

FOLKLORE MA HANDBOOK

Department of American Studies

2022 Edition

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Program Description

In the Folklore MA Program, core courses taught by the Folklore faculty offer students a perspective on the breadth of genres and issues addressed by our discipline. Three additional courses allow students to explore interdisciplinary connections and historical contexts for their thesis topics. These additional courses may be taught by Folklore faculty or may come from a variety of associated graduate programs, including Anthropology, Communications Studies, English and Comparative Literature, History, and Music. Students may also arrange to take courses at Duke University, including those taught in Cultural Anthropology, Music, and the Center for Documentary Studies.

Folklore MA Course of Study

Our MA program in Folklore is designed to take two years to complete. Here's how you get to graduation:

1. Required coursework
2. Preliminary research plan
3. Critical Literature Review
4. Thesis Proposal
5. Thesis

Yearly Requirements and Milestones

Year One

Coursework

In the fall of the first year, students take FOLK 850: Approaches to Folklore Theory, one course taught by a member of Folklore's core faculty, and one other elective. In the following spring, students take FOLK 860: The Art of Ethnography, one course taught by a member of Folklore's core faculty, and one other elective.

Milestones

In Fall of the first year, students should have periodic conversations with their preliminary advisor, other professors, and the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) to discuss their interests, identify relevant faculty in other departments, and plan courses to take the following semester. In Spring of that first year, students should identify their thesis topic and thesis committee chair and contact two additional faculty to serve on their thesis committee. On or before April 1st, students should submit their Preliminary Research Plan to their thesis committee chair for review, and to the DGS as a record of their progress.

Funding

For both semesters of your first year, you will receive Teaching Assistantships or other work placements within the department. Starting in your first fall semester, you should work with your advisors to identify summer funding opportunities. The deadline for applying for summer funding from the Green, Patterson, and Wilgus funds—endowed funds administered by the Folklore Program—is the third Tuesday in April.

Summer Between Year 1 and Year 2

Milestones

In the summer between the first and second years, students should focus on conducting research for their M.A. thesis and begin selecting the themes and readings for their Critical Literature Review (CLR).

Year Two

Coursework

In fall of the second year, students take one course taught by a member of Folklore's core faculty and one other elective. (This elective can be also taken in the spring.) Students also enroll in FOLK 993: Masters Research and Thesis with their thesis chair. In spring of the second year, students will again enroll in FOLK 993: Masters Research and Thesis with their thesis chair. (Students should also register for their additional elective course if they chose not to take it in the fall.)

Milestones

In Fall of the second year, you should have regular meetings with your thesis chair and members of your committee. By mid-September, you should identify the three key themes of your Critical Literature Review, and submit those, along with a preliminary set of readings, to your thesis chair. By mid-October, in turn, you should submit your thesis proposal and Critical Literature Review to your full thesis committee for review and feedback. Students should also finalize their committee members by this point. By the end of September, students should submit a revised thesis proposal and Critical Literature Review and schedule a formal proposal meeting for some time in mid-October. Once the committee accepts your proposal and CLR (and any suggested revisions), the thesis chair will sign the first two sections of your Master's Comprehensive Exam Report and file it with the Graduate Student Services Manager. The approved thesis proposal will then be posted on the "Folklore MA Thesis Proposal" Sakai site.

In Spring of the second year, students should have regular meetings with their thesis committee to discuss their thesis drafts. By January, you should register for a May graduation on ConnectCarolina. By mid-February, in turn, you should submit a full, final draft to your thesis committee chair, and then by March 1st should submit a revised thesis draft to all committee members and schedule your defense. The thesis defense should be held by the last week in March. When the committee accepts the thesis (along with any suggested revisions arising from

the defense), they will sign the last two sections (3 and 4) of the Master's Comprehensive Exam Report. In early April, students will submit their final revised thesis to their thesis chair (and, if necessary, to the committee) to obtain the final approval. You should then submit your thesis electronically by the Graduate School's deadline. Later in April, graduating students will join their Folklore peers in a symposium where they'll present their thesis to faculty, students, and guests.

Funding

In your second year, you will continue to receive Teaching Assistantships or other work placements in the department.

Definitions

Required Coursework: Students enrolled in the Folklore MA Program must take 8 courses and two semesters of FOLK 993 (Master's Research and Thesis); these 8 classes must include FOLK 850, FOLK 860, 3 courses with Folklore's core faculty, and 3 other courses. We recommend distributing courses as outlined here, although you may alter this distribution with your advisor's approval. (Students should notify the DGS of any changes to this distribution.) You should consult regularly with your preliminary advisor or thesis committee chair to be sure that you're on track to complete all the degree requirements.

