

DePaul University School for New Learning
Winter 2010

Syllabus:
**AI 286 New Orleans in
Song, Story and Struggle**

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Day/Time: Tuesdays, 1/5 – 3/16, 6-9 pm
Location: Loop campus, room TBA

Course Description:

The tapestry of New Orleans culture is tremendously rich and varied. This course will concentrate on two strands in that tapestry—music from New Orleans and fiction about it. Students will learn about music forms which originated in the city or its environs and which have gone on to dazzle the world, including jazz, r&b, zydeco and funk. We will situate these art forms in social and historical context and examine the complex creative processes which have shaped them. We will become familiar with innovators and icons such as Louis Armstrong, Professor Longhair, Clifton Chenier, the Neville Brothers and Dr. John. We will also read and/or screen works by literary artists who have a background in or fascination with New Orleans, including *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin; *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams; and *Mumbo Jumbo* by Ishmael Reed. Moreover, we will consider the role played in American history and imagination by New Orleans as well as the role played by images and fantasies of New Orleans in struggles for social justice at the local and national level.

Faculty:

John Kimsey received his Ph.D. in English from the University of Illinois at Chicago and serves as a member of the SNL resident faculty at the rank of Associate Professor. He has also worked as a professional musician and in 1992 was nominated Best Guitarist in the Chicago Musician awards. He has lectured on popular music and creativity at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame & Museum and has recently authored chapters for *It Was Forty Years Ago Today: Sgt. Pepper and the Beatles* (Ashgate, 2008), and the *Cambridge Companion to the Beatles* (Cambridge University Press, 2009). He has also published essays in academic periodicals such as *The Journal of Popular Music Studies* and *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies*. Not only that, but he has played “Iko Iko” with Dr. John the Night Tripper.

Competences Offered (for SNL students):

SNL students may register for as many as two of the following competences.

- A1X: Interpreting the arts
 (Statement to be designed by student in consultation with instructor)
- A5: Can define and analyze a creative process.
- H4: Can analyze power relations among racial, social, cultural or economic groups in the United States.
- H1X: Communities and Societies
 (Statement to be designed by student in consultation with instructor)

The A-1-X competence addresses the course focus on vernacular music and literature of New Orleans in terms of form, content and sociohistorical context. The A5 competence addresses the course focus on the complex creative processes that inform such musical and literary works. The H4 competence addresses the course focus on social stratification and struggles for social justice as they relate to New Orleans music and literature. The H1X competence addresses the course focus on how such phenomena are bound up with cultural difference, cultural exchange and struggles for hegemony in New Orleans, the American South and the larger US.

Liberal Studies Credit (for LA&S students)

Students from the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences may register for 4 credit hours in this course and thereby fulfill the Arts & Literature portion of their Liberal Studies requirement.

Learning Experience:

A variety of learning strategies will be employed, including listening sessions; classroom lectures and discussions; print readings; journals of the readings; group exercises; and short papers.

Expected Outcomes:

By the end of the course students should

- 1) have an appreciation of New Orleans as the site of certain unique and profound cultural expressions;
- 2) have an understanding of some specific creative processes which have informed such expressions;
- 3) be able to discuss ways in which such cultural expressions are bound up with factors such as race, class, gender, literacy, aurality and folk tradition;
- 4) be aware of issues and debates surrounding topics such as the concepts of

Creolization and the Carnavalesque; literacy and aurality; conservatory versus vernacular musical practice; sensuality and repression in American society; exclusion and assimilation of minority groups; the Apollonian and the Dionysian; Afrocentrism; the causes of the Katrina disaster; and the future of New Orleans;

5) be familiar with some basic concepts of African American vernacular musical practice and genre and the historical development of same;

6) be familiar with some basic concepts of literary form and genre;

7) be able to discuss the interplay between form and content in such works;

8) have practice with close reading techniques as applied to musical and literary texts.

Required Texts:

Hard Copy Books:

McKinney, Louise. *New Orleans: A Cultural History*. Oxford UP, 2006. ISBN 019530136-6.

Brothers, Thomas. *Louis Armstrong's New Orleans*. Norton, 2007. ISBN 03933001X

Reed, Ishmael. *Mumbo Jumbo*. Simon & Schuster, 1996. ISBN 9780684824772

Online Book:

Chopin, Kate. *The Awakening*. Posted online at <http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeneng/public/ChoAwak.html>

Sound Recording:

Dr. John. *Goin' Back to New Orleans*. CD. Warner Brothers/WEA. B000002LTW

Readings Posted on Electronic Reserve:

Several readings for this course are posted at the DePaul University Library website under Electronic Reserves. Just go to <http://library.depaul.edu> and click on Course Reserves. When the Search box comes up, type in "Kimsey". When the Kimsey page comes up, click on the title of this course. The password is AI286.

Evidence students will submit:

Class participation. Students are expected to do the appropriate reading for each class session in a timely fashion. They are also encouraged to demonstrate that they have done so by participating in class discussion. In addition, students will submit the following pieces of written work:

Journal entries. Each week (excepting week 1), students will submit a journal entry (about a typed page in length) on a reading chosen from the list of readings scheduled for that week. This will make for a total of 10 journal entries by course's end. These journal entries will be collected each week. A suggested format for journal entries is presented

later in this syllabus.

