FOLKLORE (FOLK)

FOLK 022 World Music and Cultures
This course examines how we as consumers in the "Western" world engage with musical difference largely through the products of the global entertainment industry. We examine music cultures in contact in a variety of ways— particularly as traditions in transformation. Students gain an understanding of traditional music as live, meaningful person-to-person music making, by examining the music in its original site of production, and then considering its transformation once it is removed, and recontextualized in a variety of ways. The purpose of the course is to enable students to become informed and critical consumers of "World Music" by telling a series of stories about particular recordings made with, or using the music of, peoples culturally and geographically distant from the US. Students come to understand that not all music downloads containing music from unfamiliar places are the same, and that particular recordings may be embedded in intriguing and controversial narratives of production and consumption. At the very least, students should emerge from the class with a clear understanding that the production, distribution, and consumption of world music is rarely a neutral process. For BA Students: Arts and Letters Sector
Taught by: Muller
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

FOLK 029 Gender, Sexuality, & Religion
What does it mean to be a Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, Christian, or spiritual woman or man? How important are the gender differences in deciding social roles, ritual activities, and spiritual vocations? How does gender intersect with nationality, language, and politics? This course tackles all of these questions, showing how gender— its definition and the way it is taught and performed— is central to understanding religion. In this course we will learn about women's and men's rituals, social roles, and mythologies in specific religious traditions. We will also look at the central significance of gender to the field of religious studies generally, with particular attention to non-binary genders. The first part of the course will be focused on building a foundation of knowledge about a range of religious traditions and the role of women in those traditions. This course emphasizes religious traditions outside the West. Although it is beyond the scope of this class to offer comprehensive discussions of any one religious tradition, the aim is to provide entry points into the study of religious traditions through the lens of gender. This course will emphasize both historical perspectives and contemporary contexts. We will read religion through a variety of feminist and queer theory lenses— exploring the key characteristics of diverse feminist analyses of religion, as well as limits of specific feminist approaches.
Taught by: Robb
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

FOLK 081 Myth in Society
In this course we will explore the mythologies of selected peoples in the Ancient Near East, Africa, Asia, and Native North and South America and examine how the gods function in the life and belief of each society. The study of mythological texts will be accompanied, as much as possible, by illustrative slides that will show the images of these deities in art and ritual.
Taught by: Ben-Amos
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

FOLK 101 Introduction to Folklore
The purpose of the course is to introduce you to the subjects of the discipline of Folklore, their occurrence in social life and the scholarly analysis of their use in culture. As a discipline folklore explores the manifestations of expressive forms in both traditional and modern societies, in small-scale groups where people interact with each face-to-face, and in large-scale, often industrial societies, in which the themes, symbols, and forms that permeate traditional life, occupy new positions, or occur in different occasions in everyday life. For some of you the distinction between low and high culture, or artistic and popular art will be helpful in placing folklore forms in modern societies. For others, these distinction will not be helpful. In traditional societies, and within social groups that define themselves ethnically, professionally, or culturally, within modern heterogeneous societies, and traditional societies in the Americas, Africa, Asia, Europe and Australia, folklore plays a more prominent role in society, than it appears to plan in literate cultures on the same continents. Consequently the study of folklore and the analysis of its forms are appropriate in traditional as well as modern societies and any society that is in a transitional phase.
For BA Students: Humanities and Social Science S
Taught by: Ben-Amos
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

FOLK 201 American Folklore
This course will examine American expressive culture, including everyday speech, narrative, music, foodways, religion, public celebrations, and material culture through an exploration of the multiple and changing avenues of diversity in the United States. Folklore can be considered the unofficial culture that exists beneath and between the institutions of power that we read about in our history books, and that is what we will be studying—the 99% of American life that goes unseen and unnoticed in other college courses. Some of the topics we will examine are: campus folklore; body art and adornment; contemporary (urban) legends and beliefs; public celebrations and rituals; and the adaptation and commodification of folk culture in popular media.
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

FOLK 229 Myth in Society
In this course we will explore the mythologies of selected peoples in the Ancient Near East, Africa, Asia, and Native North and South America and examine how the gods function in the life and belief of each society. The study of mythological texts will be accompanied, as much as possible, by illustrative slides that will show the images of these deities in art and ritual.
Taught by: Ben-Amos
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
FOLK 241 Great Story Collections
This course is intended for those with no prior background in folklore or knowledge of various cultures. Texts range in age from the first century to the twentieth, and geographically from the Middle East to Europe to the United States. Each collection displays various techniques of collecting folk materials and making them concrete. Each in its own way also raises different issues of genre, legitimacy, canon formation, cultural values and context.
For BA Students: Arts and Letters Sector
Taught by: Azzolina
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

