

Student Name: Elizabeth Strauss

Individual Major Advisor Name: Joseph Mbele

Title of Individual Major: Folklore Studies

Summary Description of Individual Major:

The Folklore major aims to gain an understanding of the academic study of folklore, including mythology, fairy tales, folk music, and urban legends. Through a variety of academic courses and independent research and study, I aim to investigate the significance of folklore in world cultures and its relevance in today's world, as well as the intersections between folklore and religion, and between folklore and contemporary literature. Ultimately, I want to understand and help to preserve cultural traditions, and to help the average reader critically understand and appreciate these traditions as well.

The major operates under a broad definition of folklore, considering classical myths and legends, fairy tales, religious stories, urban legends, and other stories with cultural significance to fall under the definition of "folklore." As such, classes in the major will emphasize examination of a large variety of folklore genres and traditions, and techniques for analysis.

Title of Senior Project: Stories on the Hill: A Collection and Analysis of St Olaf Students' Cultural Backgrounds

Description of the Project:

My senior project will be a compilation of five to six cultural folk stories collected from St Olaf students and comparative analysis of these stories. I will produce a website which will compile each story and my analysis of it, as well as a final paper assessing the ways in which the project fulfills the goals of the individual major. The project will aim to encompass a wide range of cultures and to include stories that represent or have special significance within the teller's culture in some way. I will ask students to tell me stories that are especially well known within their culture, stories that aim to teach religious or moral values, or stories that tell the listener something important about the teller's culture. I will consult with the College Archives early in the project (Fall semester) to determine if it is possible to archive the final product as a record of part of the range of the student body's various cultural backgrounds.

I will treat these stories with the utmost respect and my analysis will come in the form of a) drawing connections between the stories that students tell me and other stories and theories that I have come across in my major; b) gleaning information about the tellers' cultures directly from the stories that I will then verify before adding it to my final product; and c) questioning unusual or inconsistent aspects of the stories and proposing possible answers to these questions. I will not draw moral conclusions or pass judgment on any culture that is not my own.

The semester will be roughly divided into two parts— the first part of the semester will consist of study of fieldwork methodologies within Folklore Studies, to be guided by Professor Mbele with assistance from librarian Jason Paul, while the second part of the semester will consist of collecting stories from students, compiling and editing them for readability, and analysis of each story. Pending a

conversation with College Archives staff, both parts may also entail working with the Archives to ensure that my project meets appropriate standards for items included in the Archives.

The guiding questions for the first part of the semester will include:

- What practical considerations do folklorists take into account when doing fieldwork?
 - What are the best ways to recruit storytellers?
 - What are the best ways to help a storyteller feel comfortable and at ease when telling a story in order to get the most detailed and authentic retelling?
- What ethical considerations do folklorists take into account when doing fieldwork?
 - How do folklorists ensure that stories with special cultural significance are treated as respectfully as possible?

The guiding questions for the second part of the semester will include:

- What are some cultural backgrounds that St Olaf students come from?
- What aspects of St Olaf students' cultures do students want to showcase?
- What are the most productive and respectful ways to engage with cultures that are different than my own?

Description of the Plan -- a 2-semester plan for your senior project

Fall Semester

- A list of the course(s) in the fall semester that will help prepare you for carrying out your Integrative Senior Project -- *How will you incorporate that work into your project during the spring semester?*
 - During the fall semester, I am taking Asian Studies 333: What is a Hero?, which is my final 300 level class before my senior project. This class challenges me to think critically at an advanced level about stories from a variety of cultures. I will apply these skills during the analysis portion of my senior project.
- If you are using the IS 391 option, a week-by-week plan for the fall semester, including monthly and semester goals, and criteria for the P/N evaluation
 - N/A
- Your schedule for meeting with your advisor in the fall semester -- *How often will you meet? What have you agreed will be the goals for these meetings? If you are studying off campus, how and how often will you communicate with your advisor?*
 - I have been meeting with Professor Mbele occasionally over this semester to plan my senior project. I plan to continue meeting with him every two or three weeks to check in. I have met with Jason Paul once this semester and will continue to be in contact with him regarding research questions.
- Your research plan and a preliminary reading list (in consultation with your research librarian) -- *What research strategies will serve you best? How often will you meet with your librarian? How will you present research results in your project and/or your web portfolio?*
 - Jason Paul has recommended the following books for use during the first part of the semester:
 - Bartis, Peter. *Folklife and Fieldwork : a Layman's Introduction to Field Techniques*. Revised 2002. Washington, D.C: Library of Congress, 2002. Print.

