



CIEE Global Institute – Shanghai

Course name:	History of Chinese Folklore
Course number:	ANTH 3101 SHCN
Programs offering course:	Open Campus
Open Campus Track:	Language, Literature and Culture Track
Language of instruction:	English
U.S. semester credits:	3
Contact hours:	45
Term:	Spring 2020

Course Description

This course is a survey of China's rich folkloric heritage. It explores Chinese traditional myths and tales, musical and poetical folklore, as well as folkloric aspects of material culture, and folk festivals and amusement. The goal is to learn about forms and contents that are unique to Chinese folklore, but also to go beyond the “phenomenal” level and understand how religion (Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism) and political ideology (Socialism) have shaped concepts of cosmogony, human creation and existence, and the social values negotiated in the texts and practices analyzed.

Finally, the course seeks to diversify the theoretical toolbox of the folklorist, asking questions such as: How does information travel through time and space via folk transmission? What perspectives of, and approaches to, tradition do folklore studies apply? What are the genre classifications folklore studies use and how are they justified? Where does this field currently draw its disciplinary boundaries? Beyond the reading of texts, the course will enhance understanding of the performance dimension of Chinese folklore by relying on films, slide shows, and audio-tapes, and going on field trips.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- Develop folklore investigation and research abilities and examine theories of folklore.
- Evaluate how the individual folkloric texts and practices studied are relevant to an understanding of Chinese culture.
- Analyze examples where Chinese traditional folklore has been revived and



transformed through Socialist ideologies.

- Demonstrate how cultures establish categories and structures relevant to their understanding of the world.

Course Prerequisites

Students should have completed at least one course in Chinese culture and one in Chinese history, and ideally also one relevant anthropology course prior to taking this one.

Methods of Instruction

The course will be held in the form of lectures, PowerPoint presentations, class debates or guest lecturers, as well as field trips. Students will be expected to carry out an ethnographic field observation at a local cultural landscape or intangible cultural heritage base, and present their notes to class for discussion. Classroom activities will involve group work and handicraft demonstration. Invited guest speakers and inheritors of intangible cultural heritage will enrich the course with their reports.

Assessment and Final Grade

1. Group Presentation:	20%
2. Ethnographic Investigation Report:	20%
3. Take-home Exam/ Midterm Exam:	15%
4. Final Course Paper:	25%
5. Class Participation:	20%
Total:	100%

Course Requirements

Group Presentation

Students in small groups of three must give a 15-minute presentation to reflect and articulate the themes explored in this course. The presentation must include a specific topic to introduce at least one kind of Chinese folklore, such as its origin, development and inheritance, as well as its content, characteristics, classification



and cultural connotations. Students should voice their own opinions on how to utilize or protect this folklore, and are also required to make a comparison between the folklore with a similar one in his / her host country.

Ethnographic Investigation Report

The ethnographic investigation report, 1500 words in length, should be completed on the basis of the information obtained from the field trips. The purpose of this task is to train students to investigate in folklore fieldwork, and teach them to use the obtained material to complete an ethnographic report. Thus, this report will be graded based on students' ability to describe folk customs through the application of a folklore discourse system, as well as the basic specifications and requirements of ethnographic writing.

Take-home Exam/ Midterm Exam

The take-home exam will be scheduled at the midterm of the semester. Students are allowed to answer questions after class, based on textbooks, class notes or other relevant materials, but these sources must be quoted in the correct citation format on the test paper. At the same time, students are not allowed to discuss the test content with people other than teachers and teaching assistants. The test paper will contain 5 simple questions, with 3 points given for each question, the total being 15 points. This test will test students' mastery and understanding of Chinese folklore knowledge.

Final Course Paper

The final paper is to be 2000 words long and must be an in-depth analysis of one of the topics discussed in class, such as Chinese traditional clothing, festivals, handicraft skills, living customs, life etiquette, folk literature, folk amusement and so on. This paper must include and discuss at least 5 scholarly references. The paper will be graded according to student s' ability to develop an innovative and critical argument about Chinese folklore, as well as a comprehensive understanding of the reading materials in the course.

Participation

Participation is valued as meaningful contribution in the digital and tangible classroom,



utilizing the resources and materials presented to students as part of the course. Meaningful contribution requires students to be prepared in advance of each class session and to have regular attendance. Students must clearly demonstrate they have engaged with the materials as directed, for example, through classroom discussions, online discussion boards, peer-to-peer feedback (after presentations), interaction with guest speakers, and attentiveness on co-curricular and outside-of-classroom activities.

Attendance Policy

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program, and all unexcused absences will result in a lower participation grade for any affected CIEE course. Due to the intensive schedules for Open Campus and Short Term programs, unexcused absences that constitute more than 10% of the total course will result in a written warning.

Students who transfer from one CIEE class to another during the add/drop period will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of their new class, provided they were marked present for the first session(s) of their original class. Otherwise, the absence(s) from the original class carry over to the new class and count against the grade in that class.

For CIEE classes, excessively tardy (over 15 minutes late) students must be marked absent. Attendance policies also apply to any required co-curricular class excursion or event, as well as to Internship, Service Learning, or required field placement. Students who miss class for personal travel, including unforeseen delays that arise as a result of personal travel, will be marked as absent and unexcused. No make-up or re-sit opportunity will be provided.

Attendance policies also apply to any required class excursion, with the exception that some class excursions cannot accommodate any tardiness, and students risk being marked as absent if they fail to be present at the appointed time.

Unexcused absences will lead to the following penalties:



Percentage of Total Course Hours Missed	Equivalent Number of Open Campus Semester classes	Minimum Penalty
Up to 10%	1 content classes, or up to 2 language classes	Participation graded as per class requirements
10 – 20%	2 content classes, or 3-4 language classes	Participation graded as per class requirements; written warning
More than 20%	3 content classes, or 5 language classes	Automatic course failure, and possible expulsion

Weekly Schedule

Please note this schedule is subject to change if opportunities arise to enhance the curriculum.

Week 1 Orientation Week

Class 1:1 Introduction to the Class

This opening lecture will introduce students to the definition and classification of Chinese folklore, and present an outline of the history of Chinese folklore.

Students will learn about key concepts such as “folk”, “folklore”, “custom”, “the people”, etc. and acquire basic knowledge of different methodologies used to understand and discuss Chinese folk customs.

Ben-Amos, Dan.1971. “Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context”. *The Journal of American Folklore*. Vol. 84, No. 331. pp. 3-15

Week 2

Class 2:1 Agricultural Customs

Agricultural customs are an important part of folklore in China. Through case studies related to the 24 solar terms, which have been included in the United Nations intangible cultural heritage, this session will introduce rituals of agricultural production, local agricultural knowledge, traditional agricultural songs, etc.



China Folklore Society. 2016. "Chinese 24 Solar Terms" (Documentary, 10 minutes), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aIV9ULq2V14>

Class 2:2 Traditional Living in China

This session introduces students to the customs and social etiquette of traditional living in China. Among the topics discussed will be forms of residence, religious and ideological aspects of traditional Chinese architecture, and the social rules and taboos of a traditional lifestyle. Case studies include the Siheyuan Courtyard in Beijing and Shimenku (石门库) in Shanghai.

Sullivan, Linda. 1972. Traditional Chinese Regional Architecture: Chinese House. *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*. Vol. 12. pp. 130-149

Class 2:3 Field Trip: Investigation of Living Customs of Shikumen in Shanghai

Shikumen is a place in Shanghai characterized by a unique lifestyle. Through their fieldwork in Shikumen, students will investigate architectural styles including their symbolic dimensions, regional living customs, trade traditions, as well as entertainment customs of the local people. Prior to the field trip, survey methods will be taught. Students will be required to complete an ethnographic report.

Clifford, James & Marcus, George. 1986. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Oakland: University of California Press. Pp27–50.

Week 3

Class 3:1 Chinese Traditional Food

This lecture will introduce students to the highly developed Chinese cooking culture, including eating etiquette and customs related to the preparation of meals. We will learn about the symbolism of Chinese food and the ethnic/cultural mentality reflected in a typically Chinese diet. The culture of Chinese spirits and tea will be two key points of this session.

A Bite of China, a documentary about Chinese food, will be screened.



Li, Li. 2002. "Cultural and Intercultural Functions of Chinese Restaurants in the Mountain West: An Insider's Perspective". *Western Folklore*. Vol. 61, No. 3/4, pp. 329-346

Class 3:2 Folk Festivals

Through an analysis of the Spring Festival, this lecture will introduce students to the origins, developments, types, ritual processes and main features of traditional festivals in China. Students will learn about the important role festivals play in Chinese agriculture in particular and people's daily lives more generally.

Dore, Henry. 1918. "Some Annual Religious Festivals and Customs", in *Researches into Chinese Superstitions*. Vol. V. Shanghai: Tusewei Printing Press. Pp. 619 – 656

Class 3:3 Folk Literature

Students will discuss theoretical implications of key concepts, such as mythology, epic, legend, story, folk song, etc. and explore characteristics of folk literature — orality, collectivity, inheritance, and locality. Folk songs from the Shanghai region, such as Pudong wedding songs and Chongming folk songs, will be used as exemplary folkloric texts to analyzed by the class.

Giskin, Howard. 2004. "Dreaming the Seven-Colored Flower: Eastern and Western Approaches to Dreams in Chinese Folk Literature", *Asian Folklore Studies*, Vol. 63, No. 1, pp. 79-94

Due date for Take-home Exam

Week 4

Class 4:1 Traditional Social Etiquette and Rites of Passage

Using Arnold van Gennep's *Rites of Passage* as a starting point, this session explores the history of Chinese social etiquette as it relates to the landmarks of human life. Students learn about traditional ceremonies held on the occasion of births, weddings, birthdays and funerals, among them the customs of "Praying for Children". How traditional rituals and ceremonies have been transformed since the arrival of modernity will be the focus of a wrap-up discussion.



Dore, Henry. 1918. *Researches into Chinese Superstitions*. Vol. I. Shanghai: Tusewei Printing Press. Pp. 1 – 68

Class 4:2 Chinese Folk Religion

The introductory lecture gives an overview of the landscape of Chinese folk religion through a critical examination of case studies conducted by Western sinologists. Among the aspects covered will be diverse mythologies, polytheism, religious practices and rituals. In particular, this session focuses on the various transformations that folk religion has undergone in recent Chinese history.

Wolf, Arthur. 1999. “Gods, ghosts, and ancestors”, in *Religion and Ritual in Chinese Society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. Pp. 193–206

Class 4:3 Traditional Community Life and Its Values

This session explores the powerful presence of clan communities in China’s rural areas. Taking a well-researched descent group as a case in point, we will learn about forms of organization, social structures, conflict resolution as well as rituals and customs of daily life. As before in this course, we will also look at how clan systems in China have both disappeared and been revived since the advent of Western-style modernization.

Watson, Rubie. 1982. “The Creation of a Chinese Lineage: The Teng of Ha Tsuen, 1669–1751”. *Modern Asian Studies*. Vol. 16, No. 1. Pp. 69-100

Due date for submission of Investigation Report

Week 5

Class 5:1 Traditional Clothing

The introductory lecture explores the rich and diverse tradition of Chinese traditional clothing, addressing aspects of style, composition, and cultural symbolism. The session will examine how traditional clothing in China has reflected social role and rank, cultural identity and political affiliation.

Garrett. 1987. *Traditional Chinese Clothing in Hong Kong and South China, 1840-1980*. New York: Oxford University Press



Class 5:2 Folk Arts

In this session we will analyze examples of traditional Chinese arts, such as New Year's pictures, Farm pictures and propaganda posters. As we study the content and aesthetics of these art forms, our special interest will be the relationship between folkloric arts and political propaganda.

Hung, Chang-Tai. 1997. "Two Images of Socialism: Woodcuts in Chinese Communist Politics". *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. Vol. 39, No. 1. pp. 34-60

Class 5:3 Group Presentations

This session will be devoted to the group presentations. Together with the instructor, the students will determine the running order of the speakers / performers from each group.

