Course Description:
Learn the fundamental skills of doing research on the customs, traditions, and everyday life practices of your own and other communities. Topics include ritual, festival, urban legend, fairytale, ballad, local music, campus life, social and political groups, cultural expressions, workplaces, the transmission of knowledge across time and space, verbal arts including joking and storytelling, dance and culture, food customs, tattoos and other bodily performances, and costumes. The course provides step by step instruction in collecting and observing cultural performances and requires a term paper based on those collections/observations.

Culture and Ideas: GE Requirement
This course provides a broad survey of cultural practices among many different groups. One of the folklorists we study defines folklore as “artistic communication in small groups.” Another defines it in terms of expressive culture. In this class, we observe how cultural practices permeate all dimensions of life, from ordinary everyday practices to the performances of rituals in yearly and life-cycle celebrations. We consider how particular cultural groups give value and meaning to different genres of human behavior including verbal arts, material culture, and interactive ritual performances.

Goal: Students will acquire tools for identifying and understanding a wide range of cultural practices.
Outcome: Students will use the tools to undertake in-depth research on a cultural practice in one community.

Texts:
Living Folklore 2nd Edition by Matha C. Sims and Martine Stephens
Available as a pdf on line:
Additional readings will be posted on Carmen or through the library online journals list (on the right side of the library page: http://library.osu.edu/)

Assignments, Exams, and Grading

Final Project Proposal: Due anytime before Final Project: Due
Oral Presentation of Final Project: April 12, 17, 19
Class participation, attendance: 5%

Requirements:

1. Comments posted to the Carmen discussion page for every reading assignment. These comments will serve as your midterm and final exam. (15 points)
2. Occasional very simple quizzes on the reading
3. Four short assignments (15 points each)
   a. Due: January 30
      Conduct a tape-recorded interview of about 15 minutes (more is fine) with someone about some aspect of work. Transcribe the interview (following the instructions on pp 221-222). You could ask any of the following questions: 1) how did you learn how to do this?; 2) how did you get your job?; 3) tell me something about your job; 4) tell me a story about something that happened related to this work.

   b. Due February 15:
      Write a ¾-one page double-spaced observation of gift exchange related to Valentine’s Day. For example, you could describe a card and/or gift you or someone else received or sent and describe your relationship with that person—is it reciprocal? You could describe a range of Valentine’s Day options for participating or not participating in Valentine’s Day.

   c. Due March 20
      Observe someone doing something. In class, we will refer to this as a “performance,” but don’t get confused by the term. Cooking, eating, playing music, telling a joke, ordering food in a restaurant or serving food, religious events, birthday celebrations (or other celebrations), or “being a customer,” in a particular kind of store can all qualify for this assignment. Describe the circumstances in which you made your observation. Describe the participants, including onlookers. Describe what happened. Describe how the person(s) performed whatever they did? What aesthetic elements or stylistic elements were part of this occasion? Two pages double-spaced.

   d. Final possible date to turn in proposal for final paper: April 5.
The proposal should include 1) what you plan to study; 2) how you plan to collect the data; 3) the kind of background information/context you plan to include; 4) a paragraph-length discussion of your proposed approach to the topic; 5) if not included in the above information, what is the cultural group and what genre of expression are you studying?

4. The Term Paper Due April 22

The goal of this class is to prepare you to do folklore research. Your term paper will be based on your "fieldwork" which could include any of the following: observation of a cultural event, an interview with a person who can tell you about their cultural practices, or a tape recording (audio or video) of people telling stories or jokes, engaging in a ritual event, making things, celebrating, playing, or other cultural events. You need to explain your topic in terms of the definitions of folklore and folk group discussed in class. Your term paper will be a description of what you learned and a discussion of the context in which these folk practices are meaningful. You may use any or all of the four assignments for your term paper, or you may select a completely different topic.

The term paper topic description is a brief statement of what you plan to study, how you plan to do your study (interview, observation, etc.), what folk group is involved, and the context in which the things you study are meaningful.

All papers are filed in the O.S.U. folklore archive. Check the O.S.U. Center for folklore studies website: http://www.cfs.osu.edu for information about visiting the archive and for the permission forms (under the category archive) that must accompany your paper.