- MacClancy, Jeremy. *Exotic No More : Anthropology for the Contemporary World* . Second edition. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2019. Print.
 - Mannik, Lynda, and Karen McGarry. *Practicing Ethnography : a Student Guide to Method and Methodology*. North York, Ontario, Canada ;: University of Toronto Press, 2017. Print.
 - Ritchie, Donald A. *Doing Oral History*. Third edition. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014. Print.
 - We will discuss books concerning specific folklore traditions later, when I have determined what traditions I will be drawing from. In the meantime, Jason has also provided a number of folklore journals and databases.
- Other resources (human, technological, other) you might need -- *Do you need IRB approval?*
 - None
- Your intermediate and semester-end goals for your web portfolio -- *Will you have special technical or support needs (graphics, sound, copyrighted or fair use materials, privacy issues)?*
 - By the end of this semester, my web portfolio will contain materials from classes that I have taken within the major, including final projects; my major proposal; and a short personal introduction and biography

Spring Semester (IS 392)

- An outline of your plan for the second semester, including monthly and mid-semester goals
 - By the beginning of the semester, I will have met with College Archives staff to discuss whether my project is suitable for the archives and what criteria it will need to meet to be suitable. I will make any needed adjustments to this schedule based on that meeting.
 - By the end of February, I will have read and discussed literature on the practices and ethics of ethnographic study and folklore field work, guided by Professor Mbele. I will have created a plan for myself as to how to implement best practices into my project.
 - I will begin recruiting students at the end of February.
 - By the end of March, I will have met with students and recorded them telling their stories in the DiSCO video recording studio. I will have edited each video for clarity and prepared an audio transcript or closed captions. I will have begun research into other stories and folk traditions from the culture of each story.
 - By the end of April, I will have completed analysis of each story and begun preparing my presentation.
 - By Honor's Day (May 6), I will have prepared my presentation.
 - By the last day of classes (May 18), the project will be completed and the website will be finalized.
- Your plan for meeting with your advisor in the spring semester.
 - I will meet with Professor Mbele every week or so of February to discuss methodology and ethics of field work. We will also discuss logistics and a plan for carrying out the fieldwork.
 - I will continue meeting with Professor Mbele every two or so weeks throughout the rest of the semester to discuss the stories and points of analysis. Throughout this time, he will continue to recommend texts relevant to the stories that I will be discussing.
- Your plan for meeting with your research librarian and for continuing your research.

- I will meet with Jason Paul at the beginning of the semester to go over texts that I will be reading with Professor Mbele during the first part of the semester and make sure that we're on the same page about what I'll be studying. I will meet with him again at the end of February/ beginning of March once I have recruited students to discuss resources to gain an understanding of relevant aspects of each culture.
- A more complete description of what you will submit in early May -- *What format(s) will you use to present your project? Will it have one or several components? Will it include a performance, exhibit, talk, or other ephemeral aspect? Which part(s) will you plan to add to your web portfolio?*
 - My final product will be a WordPress website to be linked on my web portfolio. It will be comprised of one page for each story, each of which will include a video of the student telling their story, including an audio transcript and/ or closed captions; a brief background of the culture that each story comes from; notes on how each recording was obtained, the personal and cultural context of each story, and about the people telling the stories; and my analysis of each story. It will also include an introduction page with information about the project and the Folklore major as a whole.
 - I will also produce a final paper which I will submit to Professor Mbele that will evaluate my project and the major as a whole based on the ways in which the project and the major have fulfilled the goals of the major as stated in the initial major proposal.
- A preliminary plan for your public presentation -- *Who/where is your most appropriate audience for your public talk in April? Will you need to make any special arrangements (location, equipment, etc.)? When will you use the Speaking Space to practice? What will you feature on your poster for the CIS poster session?*
 - My presentation will consist of a slideshow with descriptions of: the initial goals of the project; the methodology I used to collect the stories and what I would change for the next time I do fieldwork; and brief retellings and analysis of two or so stories. I will need a projector, but no specialized equipment.
- The criteria you and your advisor have agreed on for evaluating your Senior Project and all its parts -- *What materials or other evidence will your advisor be able to share with the CIS Director in May?*
 - Professor Mbele will evaluate each component of the project based on the quality of the ideas and their groundedness in the literature of Folklore Studies. He will look at articulation of ideas, quality of analysis and interpretation, and success of fieldwork elements. He will also consider conversations that we have had about my project and the contents of my final reflection paper in his analysis.

Student Signature: Elizabeth Strauss

Date: 11/1/2021

Advisor Signature:

Date: