

Interdisciplinary Major: Folklore Studies

When I applied for Hendrix College, I did so as a political sciences major and data analysis minor. However, between my lifelong love of literature and creative writing, and my newfound interest inspired by coursework in anthropology, I discovered the discipline of folklore studies. It struck a perfect balance between my interest in culture and my desire to engage with storytelling. While I have enjoyed my coursework in both English and anthropology, majoring in either one would not allow me to accomplish my academic goals. The degree requirements for English do not introduce me to the methods, theories, and ethics of social scientific research, whereas anthropology does not teach the close reading, storytelling, and interpretive work necessary to engage with literature.

Folklore studies is an inherently interdisciplinary endeavor. It requires you to take on both the role of the storyteller and the story witness, as well as the ability to make cultural observations. These literary and anthropological perspectives are complemented by features of history, art, philosophy, ecology, and religious studies, all of which are frameworks from which folklore can be approached. Studying these disciplines alongside each other has allowed me to better participate in each; the skillsets and theoretical frameworks not only transfer, but enhance one another. By pulling from multiple disciplines, I have been able to develop an academic perspective that I otherwise would not have been able to. Hendrix's emphasis on a liberal arts education makes it an ideal institution to complete such interdisciplinary study and I believe that folklore studies is highly compatible with Hendrix's academic aims. I plan on pursuing a graduate degree in folklore studies. Many such programs are available at the graduate level.

For my major, I have identified 10 courses for the program. Four are at 300-level or above and my capstone is identified as well. I have already accomplished my W2 through my

English minor, but the substantial writing for my thesis in the capstone will also further these skills. My courses come from seven different disciplines, a truly interdisciplinary span. All my courses have been completed except the capstone.

Learning Goals

- I will demonstrate the ability to integrate concepts and critical thinking approaches from two or more academic disciplines.
- I will create written, oral, visual, or multimedia materials that demonstrate the ability to present and analyze evidence.
- I will examine the use of a folklore studies framework to analyze faerie stories in a cross-cultural perspective.
- I will use literary analysis and ethnographic methods to produce a capstone paper on an aspect of folklore studies.

Course Justification

English

ENGC 307 – Writer as Witness | Used a multi-genre approach to understanding how a storyteller—or, by extension, us as readers—relate to a time, space, event, or experience they witnessed. Emphasized the importance of perspective in the storytelling process, which is an essential component of how folklore is propagated and received.

ENGL 000 – Scottish and Irish Folklore, Fairie | This course taken at Oxford University allowed me to use a literary perspective—from Ulster cycle mythology to modern film and media—to understand the development of fairy folklore in Scotland and Ireland. Fairy folklore is the most central component of my academic interests.

LITR M23 – Transatlantic Perspectives on Hispanic Literature | Provided me with a philosophic framework and language for discussing place and space, providing me with a more nuanced understanding of notions of belonging, environmental conditions, home, and connectivity to others.

Anthropology

ANTH 240 – Applying Anthropology | Demonstrated the multitudinous applications for anthropological theories, methods, and thinking. Allowed me to practice these skills first-hand in an applied research project about disability access on campus.

ANTH 300 – Ethnographic Methods | Explored in depth the quintessential anthropological method of ethnographic research, as well as the ethical considerations, tools, and skillsets needed to succeed in such research.

ANTH 499 – Independent Study: Capstone | *currently enrolled* Will introduce me to major concepts, methods, and ethical considerations relevant to the discipline of folklore studies. Will produce a 20-25 page thesis applying these approaches to the field of fairyology and fairy studies.

Multidisciplinary

CLAS 294 – Greek and Roman Sexualities | Examined mythological story origins in a historical context, as well as engaged with literature and art that illustrated concepts of gender and sexuality.


CHIN 290 – Gods, Demons, and the Supernatural | Introduced me to otherworldly creatures in Chinese literature, as well as principles of folklore and oral story transmission.

RELI 280 – African Religions | Complicated notions of what ought to be considered a world religion, as well as introduced me to how folk practices strike a balance with institutional religiosity.

HIST 399 – Magic and Witchcraft | Provided me with a historic understanding of the development of witch trials and portrayals. Broadened my knowledge about and within the discipline of magic and occult sciences.

Faculty Committee:

Dr. Anne Goldberg, chair: _____

Dr. Ruth Yuste-Alonso: 

Student: Sophie O'Reilly: 