Students may take "other" courses in any department at UNC or—by applying through the Inter-Institutional Program—at Duke, North Carolina Central, or North Carolina State University. To take courses elsewhere, you'll have to both secure permission from the course instructor and work with the DGS to process the paperwork. See the department policy document on our Intranet site for more information.

If you want to take a course with someone who is not a Folklore core faculty member and have it count as one of the 3 courses required by the program, then you'll need to consult with your thesis chair about your proposed alternative and submit a formal request (with your rationale and a statement of support from your thesis chair) to the DGS for approval.

Coursework Evaluation

- **Grades:** For graduate courses, H for work that is clearly excellent, P for work that is entirely satisfactory, L for work that is marginal but passing, and F for work that is failing. Plus and minus grades are recorded by the Department but not by the Graduate School.
- **Satisfactory Progress:** If a student earns 3 or more Ps or one L in the first year, the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) may meet to evaluate the student's record. Students who receive 2 incompletes in the first year will also be evaluated. The GSC and the faculty who have taught this student will meet to discuss progress and determine whether they should continue in the program.

- **Incompletes:** Incompletes are to be avoided when possible. Students may not take more than one Incomplete per semester. While the Graduate School policy states that students have a full calendar year to finish incomplete work, the department stipulates that faculty must come to a specific agreement with the student, setting the earliest due date possible. A grade of Incomplete can be rectified no later than two weeks before the exam period in the semester that the incomplete work is due. Graduate School policy declares that an Incomplete (or AB) must be removed by the deadline or the grade becomes an F. Incompletes (and ABs) must be removed before the student can graduate or take a leave of absence.

Advisor, Thesis Chair, and Committee Composition: Although your preliminary advisor may end up chairing your thesis committee, this is by no means required; you may choose any member of Folklore's core faculty as your chair. Your thesis committee, in turn, must also include at least one other member of the core faculty; the third member (necessarily a PhD) could hail from any department at UNC or another university, or could be a scholar working outside the academy. If you choose a scholar from outside of UNC, you'll need to get approval by the semester's end from both your chair and the DGS, so that all the requisite formalities can be addressed. You may also choose to add a 4th member to your committee; usually, this is someone from the community with whom you are working.

Preliminary Research Plan: This document typically stretches about two pages, with an additional page of bibliography. It is a brief review of your thesis research in which you state your key research question(s) and outline your plans for doing the research and obtaining funding to support it. Once you have drafted the plan and obtained approval from your thesis chair, you can incorporate this material in your funding applications and circulate it to potential members of your thesis committee. You should also submit it, for record-keeping purposes, to the DGS.

Critical Literature Review: This document is a 15-20-page bibliographic essay based on readings you are exploring for your thesis and from your first-year courses.

Thesis Proposal: Your Thesis Proposal should be roughly 10 pages (2500 words) of prose, plus a detailed bibliography, any relevant images, etc. In it, you should:

- succinctly state your key research question and thesis statement;
- briefly outline the thesis's central topic and core issues;
- discuss your methodology, describe the data that you've already collected, and identify additional research that you need to do;
- briefly situate your inquiry within the relevant factual and theoretical literature; and
- offer a substantial bibliography.

Thesis Proposal Meeting: At the proposal meeting, you should be prepared to defend your Thesis Proposal and to field questions about your Critical Literature Review. Committee members will assess whether you are prepared to undertake the proposed work and will make suggestions about additional research and/or reading that they deem crucial to the project.

Thesis: Theses produced by students in the Folklore Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill make original, significant contributions to clearly defined fields of research in the discipline. Theses will make clear, coherent arguments, will incorporate sufficient research in secondary criticism, and will demonstrate mastery of research methods. Students are expected to incorporate feedback before submitting a final draft. Your thesis should follow the format specified in the Graduate School's Thesis and Dissertation Guide.

The thesis should be 35-50 pages long, excluding notes, bibliography, illustrations, and appendices. It should be based on original field and/or archival research and should present an argument with the degree of detail and thoroughness represented in our discipline's major scholarly journals (such as the *Journal of American Folklore*) or other journals suggested as models by your thesis committee chair. We welcome alternative forms of sharing your research results; these might include, for example, a film with adjoining commentary, a CD with extensive liner notes, detailed plans for an exhibition or festival, or a fully developed website. If you plan an alternative "thesis," be sure to consult with both your thesis chair and your committee members early in the process.

