

**Folklore of Central Asia**  
**ANTH – 224**  
**Spring 2013**

American University – Central Asia  
Department of Anthropology

Instructor: Nurzat Sultanalieva  
Class time: Monday/Wednesday 14.10  
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**Course Description:**

Have you ever thought what is folklore and its function? Why all people in the world had to come up with various myths, legends, epics and other oral narrations? This course was designed to give students a general overview of what folklore is and what styles/genres it has all over the world. The ultimate outcome of the course is to acquaint students with the Central Asian folkloric genres based on oral tradition. Within the framework of the course we will work on themes, symbols, and motifs of oral narratives, exploring various interpretations.

We will also look at folkloric material as a performance, paying attention to folk minstrels (akyns, bakshy, ozan, jyrav), narrators of folklore. Much emphasis would be on basic skills like recalling sequence of events, separating main ideas from details, recognizing fact from opinion, summarizing, outlining and note-taking. Students will fashion oral narratives of their own to understand the structure and function of each folkloric genre.

The students will analyze anthropological issues (marriage, political organization, law, kinship, religion, ritual, etc.) within folklore material.

**Course Outline:**

This course is divided into two parts: *1<sup>st</sup> part* is designed to provide students with the general knowledge on the subject of folklore, its styles and genres, how oral folk traditions are reflecting traditions and worldview of the people, what are the values and worries of the people in the legend/myth and in reality. It will familiarize students with the various components of folklore: folklore research, poetry, songs, myths and legends, folktales, etc. *2<sup>nd</sup> part* is designed to introduce students with the main folkloric genres and folkloric material in Central Asia – we will look closer to archaic Kyrgyz, Tajik, Uzbek and other epics within the region. The second part is also a “practical” part, where students will be given a chance to deconstruct and construct their own epics, folktales and legends.

**Learning outcomes**

*Subject specific knowledge and skills*

Upon finishing your course you will be able to:

1. Differentiate the main genres of folklore
2. Know the main peculiarities of Central Asian folklore
3. Analyze folkloric material
4. Understand culture from oral narratives

*Other academic skills*

Students are expected to fulfill several course requirements, which will help them to develop the following academic skills that are essential for their academic carrier:

1. Oral presentation skills
2. Academic writing skills
3. Analytical and integrative thinking

## Assignments/Assessment

The course emphasizes interdisciplinary approach and in-class discussion of readings to the study of the region. You will be evaluated based on the following:

**Journal (30%)** (5 entries, submission each two weeks). The journal is an important part of this class. You will turn in your entry each week during the semester. Your journal entries (1-2 double spaced –2-3 pages) should include a combination of the following: (1) Your reflections on class discussions, (2) Your thoughts on the weekly reading assignment (Is anything especially interesting or surprising? Has the reading challenged you to reconsider some of your views? Is any part of the reading confusing or unclear? etc.);

**A Long Essay (25%)** will also make up a major component of final grades. Students will be given a set of questions before the spring break. Each student is free to choose to write one essay on each set of questions. Additional readings will be given for each set of questions. Most questions will be based upon the readings/articles.

**Participation and Attendance (15%).** Attendance and participation are required. Class participation involves more than good attendance. You need to be prepared to discuss the course readings as listed on the schedule.

**Class Presentation (30%).** All students will be expected to give an in-class presentation on one topic over the course of the semester. Students may choose their own topics or issues that concern Central Asian folklore, history and culture. Instructors will also facilitate choosing your topic. Topics should be given to the instructors until week 7. The schedule/sequence of presentations will be finalized a week before the spring break. Presentations will start after the spring break. The written form of your presentations should be submitted at the end of semester.

I expect you to do your own work in accordance with the Code of Conduct, AUCA ([http://www.auca.kg/en/students/registrars\\_office\\_student/conduct](http://www.auca.kg/en/students/registrars_office_student/conduct)). It should go without saying that **cheating and plagiarism cannot be tolerated in any form in scholarly work, but it will be stated for your information that any exam or paper that contains plagiarized material will receive a grade of zero, and may possibly be grounds for flunking the class.** Please be sure you understand what constitutes plagiarism and what are acceptable forms of citing published (and unpublished) material. For an explanation of how to properly cite sources see: (MLA format citing at <http://www.library.cornell.edu/resrch/citmanage/mla> or at <http://www.easybib.com/>).

Wikipedia and alike web-sites are not considered trustworthy sources for citing.

### **Attendance**

Please note that attendance is required. Attendance will be checked in the beginning of each class period. If you are late you can be allowed to the class but will get an absence in the attendance list.

If you got sick, you have to notify the instructor or the office manager in advance, and later submit an official document (spravka) from a physician, especially if you are scheduled to make a class presentation. **Three unexcused absences** will result in “X” for the whole course.

**Cell phone/wireless connection:** While I recognize that cell phone technology has become a particularly important social resource in our everyday lives, I am requested that if you carry a cell phone (or beeper), PLEASE keep the ringer/buzzer "off" while you are in class. No wireless web connections in lecture or sections, please.

**Office hours:**

- Please note that I am always available in my office hours to discuss or clarify questions and concerns you may have related to the course or the discipline in general.
- A sign up sheet with designated times (for those of you who plan ahead and/or want to reserve a longer time slot with me).
- Drop by times for shorter inquiries and conversations. I am also always available right after class for questions. Please only use email for emergencies or quick clarifications and come to my office hours for any substantive questions.

**COURSE MATERIALS:**

Assigned articles and book chapters will be placed on reserve and can also be downloaded using the electronic library resources at AUCA.

**Note:** This syllabus is *subject to change* as necessary throughout the semester. *All* students are responsible for attending classes for information in this regard. Check the E-course system and your university e-mail for updates and announcements, information on essays and exams.

**Used literature:**

1. Adams, R., Introduction to Folklore. Columbus, Ohio: Collegiate Pub. Inc., 1973.
2. Brunvand, J. H., The Study of American Folklore. New York: W. W. Norton and Co. Inc., 1978.
3. Dorson, R., Folklore Research Around the World, Indiana University Press, 1961.
4. Dundes, A., The Study of Folklore. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1965.
5. Dyikanbaeva, A., Kyrgyz ulamyshтары, 2005, Bishkek.
6. Ergun, M., Türk Dünyası Efsanelerinde Değişme Motifi, 1997, Ankara.
7. Jırmunskiy, V., Türkskiy Geroičeskiy Epos, Leningrad, 1974.
8. Kırgız Adabiyatının Tarihi, 2-4. ss. Bishkek, 2002.
9. Kyydyrbaeva, R., Skazitelskoe Masterstvo Manaschy, Frunze, 1984.
10. Propp, V., Folklor i Deystvitelnost, Moskva, 1976.
11. Propp, V., Morfolklogiya Skazki, Moskva, 1969.
12. Thompson, S., Motif-Index of Folk-Literature, 6 vols. Rev. ed. Copenhagen, Bloomington, IN, 1958.
13. Türk Dünyası Edebiyat Tarihi, I-III volumes, Ankara, 2001.

**Course Schedule**

Week 1: Introduction to the course

- Group discussion, clarification of the syllabus, students' and instructor's expectations and interests. No reading is required for this week

Week 2: What is Central Asia?

- Geographical determinism? Ecology, environmental change, and patterns of settlement and nomadic life

Week 3: Folklore research around the world

- Folklore research in Germany, England, Finland, Turkey, Russia, and post Soviet Central Asian countries

Week 4-5: The field and study of folklore

- What is folklore?
- The American and Soviet classification of Folklore genres
- The research methods of Folklore: Historical-Geographic Finnish School, Structuralism, Functionalism, and Oral Formulaic, Performance Theory

Week 6: Folk Poetry and Folksongs

- Poetics, functions and melody of work, traditional, didactic, and religious poetry of Central Asian people

Week 7-8: Myth and Legends

- The Myths and Legends as the sacred stories
- Topic, Hero, and Motif Analyses of Legends and Myths
- The commonalities and distinctions of two genres
- Classifying, defining and fashioning the legend by the students

Week 9: Folktales

- The main peculiarities of Folktales
- Formulistic beginnings and endings of Folktales of Turkic People

Week 10: Epics

- Central Asian epic research by pre Soviet and Soviet Russian scholars
- The origin, function, and classification of epics

Week 11: Archaic Kyrgyz epic Kojojash

- The variants of “Kojojash”
- The shamanistic elements in the epic
- The marriage and funeral ceremonies in Kojojash

Week 12: Epics: Heroic epic Manas

- The core episodes and motifs of Manas

Week 13: Epics: Alpamysh, Koroglu

- The core episodes of the epics

Week 14: Epics: Dede Korkut

- The core episodes of the epic
- The comparison of epics Manas, Alpamysh, Koroglu, Dede Korkut by core episodes and motifs

Week 15: Epic Singers

- Becoming an epic singer (ozan, bakshy, manaschy, semeteychi, ashyk, dastanchy, jyrav) and its connection with Central Asian shamanism and Sufism

