

Folklore and Mythology

Course code: HSS 310/HUM 510
Semester and year: Spring 2025
Day and time: Mondays 08:15-11:00
Instructor: Joanna Srholec-Skórzewska, Ph.D.
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Consultation hours: by appointment

Credits US/ECTS	3/6	Level	Advanced
Length	15 Sessions	Pre-requisite	TOEFL iBT 71 (undergrad) /TOEFL iBT 80 (grad)
Contact hours	42 hours	Course type	Bachelor Required-elective Master Required-elective

1. Course Description

Folklore — the oral traditions of a people — informs the arts, politics, and many other areas of human endeavor. Its study is truly interdisciplinary, involving anthropology, history, literature, music, sociology, and the arts. This course will introduce students to a wide range of oral, customary and material folklore genres, and to folkloristics, the study of folklore.

2. Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Understand the definitions, categories and subcategories of folklore.
- Identify and classify an example of folklore using the terminology and classifications of folklore study (also called "folkloristics").
- Use the various indices and scholarly journals in the field of folklore study.
- Critically examine popular conceptions regarding folklore and folklore study's own assumptions during its long history.
- Engage in focused discussion of folklore and folklore scholarship.
- Make connections between folklore and other fields, including ethnic and nationalism studies.
- Use a variety of scholarly research sources, including primary materials collected by folklorists, to formulate a thesis and support it in a folklore research paper.

3. Reading Material

Required Materials

There is no textbook. All required reading, viewing, and listening assignments are on the NEO course site in "Resources" or "Lessons" and listed below. They include items from classic folklore collections, folklore indices, scholarly studies of folklore, and documentary audio/video. Additional required graduate student readings are included here, and also listed separately in the course calendar for each date.

All:

- Anonymous. *The Homeric Hymns and Homerica with an English Translation by Hugh G. Evelyn-White. Homeric Hymns.* Cambridge, MA., Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1914. Available on Crane, Gregory F. (ed.). "Perseus Collection Greek and Roman Materials." *Perseus Project*, 2014.
 - "Hymn To Demeter" (Homeric Hymn 2) URL: <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0013.tlg002.perseus-eng1:2>
 - "Hymn To Aphrodite" (Homeric Hymn 5). URL: <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0013.tlg005.perseus-eng1:5>
- Anonymous. "Hervararkviða – The Waking of Angantýr" In *The Saga of King Heidrek the Wise*. Tr. Christopher Tolkien, Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1960.
- Anonymous. "Voluspá – The Prophecy of the Seeress." Tr. Carolyne Larrington, Oxford University Press, 1996.
- "The Race Between Toad and Donkey." In Abrahams, Roger. *Afro-American Folktales*. N.Y.: Pantheon, 1985.
- Ashliman, D.L. "Folklore and Mythology Electronic Texts." *University of Pittsburgh*. 1996-2014. <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/folktexts.html>. "Hansel and Gretel", "Rumpelstiltskin", "Cinderella", "The Hand From the Grave."
- Brunvand, Jan Harold. *The Study of American Folklore: An Introduction*. New York: Norton, 1998 (1968).
- Child, Francis James. *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1904 (1884). Internet Library Open Archive. URL: https://openlibrary.org/books/OL13499113M/English_and_Scottish_popular_ballads
- Classical mythology on theoi.com. A good list of website resources on classical mythology: <https://libguides.southernct.edu/mythology/websites>
- Dorson, Richard, *Buying the Wind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972, pp. 190-ff., "The Crying Stair Well."
- Dundes, Alan. Bloody Mary in the Mirror: A Ritual Reflection of Pre-Pubescent Anxiety *Western Folklore* 57:2/3 (Spring/Summer 1998), 119-35.
- Dundes, Alan., & Bronner, Simon. J. (2007). *The meaning of folklore: The Analytical Essays of Alan Dundes*. Logan: Utah State University Press.
 - "On Game Morphology: A study of the Structure of Non-Verbal Folklore." 154-63.
 - "Madness in Method, Plus a Plea for Projective Inversion in Myth," 343-51.
- Erdoes, Richard and Ortiz, Alfonso. *American Indian Myths and Legends*. New York: Pantheon, 1984. Selected tales.
- Finnegan, Ruth. *Oral Literature in Africa*. Chapter 14, "Proverbs," I-IV, 379-405. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2012.
- *Genesis*, Books 1-3. In "A Hebrew-English Bible According to the Masoretic Text." *Mechon-Mamre*. 2005. URL: <http://www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt0.htm>.
- Hesiod, *Theogony*, Book 1. In *The Homeric Hymns and Homerica with an English Translation by Hugh G. Evelyn-White. Theogony*. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1914. Available at *The Perseus Project*. URL: <http://data.perseus.org/texts/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0020.tlg001.perseus-eng1>