Thesis Defense: The final oral is, in a strict sense, a defense of the thesis, and it should be approached as such; you should be ready to explain and justify the argument, and to state with clarity its original contribution to the discipline. You may be called on to discuss methodology, plans for revision, and trends in the field. The defense takes place no later than the spring semester of the student's second year. When scheduling the defense, students are responsible for organizing the date and time. The thesis advisor can assist with scheduling if need be. Students are responsible for contacting the Graduate Student Services Manager (GSSM) with the date and time of their defense. The GSSM will then reserve a room and prepare paperwork for the chair. At the time of the defense but no later, the committee may require revisions to the thesis. The thesis advisor will be responsible for ensuring that the required revisions have been made.

Thesis Submission: The thesis must conform to the format outlined in the Thesis and Dissertation Guide at the Graduate School. The student files the final thesis with the Graduate School, here. It is the student's responsibility to adhere to the dates and deadlines set forth by the Graduate School, here.

Graduation: Students must apply to graduate with the Graduate School via ConnectCarolina in the semester during which the student intends to defend their thesis. The student must apply to graduate by the deadline set forth by the Graduate School.

Be sure to check with the [Graduate School](#) for all deadlines related to graduation.

Departmental Policies and Opportunities

The following policies may be updated at the discretion of the Graduate Student Services Manager and the Registrar.

Full Time Registration: Please see the registrar's website for instructions on how to register and for pertinent deadlines.

Students must be registered full-time to hold a University Fellowship. This includes Teaching Fellowships, Research Assistantships, Non-Service Awards, etc.

Students who hold any kind of Fellowship and are enrolled in fewer than three courses are considered under-enrolled by the Graduate School, a circumstance that comes with heavy financial penalties. However, full-time registration can also be achieved by registering for nine or more hours (three classes) OR registering for three hours of 993 with or without credit hours for other courses. Advanced students registered only in 993 are considered full-time students.

When students do not register for courses during any given semester, they must apply for readmission.

Master's Thesis Hours (FOLK 993): You need only register for 3 credits in these classes to be considered full time. You may register for thesis hours for multiple semesters. It is important to register under the appropriate instructor's section number when registering for any of these classes. Please contact the Graduate Student Service Manager if you do not see your advisor or instructor assigned to a section.

Dropping Courses: Students who are receiving tuition remission (payment for out-of-state tuition) are responsible for dropping any unwanted classes **by the last day to drop a course for financial credit**. This is usually two weeks after the first day of classes. If you drop a course during this time, you must inform the Graduate Student Services Manager. See the Registrar's calendar to find the deadline for each semester. Students who drop after this date are responsible for paying for the dropped classes.

Inter-Institutional Enrollment: Students registered for at least three credit hours on this campus may take graduate courses at North Carolina State University, UNC-Charlotte, UNC-Greensboro, North Carolina Central University, and Duke University. Students must fill out the Inter-Institutional Approval Form and have it approved by the DGS. Tuition will be calculated as if the registration were for a course offered at UNC.

Auditing: Auditing courses is permitted but not encouraged, given the additional time commitment. Students must have permission from the instructor to audit.

Contact Information: It is the responsibility of every graduate student to have a current address and phone number listed in ConnectCarolina. We also expect you to thoroughly read and respond to emails. All graduate students are assigned mailboxes in the mailroom located in the Bain Staff room (GL 219). We encourage Students to check their boxes at least once a week.

Conferences and Travel Funding: Students may apply for and receive travel funding to a conference at which they are presenting once in their tenure as a student with the department. Applications can be found under the "Graduate Forms" tab on the Intranet. Travel grants are also available from the Graduate and Professional Student Federation and other campus centers.

Residency: If you are an out-of-state student, we ask that you apply for residency for tuition purposes once you are eligible. This significantly reduces the cost of your tuition and allows us to support more students in our program. More information can be found on the Graduate School website. Students should take steps toward residency in their first year so that they may secure residency in the fall of their second year. Contact the GSSM for assistance and information.

Leaves: A graduate student may request a leave of absence from graduate study for up to one year. During an official LOA, the student does not plan to make academic progress. Students should consult with the DGS about their intention to take a leave; DGS and GSSM will assist in submitting the proper forms to the Graduate School for Approval. Students should check the Graduate School Handbook for associated restrictions.

Miscellaneous: Graduate students are eligible for study carrels located in the book stacks of Davis Library. Students may obtain applications for carrels at the Circulation Desk of Davis. These applications should be signed by the advisor or the Director of Graduate Studies.