You will receive detailed term paper instructions. The term paper should include:
A description of all participants
A description of what you observed, learned, collected
A brief discussion of the definition of folklore you are using for this project
One or more article-length (15 page) outside references; this may be something you identified in the OSU folklore archive.
An interpretation of the cultural practice; an insider’s interpretation is excellent

Schedule of Readings:

January 11: What is folklore?
Listen to the following interview between Charles Kuralt and Alan Lomax:
Post to Carmen on the question: how does Alan Lomax define folklore and what does he say is compelling to him about folklore?
Read *Living Folklore* Chapter 1, pp 1-29

**January 16 Groups** (the concept of folk group, esoteric/exoteric, self-evident and self conscious practices, style, belief)

Read *Living Folklore* pp 31-68

**January 18**

**January 23 Fieldwork**
Read *Living Folklore* pp. 206-222.

**January 25 contemporary legend**
Reading on Carmen

**Assignment 1 Due January 30**
Conduct a tape-recorded interview of about 15 minutes (more is fine) with someone about their work. Transcribe the interview (following the instructions on pp 221-222).

**January 30 Tradition**
*Living Folklore* pp. 69-97.

**February 8 Authenticity and Folk Art**
Hunt, Born into the Stone on Carmen

**February 6 Ritual**
*Living Folklore* pp. 98-129 on Carmen

**February 13 Memorials**
Tad Tuleja “Closing the Circle: Yellow Ribbons and the Redemption of the Past” in *Usable Pasts* pp. 311-331.
“memorials pile up” (the whole book is on the web and on Carmen; read only this chapter)

**February 15 Assignment 2 Due**
Family
Dargan “She Comes by it Honestly”

**February 20 Performance**
*Living Folklore* pp. 130-162

**February 22 Fairytale**
Readings on Carmen

**February 27 Versions of Beauty and the Beast**
Readings on Carmen

**March 1 Ballad**
Readings on Carmen

**March 6 Murdered Girl Ballad**
Readings on Carmen

**March 8**
Abrahams, Roger and Alan Dundes “Riddle” (on Carmen)

**March 11-15 spring break**

**March 20 Assignment 3 Due**
**March 20 Approaches to interpreting folklore**
*Living Folklore* pp 180-205

**March 22 World View**
Toelken “Folklore and Cultural World View” (on Carmen)

**March 2: Fieldwork: insider outsider**
*Living Folklore* pp222-231.

**March 29 Folklore and Place:**
Mary Hufford “Soundscape and Story” On Carmen

**April 3 Food**
Mario Montano “Appropriation and Counter-Hegemony in South Texas”
*Usable Pasts* pp 50-67. (the whole book is on the web and on Carmen; read only this chapter)

**April 5 sample papers**
*Living Folklore* pp. 232-269.

**April 5 Final possible date to turn in proposal for final paper.**
The proposal should include 1) what you plan to study; 2) how you plan to collect the data; 3) the kind of background information/context you plan to include; 4) a paragraph-length discussion of your proposed approach to the topic; 5) if not included in the above information, what is the cultural group and what genre of expression are you studying?

**April 10 sample papers**
*Living Folklore* pp. 232-285
April 12 Class Presentations

April 17 Class Presentations

April 19 Class Presentations

Course Policies

Plagiarism: In a folklore course, you are rewarded for citing others, whether written or oral sources. Your work is more valuable to the extent that you cite others rather than claim ideas as your own. Thus, in this course, plagiarism is self-defeating in more than one sense. Plagiarism is the representation of another's works or ideas as one's own: it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas. All cases of suspected plagiarism, in accordance with university rules, will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct.

Disabilities: The Office for Disability Services, located in 150 Pomerene Hall, offers services for students with documented disabilities. Contact the ODS at 2-3307. Even if you do not have a documented disability, we are willing to make any accommodations necessary to help you to do your best work for this class.

Attendance: You are expected to attend all classes. If you are unable to attend class, when you return to class, you must submit a written summary of the readings due on that day. More than two absences will result in a lower grade. You are responsible for all materials discussed in class and should make your own arrangements to get notes from another student if you miss class, whether or not the absence is excused. If you anticipate an absence and inform us in advance, we will make every effort to tape-record the class for you.