- Horák, Pavel. "Discovering Slavic Mythology between East and West: Folklore Research and the Pagan Past in the Service of Nation Building". *Folklore*, vol. 133 (2022), 463-86.
- Knapp, Mary and Herbert. *One Potato, Two Potato: The Secret Education of American Children*. Chapter 1, "The Folk Curriculum," 1-16. New York: Norton, 1976.
- León-Portilla, Miguel. *Pre-Columbian Literatures of Mexico*, Chapter 1, "Myths In Pre-Columbian Poetry." 30-59. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986.
- Mark, Joshua L. "Enuma Elish – The Babylonian Epic of Creation – Full Text." *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, 2009-2021. URL: <https://www.ancient.eu/article/225/enuma-elish---the-babylonian-epic-of-creation---fu/>
- Myerston, Jacobo. Variations on Violence in Greek and Akkadian Succession Myths. *Trends in Classics*, vol. 14 Issue I, De Gruyter, 2022, 1-35.
- Ovid, *Metamorphoses, Book 1*. A.S. Kline (tr.), *Poetry In Translation.com*. URL: <https://www.poetryintranslation.com/klineasovid.php>.
- Pavlicová M., Uhlíková L., "Folklore movement and its function in the totalitarian society". *Národopisná revue* 23/5, 2013, 31-42.
- Rand, Harry. "Who Was Rumpelstiltskin?" *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 81 (2000): 943-62.
- Taylor, Archer. "The Riddle." *California Folklore Quarterly* 2:2 (Apr. 1943), 129-47.
- Thompson, Stith. *Tales of the North American Indians*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1929. Chapter I, "Mythological Stories," VII: "Raven's Adventures," 19-24. Available at *Internet Sacred Text Archive*. URL: <https://sacred-texts.com/nam/tnai/index.htm>

Graduate:

- Dundes, Alan and Georges, Robert A. "Toward A Structural Definition of the Riddle." *Journal of American Folklore* 76:300 (Apr.-June, 1963), 111-118.
- Ellis, Larry. "Trickster: Shaman of the Liminal." *Studies in American Indian Literatures Series 2*, 5:4 (Winter 1993), 58-68. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20736767>
- Girard, René, *Violence and the Sacred*. Tr. Patrick Gregory. London, New York: Continuum, 2005 (1988, 1977 Johns Hopkins University Press). Chapter 1, "Sacrifice," 1-40.
- Janeček, Petr. "Bloody Mary or Krvavá Máří? Globalization and Czech Children's Folklore." *Slovenský Národopis (Slovak Ethnology)* 2, 221-243.
- Lüthi, Max. *The European Folktale: Form and Nature*. Philadelphia: Institute for Study of Human Issues, 1982. Chapters 1-2: "One-Dimensionality", "Depthlessness," 1-23.
- Propp, Vladimir. *The Morphology of the Folktale*. Tr. Laurence Scott. Austin: University of Texas Press: 1968 (1958).
- Segal, Robert A. *Theorizing About Myth*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999. Chapter 6, "Jung On Mythology," 67-97.
- Tangherlini, Timothy. "It Happened Not Far From Here: A Survey of Legend Theory and Characterization." *Western Folklore* 49:4 (Oct. 1990), 371-390.
- Taylor, Archer. "Problems in the Study of Proverbs." *The Journal of American Folklore* 47:183 (Jan.-Mar. 1934), 1-21.
- Zipes, Jack. "Spinning with Fate: Rumpelstiltskin and the Decline of Female Productivity." *Western Folklore* 52:1 (Jan. 1993), 43-60.

Recommended Materials

I shall give handouts in some classes for additional recommended further reading on that lecture's topic.

- Heidel, Alexander. *The Babylonian Genesis: The Story of Creation*, 2nd Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952 (1941). Chapter I, "Enuma Elish," 1-61. https://oi.uchicago.edu/sites/oi.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/shared/docs/misc_genesis.pdf
- Thompson, Stith. *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature: A Classification of Narrative Elements in Folktales, Ballads, Myths, Fables, Mediaeval Romances, Exempla, Fabliaux, Jest-Books, and Local Legends*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1955-1958.
- Uther, Hans-Jörg. *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography. Based on the System of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson*. Parts I-III, FFC 284, 285, 286. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia (Academia Scientiarum Fennica). First printing 2004. Second printing 2011.

4. Teaching methodology

I shall lecture and ask questions of individual students about the assignments and seek out questions from the class as I lecture. Also, you are expected to actively discuss the readings.

5. Course Schedule

Date	Class Agenda
Session 1 February 3	<p>Topic: Introducing Folklore: Definitions and Methods of Study</p> <p>Description: <i>How do folklorists define folklore? How do they collect, classify, and analyze it? How do we approach world mythologies? Why do we need folklore and mythology?</i></p> <p>Reading: In class: excerpts from Brunvand, <i>The Study of American Folklore</i> and Horák, <i>Discovering Slavic Mythology</i>.</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines:</p>
Session 2 February 10	<p>Topic: Ancient Near Eastern Creation Myths</p> <p>Description: <i>Ancient tablets containing some of the world's earliest recorded tales, discovered in the 19th century, sparked a controversy over the origins of Judeo-Christian myth. Also, a leading folklorist suggests ways to consider such myths today.</i></p> <p>Reading (all):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Mark, Joshua L. <i>Enuma Elish – The Babylonian Epic of Creation</i>. Read and listen along. 2) <i>Genesis</i>, Books 1-3 (in Hebrew-English Bible). 3) Dundes, A. "Madness in Method." <p>Reading (Optional, but some information from this reading will form part of lecture and will be required knowledge on exams): Heidel, Alexander, <i>The Babylonian Genesis</i>, Chapter 1, "Enuma Elish," 1-61.</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines:</p>
Session 3 February 17	<p>Topic: Ancient Greek and Roman Myths I</p> <p>Description: <i>Titanic Clashes. Stories about rivalry, family relationships, betrayals and alliances whose impact on the European culture can be visible to this day. The fundamental role of destiny.</i></p> <p>Reading:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Hesiod, <i>Theogony</i>, Book 1 (ll. 1-1020 in <i>The Perseus Project</i> online text).

	<p>2) Myerston, J., "Introduction", 3.2. "The Meaning of the Myth" and 4.2. "Enuma Eliš" & 4.3. "Hesiod's Theogony" (in 4. "The Succession Myth in Greece and Mesopotamia").</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines:</p>
Session 4 February 24	<p>Topic: Ancient Greek and Roman Myths II</p> <p>Description: <i>Was Roman mythology barely a version of the Greek mythology? A thorough comparison demonstrates similarities and differences between the two. We are going to discuss examples of diffusion and local variation of beliefs as well as the tension between one's fate and free will depicted in the stories.</i></p> <p>Reading:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) "Hymn To Demeter" (Homeric Hymn 2). 2) "Hymn To Aphrodite" (Homeric Hymn 5). 3) Ovid, <i>Metamorphoses</i>, Book 1. <p>Assignments/deadlines: Early Term Reading Quiz posted on NEO, due on NEO Friday, March 1, 11:59 p.m.</p>
Session 5 March 3	<p>Topic: Norse Myths</p> <p>Description: <i>A Northern version of creation that follows destruction, and a new world that is born out of the destruction. We will discuss the role of destiny and struggles between different kinds of creatures as well as the motif of self-sacrifice. The importance and complex role of giants.</i></p> <p>Reading:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) "Voluspá – The Prophecy of the Seeress." 2) "Hervararkviða – The Waking of Agantýr." <p>Reading (grad): Segal, Robert A. <i>Theorizing About Myth</i>, Chap. 6: "Jung On Mythology," 67-97.</p>
Session 6 March 10	<p>Topic: Ancient Mesoamerican Myths: The Indebted Ones. La Llorona.</p> <p>Description: <i>An examination of Náhuatl and other ancient Mesoamerican myth, including justifications for human sacrifice and another version of self-sacrifice commenced by a god.</i></p> <p>Reading (all): León-Portilla, <i>Pre-Columbian Literatures of Mexico</i>. Chapter 1, "Myths in Pre-Columbian Poetry," 30-59.</p> <p>Reading (grad): Girard, René. <i>Violence and the Sacred</i>, Chap. 1: "Sacrifice", 1-40.</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines:</p>
Session 7 March 17	<p>Topic: Northwest Native North American Myths.</p> <p>Description: <i>Tales of creators, tricksters and culture heroes – a single god can be all of those at once.</i></p> <p>Reading (all):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Erdoes, Richard and Ortiz, Alfonso. <i>American Indian Myths and Legends</i>. "Creation of the Animal People" (Okanagan), 14-15; "How Men and Women Got Together" (Blood-Piegan), 41-45; "Pushing Up The Sky" (Snohomish), 95-97; "People Brought In A Basket" (Modoc), 109-111; "Creation of the Yakima World" (Yakima), 117-18; "Walks-All-Over-The-Sky" (Tsimshian), 136-39; "Playing A Trick on the Moon" (Snoqualmie), 168-69; "Coyote Places the Stars" (Wasco), 171-72. 2) Thompson, Stith. <i>Tales of the North American Indians</i>. "Raven's Adventures" (Tsimshian), 19-24. <p>Reading (grad): Ellis, Larry. "Trickster: Shaman of the Liminal." <i>Studies in American Indian Literatures Series 2</i>, 5:4 (Winter 1993), 58-68. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20736767</p>

