in a respectful manner.
- 3) They will master simple data management.
- 4) Students will be able to write a scholarly paper effectively describing one aspect of heritage expressed through folklore.

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

**Concepts** covered include, but are 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; questions of authenticity connected to tradition and considered important by folk groups, especially ethnic groups

**Ritual and ritual types;** the expression of tradition through ritual; the teaching function of ritual; ritual and belief.

**Performance and Aesthetics:** how performance differs from other behaviours; what makes performance effective; how performance adapts to community needs and values. Aesthetics: 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?

**Schedule:** Topics are by week, along with appropriate readings – mostly chapters in the Sims and Stephens book. Short readings on fieldwork and ethics will be posted on eClass.

Most, but not all, Fridays will be discussion days. Students will discuss the lectures of the preceding week and their assigned readings. Short, 100 word response papers based on Friday’s discussion and exercises will be submitted most Mondays.

**Sept. 6:** 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. 11:** Folk groups; the concept of group, folk group types, self-definition and identity construction.

Reading assignment: Sims and Stephens, chapter 2.

**Week of Sept. 18:** Tradition; defining tradition. Dynamics of tradition, questions of authenticity.

Reading assignment: Sims and Stephens, chapter 3.

**Week of Sept. 25:** Ritual: ritual forms and ritual types; differences between calendar and life-cycle rituals; what are “occasional” rituals and when are they needed.

Reading assignment: Sims and Stephens, chapter 4.

**Week of Oct. 2:** Performance; types of performance, performance theory.

Reading assignment: Sims and Stephens, chapter 5.

Midterm 1 – October 6

**Week of Oct. 9:** 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. Think of the steps of a ritual. Think of foodways and expression of culture through food.

In class on Wednesday and Friday – we start preparing for fieldwork by discussing data collection approaches and techniques and the ethics of fieldwork. We also continue with the subject matter of the book.

Reading assignment: short chapter on Ethics and the Student Fieldworker posted on eClass; Sims and Stephens, chapter 7.

PLEASE NOTE THAT FIELDWORK (Ch. 7) WILL COME **BEFORE** APPROACHES TO INTERPRETING FOLKLORE.

**Week of Oct. 16:** Emergence: the interplay between the performer/creator of folklore and the consumer of folklore. Aesthetics and folk-based value judgements. Approaches to interpreting folklore.

Reading assignment: chapter 6 of Sims and Stephens

AGAIN – PLEASE NOTE THAT THE ORDER OF CHAPTERS 6 AND 7 IS REVERSED.

**Week of Oct. 23:** History of folklore scholarship. Data management. Selecting relevant data. Fieldwork and data management are valuable skills.

Reading assignment – no new readings. Check the sample projects in the back of the book. Friday – submit a project proposal. In discussion section: read the proposals of fellow students and provide feedback.

**Week of Oct. 30:** Discussion of project proposals; formulation of questionnaires and/or observation plans.

Friday – evaluation of questionnaires and/or observation plans.

**Week of Nov. 6:** Project work. Setting up interviews, reviewing questionnaires observation plans. Systematizing data, discarding irrelevant data, and analyzing data.  
Midterm 2 – Nov. 10

**Nov. 13-17:** Remembrance Day and Fall Break.

**Starting Nov. 20 through Nov. 24: Project discussions**

Team work on projects. Class will be divided into two groups based on project topics. The groups will meet to discuss the data collected by classmates. A substantial portion of the data must be collected by this point and ready for presentation and evaluation. Peer mentors will be available to help with projects.

**Nov. 27 through Dec. 8 –student presentations.** Oral presentations using a PPT – no Prezi’s please. Unless something has changed, Prezi’s do NOT upload to eClass.

**Write-ups** of research – **due Dec. 21.** The write-up should be a formal 5-10 page paper. Detailed instructions will be on eClass. Submit in ARTS 441-C, between noon and 3PM.

