**Annual Departmental Assessment Report**

**Department or Program: Folklore and Public Culture**

**Academic Year of Report: 2020-2021**

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**Section 1: Learning Objectives Assessed for this Report**

The Learning Objectives of the program are that students should be able to:

1. Identify, explain and apply basic concepts in Folklore scholarship
2. Demonstrate ability to conduct ethnographic fieldwork on folklore topics and integrate research findings into speech and written presentations
3. Identify, explain, and analyze diverse folklore forms in relationship to the historical, cultural, and social contexts in which they are performed, employing appropriate theoretical and methodological approaches
4. Identify, explain, and critically analyze the role of folklore in community constitution, identity formation, and conflict negotiation for diverse groups of people in the United States and globally

**Section 2: Assessment Activities**

It should be noted that we have very small sample sizes, as there are only 12-15 Folklore & Public Culture majors at any one time, and the classes taught by Folklore and Public Culture core faculty (the ones we have access to for assessment purposes) form only a fraction of the courses that count for the major. Each course taught by Folklore and Public Culture core faculty will have only 2-3 Folklore and Public Culture majors (and as many as 147 non-majors). This in a sense the value provided by Folklore and Public Culture core faculty and courses goes to non-majors to a great extent than to majors.

For each of the seven classes described below, we looked at class materials and the papers and exams produced by the students, an unusually easy task this year because everything is recorded on Canvas, due to the pandemic.

For Learning Objective 1, we looked at the FLR 250 (Introduction to Folklore) course taught in winter 2021. This turned out to enroll one Folklore major (and 41 non-majors). She earned an A in the class (with a score of 95%), and her tests and papers showed her well able to handle basic concepts of Folklore, writing about rites of passages, the features and meaning of urban legends, cultural influences on supernatural explanations of natural phenomena,

For Learning Objective 2, we looked at three courses. The first was the same FLR 250 course described above; there we examined the fieldwork project done by the Folklore major, which showed that she was able to do sophisticated interviewing and analysis on multiple topics. Second, we looked at the FLR 410/510 "Folklore Fieldwork" class taught in winter 2021 (this course is undergoing a transition in number). This had two Folklore majors (and a number of others), whose projects showed that they were proficient in fieldwork skills. One of these majors (not the one described above) went on to do an internship in fieldwork practices under a Folklore faculty member, shadowing a folklorist in interviewing tradition-bearers in the community, in this case by Zoom because of the pandemic, and producing field notes and a written report, all of which demonstrated proficiency. Third, we looked at the FLR 415/515 “Folklore and Foodways” class taught in winter 2021, which had 18 students, around 3 of whom were majors. The in-class presentations of the students' individual projects, observed for a teaching peer review, showcased all four Learning Objectives.

Learning Objectives 3 and 4 were embedded in the work done as described for the first two Learning Objectives, as well as in other academic work. For this we also looked at FLR 236 (Magic in the Middle Ages), taught in summer session 2020. This enrolled 46 students, of whom 4 were Folklore majors, who earned grades of A, A, A-, and B. Their papers and tests covered topics such as the role of religion in the development of witch persecution, the ways in which the increasing demands of the Church led ordinary people to develop their own home rituals, and how communities form and are formed by common beliefs and practices. We are satisfied that Learning Objectives 3 and 4 are being achieved. These Learning Objectives are also on show in the spring 2021 FLR 410/510 class, "Games and Culture," which enrolls 3 Folklore majors. The students successfully wrote on such topics as the ways in which Japanese poetry relates to the game of Go, the ways in which community is forged by the pan-African game of oware (a form of mancala), not only in Africa itself but in the African diaspora in the Caribbean, and how ancient Egyptian beliefs about the afterlife were mediated by the game of senet. Each of the Folklore majors is performing well in the course.

The program continues to have the challenge that since the new, lengthy online course evaluations have been developed at the UO, a vanishingly small proportion of students fill them out, despite various inducements to do so. Of those who do fill them out, of course we have no way of knowing which were Folklore & Public Culture majors. Thus this has not been a fruitful avenue of assessment for us.

**Section 3: Actions Taken Based on Assessment Analysis**

We are satisfied that the program's learning goals are being met. The challenges faced by the program, described below in Section 4, relate to other aspects of student experience.

**Section 4: Other Efforts to Improve the Student Educational Experience**

The biggest challenge faced by the program is the extreme reduction in the number of courses, due to a drastic reduction in core faculty. Where the program had 12 active core faculty in 2015-16, that has been reduced to 7 in 2020-21, including two on leave and one other teaching only one course. So if we calculate 4 courses per year per faculty member, in 2015-16 that gives 48 courses offered in 2015-16, and only 20 in 2020-21. It has become difficult for Folklore majors to find the courses to allow them to complete their major expeditiously. In response we have put in a proposal to simplify the major by eliminating the 2 categories into which courses were divided, and which always was an imperfect division, as most courses actually should fulfill both categories. In the longer run, new faculty are urgently needed if the program is to be able to offer a full range of topics and themes, in particular those relating to diversity. We put in both a Hiring Proposal and a Target of Opportunity hiring proposal in 2020-2, but were not successful.

**Section 5: Plans for Next Year**

In 2021-22 we will attempt to improve the student education experience by putting in yet another hiring proposal, hoping to strengthen our course offerings. As we have no excess budget, particularly after the summer earnings were reclaimed by the Provost's office, we cannot undertake any initiatives that call for additional resources. Our Equity & Inclusion committee will attempt to devise ways to strengthen our diversity initiatives without further funding. We will assess those courses next year that are likely to enroll the highest number of Folklore majors. Despite our attenuated ranks, the evidence shows that the program offers what it should to students, and that students are accomplishing the Learning Objectives as they should.