

## Course Form for PKU Summer School International 2025

<b>Course Title</b>	Title in English: The Forms of Folklore
	Title in Chinese: 民俗学专题
<b>Teacher</b>	程梦稷 Mengji Cheng
<b>First day of classes</b>	July 14, 2025
<b>Last day of classes</b>	July 25, 2025
<b>Course Credit</b>	3 credits
<b>Course Description</b>	
<b>Objective:</b>	
<p>This course explores the foundational concepts and categories in folklore studies, with a particular focus on traditional Chinese folk culture. Topics include the three primary categories of folklore: verbal folklore (folk literature), material folklore, and customary folklore. Within these categories, we will examine subtypes such as narratives (myths, legends, folktales) and poetic forms (songs, epics, ballads). Through case studies, interactive classroom discussions, and field trips, students will gain both a theoretical understanding of folklore studies and firsthand exposure to Chinese folk culture. This course seeks to balance academic rigor with cultural enrichment, providing an engaging introduction to both folklore studies and Chinese heritage.</p> <p>Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce fundamental categories and concepts in folklore studies.</li> <li>• Provide international students with an overview of traditional Chinese folk culture.</li> <li>• Encourage cross-cultural discussions about folklore's role in various societies.</li> </ul>	
<b>Pre-requisites /Target audience</b>	
This course is designed for international students interested in folklore studies and Chinese culture, and is open to both undergraduate and graduate students.	
<b>Proceeding of the Course</b>	
The course will consist of a combination of lectures, group presentations, and field trips to culturally significant sites. Each session will focus on a different aspect of folklore, with class materials provided beforehand. Students are encouraged to actively participate and engage in discussions, both in class and during field visits.	
<b>Assignments (essay or other forms)</b>	

<p>Assignments will consist of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class Presentations: Each student will lead one brief presentation on a specific folklore topic.</li> <li>• Reflection Essays: Following field trips or key discussions, students will submit short reflection essays.</li> <li>• Participation and Contributions: Daily engagement in class and field activities.</li> </ul>	
<b>Evaluation Details</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class Presentation: 30%</li> <li>• Reflection Essays: 30%</li> <li>• Class Participation and Engagement: 40%</li> </ul>	
<b>Text Books and Reading Materials</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selected readings from <i>The Study of Folklore</i> by Alan Dundes.</li> <li>• Excerpts from <i>Folklore Genres</i> by Dan Ben-Amos.</li> <li>• Additional materials on Chinese literature and folk culture (provided by the instructor).</li> </ul>	
<b>Academic Integrity (If necessary)</b>	
<p>Students are expected to uphold high standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism or cheating will result in disciplinary actions as per university policy. Collaborative discussions are encouraged, but submitted work must be individually completed.</p>	
<b>CLASS SCHEDULE</b> (Subject to adjustment)	
<p>Session 1: <i>Understanding Folklore: Definitions, Categories, and Academic Perspectives</i></p>	<p>Date: <i>July 14, 2025</i></p>
<p><b>【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)</b></p> <p><i>This introductory lecture is designed to provide a foundational understanding of the field of folklore studies, focusing on key terms and their evolving definitions, the primary categories of folklore content, and an overview of the academic history that has shaped folklore as a discipline. We will begin with an exploration of the term folk and how its meaning has shifted over time within different scholarly contexts. This session will also introduce students to the basic categories of folklore, laying a foundation for future lectures on specific folklore forms. Finally, we will examine how folklore studies developed as an academic discipline and discuss the relationship between folklore as a cultural phenomenon and folkloristics as a field of study.</i></p>	
<p><b>【Questions】</b></p> <p><i>How has the concept of “folk ” evolved in folklore studies, and why does this shift matter? What are the basic categories in folklore studies?</i></p>	
<b>【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】</b>	
<b>【Assignments for this session (if any)】</b>	
<p>Session 2: <i>Prose Narratives: Myths</i></p>	<p>Date: July 15, 2025</p>

<p><b>【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)</b>  <i>This lecture introduces the study of myths, beginning with various definitions of myth, followed by the particular challenges in defining and categorizing Chinese myths. Students will explore foundational research methods for myth analysis, focusing on historical, cultural, and structural approaches.</i></p>	
<p><b>【Questions】</b>  <i>What defines a myth, and how is this definition complicated in the Chinese context?  How do different research methods contribute to our understanding of myths?</i></p>	
<p><b>【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】</b>  <i>william bascom - the forms of folklore: prose narratives</i></p>	
<p><b>【Assignments for this session (if any)】</b></p>	
Session 3: <i>Prose Narratives: Legends</i>	Date: July 16, 2025
<p><b>【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)</b>  <i>This session focuses on the definition and study of legends, distinguishing them from myths and highlighting their unique place within folklore. We will discuss the social function of legends and examine case studies to illustrate effective research methodologies.</i></p>	
<p><b>【Questions】</b>  <i>How do myths and legends differ in purpose and structure?  What methods are most effective in the study of legends?</i></p>	
<p><b>【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】</b>  <i>william bascom - the forms of folklore: prose narratives</i></p>	
<p><b>【Assignments for this session (if any)】</b></p>	
Session 4: <i>Prose Narratives: Folktales</i>	Date: July 17, 2025
<p><b>【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)</b>  <i>This lecture delves into the study of folktales, defining their characteristics and exploring their relationship to myths and legends. Students will learn about the morphology of folktales and the comparative cultural analysis of story types.</i></p>	
<p><b>【Questions】</b>  <i>What makes a folktale distinct within folklore studies?  How can morphology and comparative studies enhance our understanding of folktales?</i></p>	
<p><b>【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】</b>  <i>Vladimir Propp, Morphology of the Folktale  Selected Chinese folktales for analysis</i></p>	
<p><b>【Assignments for this session (if any)】</b></p>	
Session 5: <i>Poetic Forms: Songs and Epics</i>	Date: July 18, 2025

<p><b>【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)</b>  <i>This session introduces the study of folk songs and epics, focusing on their definitions, historical context in China, and major theoretical frameworks for analyzing epic narratives.</i></p>	
<p><b>【Questions】</b>  <i>How do folk songs and epics reflect and shape cultural identity?                  What theoretical frameworks best support the study of epics?</i></p>	
<p><b>【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】</b>  <i>Selected readings from Albert Lord's <i>The Singer of Tales</i></i></p>	
<p><b>【Assignments for this session (if any)】</b></p>	
Session 6: Material Folklore - Artifacts and Folk Craft	Date: July 21, 2025
<p><b>【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)</b>  <i>This lecture provides an introduction to material folklore, covering its scope and the unique features of material culture in traditional Chinese society. Students will explore folk art, architecture, and daily life artifacts as expressions of cultural values and traditions.</i></p>	
<p><b>【Questions】</b>  <i>How does material folklore provide insight into the daily lives and values of a culture?                  What can the study of traditional Chinese artifacts tell us about historical Chinese society?</i></p>	
<p><b>【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】</b></p>	
<p><b>【Assignments for this session (if any)】</b></p>	
Session 7: Customary Folklore - Rites and Rituals	Date: July 22, 2025
<p><b>【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)</b>  <i>The final lecture focuses on customary folklore, examining traditional Chinese festivals and rituals. Students will engage with case studies on key Chinese festivals and view documentary footage to deepen their understanding of ritual practices.</i></p>	
<p><b>【Questions】</b>  <i>What are the functions of rites and rituals? How do festivals foster community?</i></p>	
<p><b>【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】</b></p>	
<p><b>【Assignments for this session (if any)】</b></p>	
Session 8: Collecting Folklore - History and Methods of Fieldwork	Date: July 23, 2025
<p><b>【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)</b>  <i>This session introduces students to the historical development and practical methods of folklore collection, with a focus on fieldwork. Students will explore how folklore has traditionally been gathered, preserved, and interpreted, examining case studies of major folklore collections from different cultures. The lecture will cover essential fieldwork skills such as observation, interviewing, and documentation while considering ethical considerations in working with informants and communities.</i></p>	

<b>【Questions】</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What are some historical examples of folklore collections, and what can they tell us about the methods of their time?</i></li> <li>• <i>What ethical challenges might researchers face in collecting and interpreting folklore?</i></li> </ul>	
<b>【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】</b>	
<b>【Assignments for this session (if any)】</b>	
Session 9: <i>Research Methods in Folklore - Diachronic and Synchronic Approaches</i>	Date: July 24, 2025
<b>【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)</b>	
<p><i>This session covers two major research approaches in folklore studies: diachronic (historical, focusing on change over time) and synchronic (contextual, focusing on cultural context at a given time). We will explore how each method applies to the analysis of folklore materials and their broader cultural significance. Students will examine how each approach yields different insights, with examples drawn from folktales, rituals, and other cultural forms.</i></p>	
<b>【Questions】</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>How does a diachronic approach help us understand the evolution of folklore?</i></li> <li>• <i>What can a synchronic approach reveal about the social functions of folklore within a specific community?</i></li> <li>• <i>In what ways might combining both methods enrich our analysis of folklore?</i></li> </ul>	
<b>【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】</b>	
<b>【Assignments for this session (if any)】</b>	
Session 10: <i>Final Discussion and Course Wrap-up</i>	Date: July 25, 2025
<b>【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)</b>	
<p><i>Final reflections on what was learned throughout the course.</i></p> <p><i>Group presentations and open discussion on cross-cultural comparisons and the future of folklore studies.</i></p>	
<b>【Questions】</b>	
<p><i>What are the key takeaways from studying folklore?</i></p>	
<b>【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】</b>	
<b>【Assignments for this session (if any)】</b>	

**A CV of 250-300 words and a high-resolution personal photo should also be provided**

*CV of the instructor*

*Mengji Cheng is a scholar of Chinese folklore and folk literature at Peking University. She completed her B.A. in Chinese Literature at Peking University (2015) and later earned her Ph.D. in Chinese Literature from the same institution (2020), with joint training at the University of California, Berkeley (2018 - 2019).*

*Currently, Cheng serves as an Assistant Professor and Research Fellow in the Department of Chinese Language and Literature at Peking University, where her research focuses on early Chinese concepts of supernatural phenomena, popular literature, and the visual culture of early modern China. Cheng's research investigates the interwoven relationship between textual and visual forms in early Chinese society, exploring how these mediums articulated and reshaped worldviews, cultural identities, and collective memory across different social strata.*

*In her teaching, Cheng strives to introduce students to the complex cultural dynamics embedded within traditional Chinese literature and folklore. She is the primary instructor for the required undergraduate course *Introduction to Folk Literature*, which covers foundational topics in Chinese folklore and its various genres. Additionally, she is responsible for the graduate seminar *Topics in Folk Imagery Studies*, a course that examines the role of folk imagery and visual expressions in the evolution of popular narratives and belief systems in China.*