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

- 1) Short 100 word response exercises covering the basic concepts of the course: 10%. There will be approximately one such exercise per week.
- 2) Attendance and participation: 10%. Attendance will be taken on a random basis. In other words, the dates on which attendance will be taken will not be announced. Participation: Humanities in general and folklore in particular requires negotiation of concepts and beliefs. Participation means talking in discussion section and sharing ideas.
- 3) Two midterms These will be based on the response exercises and preceded by a review session: 10% each, for a total of 20%  
Midterm dates: October 6 and November 10. Midterms will be conducted electronically through eClass.
- 4) Course project : 60%, divided as follows:
  - Project proposal, due Oct. 27 – 10%
  - Questionnaire and/or observation plan, due Nov. 3– 10%
  - Peer evaluation of projects and project data discussion (week of Nov. 20-24) – 10%
  - Project oral presentation (last 2 weeks of class: Nov. 27 through Dec. 8) – 10%
  - Project write-up, due Dec. 21 – 20%

*The due date of the paper is based on the University examination schedule. The Fall / Winter Exam Planner for the 2017-2018 academic year can be found at the following site: <https://www.registraroffice.ualberta.ca/en/Examinations/Fall-2017-Winter-2018-Exam-Planner.aspx>*

**Required Notes:**

“Policy about course outlines can be found in [Evaluation Procedures and Grading System](#) 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 [www.governance.ualberta.ca](http://www.governance.ualberta.ca)) and avoid any behaviour that 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 that is safe and free from discrimination and harassment. It does not tolerate behaviour that undermines that environment. The Department urges anyone who feels that 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 [Office of the Student Ombudsman](#). Information about the [University of Alberta Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures](#) is described in [UAPPOL](#).

***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 language 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, digital or otherwise, 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. Student or instructor content, digital or otherwise, created and/or used within the context of the course 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 [Attendance](#) and [Examinations](#) 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 [Student Accessibility Services](#), contact their office immediately (1-800 SUB; Email [sasrec@ualberta.ca](mailto:sasrec@ualberta.ca); Email; phone 780-492-3381; WEB [www.sds.ualberta.ca](http://www.sds.ualberta.ca) ).

***Grading:*** Assessment of the individual course components may be in the form of numerical marks or letter grades. The final letter grade will be based on "a combination of absolute achievement and relative performance in a class" (University Calendar, [Evaluation Procedures and Grading System](#)). The University Grading Procedure mandates that "a student’s level of achievement of the goals/outcomes of a course, their grade, and the descriptor of that grade must be aligned" (<https://policiesonline.ualberta.ca/>). The following guidelines have been adopted by the Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies:

**“MLCS Undergraduate Grading Scale”**

Descriptor	Letter Grade	Grade Point Value	%
<b>Excellent.</b> A+, A or A- is earned by work which is superior in content and form and demonstrates an exceptional grasp of the subject matter. The grade of A+ designates work that far exceeds course expectations. Grades in the A range are normally achieved by a small number of students.	A+	4.0	<b>97-100</b>
	A	4.0	<b>93-96</b>
	A-	3.7	<b>90-92</b>
<b>Good.</b> B+, B or B- is earned by work that demonstrates a thorough comprehension of the course material and a good command of relevant skills. Grades in the B range are normally achieved by the largest number of students.	B+	3.3	<b>87-89</b>
	B	3.0	<b>83-86</b>
	B-	2.7	<b>80-82</b>
<b>Satisfactory.</b> C+, C or C- is earned by work that demonstrates an adequate grasp of the course material and relevant skills. Grades in the C range designate work that has met the basic requirements of the course.	C+	2.3	<b>77-79</b>
	C	2.0	<b>73-76</b>
	C-	1.7	<b>70-72</b>

<b>Poor/Minimal Pass.</b> D+ or D is earned by work that demonstrates minimal familiarity with the course material. Grades in the D range generally indicate insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the subject matter.	<b>D+</b>	1.3	<b>65-69</b>
	<b>D</b>	1.0	<b>60-64</b>
<b>Failure.</b>	<b>F</b>	0.0	<b>0-59</b>