Due date for submission of Group Presentation

Week 6

Class 6:1 Chinese Traditional Opera

Studying individual performances of the Kun Opera, students will explore the themes and stylistic characteristics of Chinese folk operas. A second concentration of the session will be the history of this art form, in particular how it has evolved in the modern age and most recently under the growing influence of new media.

Li, Ruru. 1988. "Chinese Traditional Theatre and Shakespeare". *Asian Theatre Journal*. Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 38-48

Stock, Jonathan. 2003. *Huju: Traditional Opera in Modern Shanghai*. New York: Oxford University Press. pp 39-45

Class 6:2 Folk Sports as Entertainment?

This session looks at examples of traditional sports in China that have acquired the status of a folkloric practice and have been promoted as well as coopted by entertainment business, in particular through the expansion of domestic and foreign tourism.



Zhang, Guodong & Green, Thomas. 2018. "I Am the Greatest Boxer: Articulating Group Identity through Chinese Folk Drama". *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 131, No. 521, pp. 250-271

Class 6:3 Paper-cutting – Revival of a Folk Art in Contemporary China

The ancient folk art of paper-cutting has evolved from a finger-size domestic craft to a painting-size exhibit art in today's China. In our concluding session, we will look at this stunning revival to examine what political forces, intellectual influences and communal interests have shaped the contents and styles of this art form and determined the cultural meanings associated with it.

Wu, Ka-Ming. 2015. "Narrative Battle: Fabricating Folk Paper-Cutting as an Intangible Heritage". In *Reinventing Chinese Tradition: The Cultural Politics of Late Socialism*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press. Pp. 64-87

Due date for submission of Final Paper

Course Materials

Readings

Ben-Amos, Dan. 1971. "Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context". *The Journal of American Folklore*. Vol. 84, No. 331. pp. 3-15

Sullivan, Linda. 1972. Traditional Chinese Regional Architecture: Chinese House. *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*. Vol. 12. pp. 130-149

Li, Li. 2002. "Cultural and Intercultural Functions of Chinese Restaurants in the Mountain West: An Insider's Perspective". *Western Folklore*. Vol. 61, No. 3/4, pp. 329-346

Dore, Henry. 1918. *Researches into Chinese Superstitions*. Vol. I. Shanghai: Tussewei Printing Press. Pp. 1 – 68

Dore, Henry. 1918. "Some Annual Religious Festivals and Customs", in *Researches into Chinese Superstitions*. Vol. V. Shanghai: Tussewei Printing Press. Pp. 619 – 656

Giskin, Howard. 2004. "Dreaming the Seven-Colored Flower: Eastern and Western



Approaches to Dreams in Chinese Folk Literature”, *Asian Folklore Studies*, Vol. 63, No. 1, pp. 79-94

Wolf, Arthur. 1999. “Gods, ghosts, and ancestors”, in *Religion and Ritual in Chinese Society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. Pp. 193-206

Watson, Rubie. 1982. “The Creation of a Chinese Lineage: The Teng of Ha Tsuen, 1669–1751”. *Modern Asian Studies*. Vol. 16, No. 1. Pp. 69-100

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Wu, Ka-Ming. 2015. “Narrative Battle: Fabricating Folk Paper-Cutting as an Intangible Heritage”. In *Reinventing Chinese Tradition: The Cultural Politics of Late Socialism*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press. Pp. 64-87

Gennep, Arnold. 1960. *Rites of Passage*. London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul

Freedman, Maurice. 1965. *Lineage Organization in Southeastern China*, Athlone Press

Clifford, James & Marcus, George. 1986. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Oakland: University of California Press

Faure, David. 2007. *Emperor and Ancestor: State and Lineage in South China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press

Online Resources

Shanghai Intangible Cultural Heritage: <http://www.ichshanghai.cn/>



China Folklore Society. 2016. "Chinese 24 Solar Terms" (Documentary, 10 minutes), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a1V9ULq2V14>