	Assignments/deadlines: Mid-term exam posted on NEO, due March 23, 11:59 p.m.
March 24	NO CLASS: MID-TERM BREAK
	Research paper: due on NEO by 11:59 p.m. May 20 will be posted on the NEO site on April 1 .
Session 8 March 31	<p>Topic: Folktales: Narratives of Magic and Cunning I</p> <p>Description: <i>Meaning and structure in folktales.</i></p> <p>Reading (all): "The Race Between Toad and Donkey," "Hansel and Gretel" (multiple versions) in Ashliman, D.L. "Folklore and Mythology Electronic Texts." http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/folktexts.html.</p> <p>Reading (grad): Max Lüthi, <i>The European Folktale: Form and Nature</i>, Chapters 1-2 "One-Dimensionality", "Depthlessness," pp. 1-23.</p>
Session 9 April 7	<p>Topic: Folktales: Narratives of Magic and Cunning II</p> <p>Description: <i>Meaning and structure in folktales.</i></p> <p>Reading (all):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Rumpelstiltskin", "Cinderella," (multiple versions of both) in Ashliman, D.L. "Folklore and Mythology Electronic Texts." http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/folktexts.html. 2) "Vladimir Propp's 31 Key Functions from Russian Fairy Tales" on NEO. 3) Rand, Harry. "Who Was Rumpelstiltskin?" 4) Zipes, Jack. "Spinning with Fate: Rumpelstiltskin and the Decline of Female Productivity" <p>Reading (grad):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5) Propp, Vladimir. <i>The Morphology of the Folktale</i>. Tr. Laurence Scott. Austin: University of Texas Press: 1968 (1958). "Introduction to the 2nd Edition", Chapter II: "The Method and Material". <p>Assignments/deadlines:</p>
Session 10 April 14	<p>Topic: Legends and Superstitions</p> <p>Description: <i>We'll examine a European place legend, an Appalachian ghost legend, and a contemporary teenagers' legend-superstition as a way of defining this elusive folklore genre.</i></p> <p>Reading (all):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Ashliman, "The Hand from the Grave" 2) Dorson, "The Crying Stair Well." 3) Dundes, Alan. "Bloody Mary in the Mirror: A Ritual Reflection of Pre-Pubescent Anxiety." <i>Western Folklore</i> 57:2/3 (Spring/Summer 1998), 119-35. <p>Reading (Grad):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Tangherlini, "It Happened Not Far from Here: A Survey of Legend Theory and Characterization." 2) Janeček, Petr. "Bloody Mary or Krvavá Máří? Globalization and Czech Children's Folklore." <i>Slovenský Národopis (Slovak Ethnology)</i> 2, 221-243. <p>Assignments/deadlines: Folktales and Legends Reading Quiz Posted on NEO, due on NEO Friday, April 25 at 11:59 p.m.</p>
April 21	NO CLASSES, EASTER MONDAY
Session 11 April 28	<p>Topic: Ballads</p> <p>Description: <i>An examination of a range of European, British and American ballads, which are a musical form of narrative oral folklore.</i></p> <p>Reading:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Child, Francis James. <i>The English and Scottish Popular Ballads</i>.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ "Tam Lin: 39A", 66-69. In <i>Tam Lin</i> Balladry. http://tam-lin.org/versions/39A.html ■ "James Harris (The Demon Lover/House Carpenter). In <i>Sacred Texts</i>. https://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/eng/child/ch243.htm <p>Listening: Multiple Versions of "Tam Lin," "James Harris/The Daemon Lover/The House Carpenter," "The Butcher Boy/The Railroad Boy," "Banks of the Ohio," "Fair Fannie Moore," "Omie Wise," "Pearl Bryan," "The Star of Bannock," "Frankie and Albert (Frankie and Johnny). Czech broadside ballads.</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines:</p>
Session 12 May 5	<p>Topic: Proverbs, Riddles and Other Folk Speech Description: <i>The wisdom of many, the wit of one.</i></p> <p>Reading (all):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Finnegan, Ruth. <i>Oral Literature in Africa</i>. Chapter 14, "Proverbs," I-IV, 379-405. 2) Taylor, Archer. "The Riddle." <i>California Folklore Quarterly</i> 2:2 (Apr. 1943), 129-47. <p>Reading (grad):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Dundes, Alan and Georges, Robert A. "Toward A Structural Definition of the Riddle." <i>Journal of American Folklore</i> 76:300 (Apr.-June, 1963), 111-118. 2) Taylor, Archer. "Problems in the Study of Proverbs." <i>The Journal of American Folklore</i> 47:183 (Jan.-Mar. 1934), 1-21. <p>Assignments/deadlines:</p>
Session 13 May 12	<p>Topic: Folk Groups and Customary Folklore. Review for the final exam. Description: <i>An introduction to non-verbal folklore and case studies of multiple genres of folklore within a single folk group. Folklore as a tool – summary.</i></p> <p>Reading:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Knapp, Mary and Herbert. <i>One Potato, Two Potato: The Secret Education of American Children</i>. Chapter 1, "The Folk Curriculum," 1-16. New York: Norton, 1976. 2) Pavlicová M., Uhlíková L., "Folklore movement and its function in the totalitarian society", 31-40. <p>Reading (grad):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3) Bronner (ed.), <i>The Meaning of Folklore: The Analytical Essays of Alan Dundes</i>. "On Game Morphology: A study of the Structure of Non-Verbal Folklore." 154-63. <p>Assignments/deadlines:</p>
Session 14 May 19	<p>Topic: Visit to the Ethnographic Museum in Prague Description: <i>We will have a guided tour at the Ethnographic Museum where we will get more familiar with various customs and traditions from the Czech lands and examine various artefacts related to them.</i></p> <p>Assignments/deadlines:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4) Final exam: posted on the NEO site on May 13 and due on NEO at 11:59 p.m. May 20. 5) Research paper: due on NEO by 11:59 p.m. May 20 (posted on the NEO site on April 1).

