

ENGLISH 780

## PRESERVING FOLKLORE THROUGH MULTIGENRE WRITING

### SYLLABUS AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS

DR. NANCY MACK

#### 1. DESCRIPTION OF THE COURSE:

Traditional art, literature, and music valorize aspects of elite culture. Taking a more anthropological focus, folklorists seek to preserve the wisdom and traditions of the common folk. Folk groups can be of many types: ethnic, occupational, age, family, gender, region, religious, national, leisure activity, etc. Folklore as an area of scholarly study has expanded to include many areas of folk life such as: foods, costumes, crafts, architecture, games, dances, festivals, traditions, superstitions, music, ballads, tales, legends, jokes, rhymes, riddles, proverbs, and language habits.

Students will learn interviewing and artifact research techniques in order to write memoirs for their own family, folk group, or community neighborhood. Family folklore stories can be about heroes, rogues, mischief makers, survivors, innocents, migrations, lost fortunes, courtships, family feuds, supernatural happening, or customs. A multi-genre writing project will be both a preservation and analysis of the collection.

Through reading journals, participants will gain a basic understanding of folklore and folklife. Students will complete a multigenre writing project about a family or community event that is researched through both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are multiple informant interviews and secondary sources are existing written documents, books, articles, or web sites. Multiple perspectives and historic contexts will be included to emphasize critical analysis of the event.

This course will also study scholarly issues related to folklore as a discipline, interviewing methodology, and multigenre writing. Students will complete an essay about one of these issues that incorporates their personal experience with reading, researching, and writing folklore that could be published in an academic journal.

I am willing to negotiate changes in some of the readings, classroom activities, and assignments. We can negotiate such changes as a whole class or on an individual basis. I value student input about the direction and content of this course.

#### 2. TEXTS:

The Study of American Folklore by Jan Harold Brunvand.

A Celebration of American Family Folklore by Steven J. Zeitlin, Amy J. Kotking,  
and Holly Cutting Baker.

Writing with a Passion by Tom Romano.

Other readings and websites given in class.

Blending Genres by Tom Romano (optional).

Writing Family Histories and Memoirs Kirk Polking (optional).

### 3. MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS:

- A. Reading Journal: You will be reading essays about folklore in the first half of the term. Several of these will be designated for a reading journal entry. There will be a separate handout about your reading journal entries. These entries will ask you to combine critical analysis, citations, and your personal experiences.
- B. Writing Process Points: Since your writing projects this term are two major projects, we will have interim deadlines to keep you from getting behind. Field notes, reflective journals, interview transcripts, and drafts will all be given frequent check-up deadlines. Missing the deadline will dock you points. If you miss several deadlines, I reserve the right to not accept you final project.
- C. Folklore Multigenre Project: This fourth hour project will contain several genre pieces written about a limited event experienced by a member of your family, folkgroup, or community neighborhood. You will need to be able to interview family members and friends several times in order to gather details for your memoir selections.
- D. Academic Essay: This scholarly essay will be about an issue related to folklore as a discipline, interviewing methodology, or multigenre writing assignments. This essay will incorporate personal experience with reading, researching, and writing folklore that could be published in an academic journal or delivered at a conference.

### 4. GRADES:

#### A. Grade Percentages

Reading Journals and Writing Process Points	20% Due Weekly
Multigenre Folklore Project	40% Due Finals Week
Academic Essay	40% Due Seventh Week

#### 4. BASIC POLICIES

- A. Attendance Regular attendance is expected. Participating in classroom activities is essential to this course. You cannot miss class and fax your work into me: this is not a correspondence course. Missing one class will be equal to missing a half a week's worth of work. Poor attendance will dramatically lower your final grade. If you cannot attend class weekly or need to leave class early or need to come to class late every day, you should drop this course and take something else.
- B. Class Cancellation Since Wright State rarely closes, we need a system for deciding when the weather is too bad for you to come to class. Rather than trying to call each one of you, I will follow the closing announcement for Sinclair University. So if the weather is bad, watch TV channels 2 or 7 or listen to the radio for an announcement.
- C. Future Use of Your Work I like to use real student papers as good examples in class and in teacher workshops. Also, I write articles about some of my teaching strategies. If I would use your writing, you would be given full credit and would retain copyright of your piece of writing. If you do not want your writing published or shared in a future class, please notify me in writing on the cover sheet of your essay. You will not be paid for your writing, but such a publication could be listed on your resume'.

D. Incompletes Incompletes are rarely given for this class. If you feel that there are compelling circumstances to warrant an incomplete, contact me before the end of the quarter to make arrangements.

E. Recommendations If you need a recommendation for a scholarship, further graduate work, or employment, please request a letter several weeks in advance. You must have taken at least two courses with me in order for me to write an accurate recommendation.

