

Folklorists see folklore as the foundation upon which all other culture is based. To understand culture at all, one must understand folk culture. The readings for this introductory course concentrates on American folk culture from the eighteenth century forward, but the fundamental focus of the course is the role that folklore takes in the lives of the students who take the class.

After two weeks devoted to a definition of folklore, the course surveys major scholarly approaches to folklore and the genres best known to residents of the United States at the beginning of the twenty-first century: beliefs, legends, historical traditions, festivals, jokes, tall tales, riddles, and proverbs. The course also devotes considerable time to many of the cultures well represented in Houston's population: African American, Anglo-American, Asian American, Cajun, Creole, Mexican American. We conclude with assignments focused on the question of what, if anything, is unique about or definitive of American folklore.

The two major writing assignments require students to collect folklore: first, students conduct a self-survey, collecting folklore exclusively through their own memories; later, they record and analyze the lore of others. Through these exercises students experience and analyze the roles and importance of folklore in their own lives and in the communities to which they belong.

There are also two exams.

Goals: a basic understanding of folklore and its working in the student's personal experience and in the lives of others; an introduction to the scholarship of folklore, its premises, and its uses; an exploration of folklore's role in American culture.

Texts: [The first two items will be available for sale only at the College Store (3503 Elgin St., ne corner of Scott and Elgin; 713 659-2665). They will NOT be available at the bookstore in the University Center. Be sure to phone first to see if the books have arrived. They are scheduled to be in the store by the first week of classes.

Brunvand, Jan H., ed. *Readings in American Folklore*. New York: Norton, 1979.

Dorson, Richard M., ed. *Buying the Wind: Regional Folklore in the United States*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964.

Reader. A booklet of outlines assembled for this course and available at the University Copy Center by the end of the first week of class.