6. Course Requirements and Assessment (with estimated workloads)

Assignment	Workload (average)	Weight in Final Grade	Evaluated Course Specific Learning Outcomes	Evaluated Institutional Learning Outcomes*
Attendance and Class Participation	42	20%	Display understanding of key concepts, share ideas and make arguments based on folklore data and scholarly theories, meaningfully critique fellow students' ideas.	2,3
Quizzes	8	5%	Show that you know characters and plots of myths, folktales, and legends studied, as well as key folkloristic terms associated with them.	
Mid-Term Exam	25	20%	Display knowledge of folklore concepts and apply them to specific case studies from the first half of semester.	1,2
Research Paper	45	30%	Ability to participate in the scholarly discourse on folklore by properly using primary and secondary scholarly sources in a clearly written paper.	1,2,3
Final Exam	30	25%	Display knowledge of folklore concepts and apply them to specific case studies.	1,2
TOTAL	150	100%		

*1 = Critical Thinking; 2 = Effective Communication; 3 = Effective and Responsible Action

7. Detailed description of the assignments

Assignment 1: Midterm exam. The exam will consist of a series of short answers designed to test knowledge of key folklore terms as well as content of primary materials, and also 1-2 short essay questions designed to test ability to apply concepts to primary material.

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Factual material	60%
Essay(s)	40%

Assignment 2: Research paper. Choose a significant folklore research topic, critically read and analyze both primary sources and scholarly secondary sources, develop a thesis regarding that folklore and explore it in depth in writing. You *must* use peer-reviewed scholarly secondary sources; exclusive use of popular Internet sources will get a C or lower. **Make sure you have access to a library database. Minimum word count (excluding bibliography): undergraduates 2000 words; graduate students 3000 words.**

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Use of primary texts as well as ability to identify and correctly use scholarly secondary sources to organize, analyze and present folklore.	60%
Clear, grammatically correct writing appropriate to a scholarly paper.	40%

Assignment 3. Final exam. The final exam will consist of factual questions designed to test your mastery of the full semester’s material covered, plus 2-3 questions requiring 600-800 word essays each, designed to test ability to apply concepts to primary material.

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Factual material	60%
Essays	40%

8. General Requirements and School Policies

All coursework is governed by AAU’s academic rules. Students are expected to be familiar with the academic rules in the Academic Codex and Student Handbook and to maintain the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity in their work. Please see the AAU intranet for a [summary of key policies](#) regarding coursework.

Prepared by: Joanna Srholec-Skórzewska
Date: Nov. 29, 2024

Approved by: Andrew Giarelli
Date: Dec. 4, 2024