FOLK 252 Themes in Jewish Tradition
Course topics will vary; they have included The Binding of Isaac, Responses to Catastrophes in Jewish History, Holy Men & Women (Ben-Amos); Rewriting the Bible (Dohrmann); Performing Judaism (Fishman); Jewish Political Thought (Fishman); Jewish Esotericism (Lorberbaum) Democratic culture assumes the democracy of knowledge - the accessibility of of knowledge and its transparency. Should this always be the case? What of harmful knowledge? When are secrets necessary? In traditional Jewish thought, approaching the divine has often assumed an aura of danger. Theological knowledge was thought of as restricted. This seminar will explore the "open" and "closed" in theological knowledge, as presented in central texts of the rabbinic tradition: the Mishnah, Maimonides and the Kabbalah. Primary sources will be available in both Hebrew and English.
For BA Students: History and Tradition Sector
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

FOLK 270 Folklore and Sexuality
Sexuality is usually thought of as being biological or social, divided into categories of natural and unnatural. Often missed are its creative and communicative aspects. Examining the constructed social elements of sexuality requires attention be paid to folklore in groups, between individuals and on the larger platform of popular technological media. The most interesting locations for exploration are those places where borderlands or margins, occur between genders, orientations and other cultural categories. A field-based paper will be required that must include documentary research.
Taught by: Azzolina
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

FOLK 280 Jewish Folklore
The Jews are among the few nations and ethnic groups whose oral tradition occurs in literary and religious texts dating back more than two thousand years. This tradition changed and diversified over the years in terms of the migrations of Jews into different countries and the historical, social, and cultural changes that these countries underwent. The course attempts to capture the historical and ethnic diversity of Jewish folklore in a variety of oral literary forms. A basic book of Hasidic legends from the 18th century will serve as a key text to explore problems in Jewish folklore relating to both earlier and later periods.
Taught by: Ben-Amos
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

FOLK 406 Folklore and the Supernatural
Beliefs in the supernatural have not diminished appreciably in modern cultures, despite many predictions that they would. Recent public opinion surveys indicate many Americans hold supernatural beliefs or have had experiences they believe to be supernatural. This course will introduce key concepts in the study of culture and the supernatural. We will examine traditional beliefs about supernatural beings, supernatural realms, and humans who interact with these, as well as the historical development of Western ideas of “the supernatural” itself. Students will enhance their understanding of human diversity through cross-cultural examples of supernatural folklore, consider the relationship between the supernatural and place, and examine how various folklore genres have expressed human relationships to the supernatural. Topics may include witchcraft, ghosts, vampires, fairies, UFOs, supernatural assault, vodou, Neopaganism, saints, healing, legend tripping, and dark tourism. There will also be opportunity for students to explore related topics of interest to them.
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

FOLK 436 Urban Folklore
This course examines the emergent aesthetic and expressive traditions of urban environments. Cities are unique places with a wide range of folkloric traditions, including neighborhood stories, ethnic festivals, and folk art. We will examine the material, customary, and verbal traditions that emerge in everyday life, including contemporary legends, urban agriculture and food ways, public displays and celebrations, body art, children’s play, and Philadelphia’s ethnic arts. We will consider how these contemporary practices may be understood within a traditional folklore framework, as well as what these practices reveal about contemporary values, anxieties, and concerns. Course work will involve local field observations and will be of use to anyone studying human interaction, creative processes, or urban ethnography.
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

FOLK 485 Japanese Theatre
Japan has one of the richest and most varied theatrical traditions in the world. In this course, we will examine Japanese theater in historical and comparative contexts. The readings and discussions will cover all areas of the theatrical experience (script, acting, stage design, costumes, music, audience). Audio-visual material will be used whenever appropriate and possible. The class will be conducted in English, with all English materials.
Taught by: Kano
Course usually offered in spring term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

FOLK 499 Independent Study
Directed study at the senior level.
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Independent Study
1 Course Unit
FOLK 531 Prose Narrative
Historical, literary, comparative, and ethnographic methods contribute to study of prose narratives which were told in oral societies in antiquity and in modern times and were documented in literary societies for different purposes. Oral storytellers, both professional and amateurs, performed them in private and public spaces. Their recording from antiquity to modern times became an integral element of modern life in general and in education and arts in particular. The storytellers, their performances in oral and literary cultures, their genres, and their symbolic meanings are the subjects of the course, together with the analytical methods that help mapping their distribution worldwide.
Taught by: Ben-Amos
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

FOLK 706 Culture/Power/Identities
This course will introduce students to a conceptual language and the theoretical tools to analyze the complex dynamics of racial, ethnic, gender, sexual, and class differences. The students will critically examine the interrelationships between culture, power, and identities through the recent contributions in cultural studies, critical pedagogy and post-structuralist theory and will explore the usefulness of these ideas for improving their own work as researchers and as practitioners.
Taught by: Hall
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit