Anth 419/519 Performance, Politics, and Folklore

This seminar investigates the definitions, ownership, and display of folklore, heritage, and culture by examining sites such as museums, heritage parks, folklore festivals, community events, and tourist destinations. An interdisciplinary approach explores the aesthetic, political, economic, and social dimensions of cultural performances. We will explore contemporary issues in performance studies with an emphasis on the post-1970's period, when the study of context and event emerged in folklore and linguistic scholarship. The study of performance involves an exploration of the aesthetic, political, and artistic dimensions of social interaction. One thread of inquiry examines performances as embedded in structured events that have distinct boundaries and have performer and audience roles. Other threads of inquiry interrogate the meanings and histories of performances, their political dimensions, their interactions with national, local, and international agendas (such as UNESCO), and the agency of their actors. What are the varied meanings of performances, and how do they relate to varied identities? How does performance relate to hierarchy, power, and resistance? This course ties together interdisciplinary threads from folklore, anthropology, cultural studies, linguistics, feminism, queer theory, ethnomusicology, film studies, and theater arts.

The class has a Blackboard site where I will post the syllabus and other documents and announcements: https://blackboard.uoregon.edu. The class discussion board via blackboard is a means to initiate and continue our discussions and to post questions and outlines. In addition, I welcome questions and feedback via email, telephone, in writing (I have a comment bag available at every class), and in person during office hours.

Please turn off cell phones during class.

Plagiarism is not tolerated at the UO. Your work must be your own.

Note: If you have a documented disability and need accommodation, please contact the office of Disability Services to request an accommodation.

Requirements:
1. 10% of your grade is based on attendance.

2. 20% of your grade is based on class participation. Discussion is the mode of the course. Students are required to pick one or two dates on which to present and lead discussion in class on the issues raised in the readings/films. Please let me know when you wish to present and I will let you know if you are doing a solo or group presentation. Group members need to coordinate their presentations/discussions. On the first day of class, we will review varied ways of facilitating discussion. Using the blackboard discussion board, students are required to post comments and/or outlines and questions on the readings/films prior to their oral presentations. The deadline is 4 PM of the day previous to the presentation.
3. **70% (53% for graduate students)** of your grade is based on three installments of an evaluative/interpretive/critical journal on the required readings/films. I suggest that students write a few pages per session, and have them ready before class. These pages can then be rethought, expanded and/or edited into the journal.

   The first written installment is 10 pages, due **April 27** in class, and covers the readings/films through April 22: **26%**.  
   The second is 5 pages, due **May 11** in class, and covers the readings/films through May 6: **20%**. 
   The third is 8 pages, due **June 10 at noon**, and covers the readings/films through the end of the term: **24%**. Please deposit the third journal in a box in 365 Condon.  
   Journal guidelines will be mutually developed, see end of syllabus.

4. **Graduate Students (17%)**: Each graduate student will write an original paper or project. Ideally, you will propose a project that relates directly to or is a part of your graduate work. You may choose an ethnography to read and critically review (I can help you find one that dovetails with your interest). You may do a mini-ethnography of an event or performance. Collaborative projects are welcome. An oral presentation on your project will be made on June 1, 3, or 10. A written version of the paper/project (10 pages) is due **June 10 at noon** in 365 Condon. A 1-page proposal for the project/paper is due **April 15** and an outline is due **May 18**.

**Readings and Films**

All required readings and two films (Paris is Burning; and Cannibal Tours) must be read/viewed prior to the class in which we discuss them. Please plan ahead.  
The required readings consist of internet readings and articles on Blackboard. Internet readings are found either via the URL provided or via the UO Library webpage [https://library.uoregon.edu](https://library.uoregon.edu). Go to Journal Titles (Find Text) in the first column. Blackboard readings are in a folder under Course Documents.

Note: Two books have been ordered in the bookstore. The excerpts from them are posted on Blackboard.

**Outline:**

1. **March 30**: Introductions and goals of the course. Debates about the definition of folklore. Historical relationship between folklore and anthropology. Precursors to the performance approach. The ethnography of communication approach in the 1970's. What are the limits of performance?

2. **April 1**: Events, Contexts, Performances. Verbal Arts and Performance.

   Bauman, Richard  
3. **April 6:** The ethnography of experience: ritual and drama.

Turner, Victor  

Turner, Victor  

Schechner, Richard  
1985 Between Theater and Anthropology. Univ. of Penn, pp. 3-33. Blackboard.

4. **April 8:** Performance, Meaning, Aesthetics, Narrative Arts.

Schieffelin, Edward  

Schieffelin, Edward  

Myerhoff, Barbara  

**Note:** April 9, 3:30 PM, Lecture by Ronelle Alexander, UC Berkeley Slavic Languages, on Balkan languages and identities, 145 Straub.

5. **April 13:** Performativity/Gender as Performance/ Queer Theory: Race, Class, Sexuality

Sullivan, Nikki.  
Film: Paris Is Burning. View this film on your own (on reserve).

**Graduate Students (and interested undergraduates):**

Butler, Judith  
6. April 15: Inventing Tradition, Questioning Authenticity.

Handler, Richard and Jocelyn Linnekin

Keesing, Roger

Trask, Haunani-Kay

Note: April 17–18, Racial Formation in the Twenty-First Century: A Symposium on Theory, Politics and Practice, Knight Law Center
http://www.waynemorsecenter.uoregon.edu/Racial_Formation_09/home.html

7. April 20: Tradition and the Politics of Identity

Briggs, Charles

Gable, Eric, and Richard Handler

8. April 22: Debating Authenticity ad Representation through Museums and Art Markets

Clifford, James

West, Richard

Evans-Pritchard, Deidre

Film: Gathering Up Again. We will view this film in class.

10. April 29: Display, Representation, Heritage, Museums

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara

Kratz, Corrine and Ivan Karp

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara


Brown, Michael

Brown, Michael

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara

12. May 6: Tourism, Globalization, and Display

Film: Cannibal Tours. View this film on your own (on reserve).

Bruner, Edward

Film: Weaving Worlds. We will view this film in class.


Myers, Fred

Myers, Fred


Feld, Steven

Feld, Steven


Steven Feld Public Events:
May 18: 7:00 pm. McKenzie 221. "Hallelujah!" Film #1 of the trilogy "Jazz Cosmopolitanism in Accra (Ghana)” + discussion. Legendary drummer Ghanaba and the Winneba Youth Choir perform their unique talking drums interpretation of Handel’s Hallelujah Chorus; plus a conversation with Ghanaba about Africa, jazz, and European music.

May 19: 7:00 pm. McKenzie 221. "Accra Train Station." Film #2 of the trilogy + discussion. Nii Noi Nortey (Ghanaian musician, afrifone instrument inventor, and sculptor on Accra Trane Station) and the African legacy of John Coltrane.
May 20: 7:00 pm. McKenzie 221. "Por Por." Film #3 of the trilogy + discussion. How a union of transport workers invented a funeral music from antique klaxon car horns, with resonances of swing, bebop, and the New Orleans jazz funeral.

May 21: 1:00 PM. Student Forum. Beall Concert Hall. "Acoustic Ecology of Bells and Birds." Do bells stand to 1000 years of European histories of sound, cosmology, and ecology as birds do to an even longer duree in tropical rainforests? Is it possible to think of birds and bells as technologies for the production of consciousness of space and time? Research and recording in 6 European countries and Papua New Guinea explore these and related questions.

May 22: 3:15 PM, Media Center. "SCHIZOPHONIA AND ITS DISCONTENTS: REVISITING BRIAN ENO & DAVID BYRNE'S 'MY LIFE IN THE BUSH OF GHOSTS'. We all know what happened to Salman Rushdie and Theo Van Gogh. Comparatively, pop stars David Byrne and Brian Eno got off easy when they turned Koranic recitation into groovy dance music in 1981 for MY LIFE IN THE BUSH OF GHOSTS. Little has been revealed of this world music saga and how it connects to so many broader rhetorics of "free speech" vs. censorship in "world music."

**Note:** May 21-31, Earth Matters on Stage: Eco drama festival:  
www.uoregon.edu/~Ecodrama

17. May 27: Gypsy Music and the Marketing of Exoticism

Silverman, Carol  

18. June 1: Ethics, Feminism, and Fieldwork.

Lassiter, Luke  

Toelken, Barre  

Lawless, Elaine  
1992 "I was Afraid Someone Like You... An Outsider...Would Misunderstand" Negotiating Interpretive Differences between Ethnographers and Subjects. Journal of American Folklore 105(417):302-314. Internet.
19. June 3: Presentations

Note: We may need to meet during the final exam period, **Wed June 10: 10:15- 12:15**.

**Journals due Wed June 10: 12:15 PM in 365 Condon.**

**Journal Guide (draft)**

Points will be deducted for late papers and for papers exceeding the double-spaced page limit. No folders, please: 1" margins, one staple in left hand corner.

You are encouraged to group articles and emphasize theoretical themes, and analytical contrasts and similarities.

You may omit one article/film at most.

If you cite relevant authors in the required readings, just cite the page number.

1. What are the author's main objectives, goals and agendas?

2. What is the context for the writing of this article/making of this film? To what body of theory does the article relate?

3. What are the major findings?

4. Do you agree with the arguments? why? why not?

5. How does the article relate to the issues and theoretical debates previously discussed in class? You may also bring in readings from outside the class, and of course, your own experiences.

6. How do you evaluate the article/film? What questions does it raise for you?