

Central Eurasian Studies

Tradition and Innovation in European Folk Music Scholarship

Catalog Number CEUS-U 520 (also meets with FOLK-F 635)

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Fulfills: F/E Area requirement

Ethnomusicology has its roots in the study of folk music, or more specifically “folksong” - a term coined by Johann Gottfried Herder in the late 18th century. In the centuries since Herder’s efforts to map Europe through music, scholars and musicians have grappled with how to study this repertoire and in fact how to define what it is, even as it has been invested with ideological importance as the “voice of the people” and treated as raw material by composers and songwriters.

In this course we will explore the history of scholarship on the traditional musics of rural Europe, particularly from Hungary, Finland, Russia, Germany, the Balkans, and the British Isles, and how that music has been used in the development of national culture, both high and low. We will also examine musics of two important transnational communities, Jews and Roma (Gypsies) and the challenges their cases bring to the idea of the culture nation. Finally, we will look at how folk music has been transformed and revived in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries particularly by examining the impact of revival and commercialization.