In addition:

--*SNL students registered for two competences* will submit a short essay (5-7 pages long) addressing each of the competences for which they're signed up. They will submit one such essay (addressing one competence) at midterm time (week 6) and another such essay (addressing another such competence) at finals time (week 11). This totals up to two short essays by the end of the course. For information on essay topics, see below.

--*SNL students registered for one competence* will submit one short essay addressing that competence at either midterm time (week 6) or finals time (week 11); the choice is up to the student. This totals up to one short essay by the end of the course. For information on essay topics, see below.

--*LA&S students taking the course for Liberal Studies credit* will submit two short essays (5-7 pages long). They will submit one such essay at midterm time (week 6) and another such essay at finals time (week 11). This totals up to two short essays by the end of the course. For information on essay topics, see below.

Re topics for essays: Students will choose topics from an array of essay questions prepared by the instructor. The instructor will provide one array of such questions for the midterm paper and a second array of such questions for the final paper. The instructor will see to it that the essay questions are attuned to the needs of students. SNL students will be provided with questions attuned to specific SNL competences. LA&S students will be provided with questions attuned to the Arts & Literature requirements of the Liberal Studies program. Also, it's always possible for a student to write on a topic of his/her own choosing, providing the instructor approves it.

In sum, the evidence requirements for the course are: class participation; journal; one short paper; and, for students registered for two competencies (4 credit hours), another short paper. Percentage-wise, the breakdown is as follows:

Class participation	10%
Journal	30 %
Short paper (midterm)	30 %
Short paper (final)	30 %

Criteria for Assessment:

In assessing work like that described above, I look for a) knowledge and comprehension of pertinent issues, events and individuals and/or institutions; b) a scope of discussion that goes beyond material covered in class; and c) thoughtful engagement with the material, i.e., with questions or conflicts raised or implied by the material. Evidence of one of these elements equates roughly with a C; evidence of two with a B; and evidence of three with an A. Other factors, such as class participation and attendance, can also affect final grades.

I also expect such work to conform to college-level standards of mechanics and presentation. I am happy to work with students on these points, on a draft-revision basis, if students so desire. In making such assessments, I strive to be clear, flexible, forthright and empathetic.

Policy on Academic Integrity:

This course abides by the university's strictures against plagiarism and its policies on Academic Integrity as described in the DePaul Student handbook. All work done for this course must observe the Guidelines for Academic Integrity as outlined in the *Code of Student Responsibility* (in the *DePaul Student Handbook*). The code's Plagiarism Policy reads as follows:

Plagiarism is a major form of academic dishonesty involving the presentation of the work of another as one's own. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the following: The direct copying of any source, such as written and verbal material, computer files, audio disks, video programs or musical scores, whether published or unpublished, in whole or in part, without proper acknowledgement that it is someone else's; copying of any source in whole or in part with only minor changes in wording or syntax even with proper acknowledgement; submitting as one's own work a report, examination paper, computer file, lab report or other assignment which has been prepared by someone else; and the paraphrasing of another's work or ideas without proper acknowledgment.

Plagiarism, like other forms of academic dishonesty, is always a serious matter. If an instructor finds that a student has plagiarized, the appropriate penalty is at the instructor's discretion. Actions taken by the instructor do not preclude the college or the university taking further punitive action including dismissal from the university.

Policy on Incompletes:

It is expected that students will complete course assignments by specified due dates within the quarter. In circumstances that the instructor determines to be exceptional, when the student is unable to complete required coursework by the established due dates, the student may request that a grade of Incomplete (IN) be issued. This request must be made formally, in writing, by completion of IN Request Form that the student signs. The form specifies the final date by which all outstanding coursework must be completed. Failure to submit outstanding work by the specified due date will result in a grade change from IN to W or FX for each enrolled competence, along with serious academic and/or financial consequences. After the final submission deadline, the student will have no further opportunities to submit work for a passing grade.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

[This is a tentative schedule, as of 10/7/09]

Note: The symbol [E] after a reading below indicates that the reading is posted on Electronic Reserve at the DePaul Library website. Just go to <http://library.depaul.edu> and

click on Course Reserves. When the Search box comes up, type in “Kimsey”. When the Kimsey page comes up, click on the title of this course. The password is AI286.

Week One 1/5

Introduction to the course; Creolization as cultural phenomenon; Screening of excerpt from *Make It Funky: the Music That Took Over the World*

Week Two 1/12

Early history; French, Spanish, Caribbean, Native American and African influences; The Louisiana Purchase and the Battle of New Orleans

Readings:

McKinney, 1-29
Remini, “New Orleans” (E)
Chopin, *The Awakening*, I - XV

Week Three 1/19

Social stratification; The latter 19th century; Women and power: Kate Chopin and Marie LaVeau; Screening of excerpt from *Divine Horsemen*

Readings:

Chopin, *The Awakening*, XVI - XXIX
McKinney, 86-101
Reed, “Shrovetide in Old New Orleans” (E)

Week Four 1/26

Louis Armstrong and the Birth of Jazz; Musical Forms and Social Context

Readings:

Brothers, Introduction; Chapters 1-3
McKinney, 31-41; 109-116

Listening:

Dr. John, tracks 1-9

Week Five 2/2

The French Quarter; French Carnival & the Carnavalesque; Mardi Gras Indians

Readings:

McKinney, 51-82; 201-228
Gill, “The Rise and Fall of French Carnival” (E)
Brothers, Chapters 4 & 7

Week Six 2/9

New Orleans Imaged as a Woman: Poetic truth or pernicious stereotype?; Tennessee Williams and Bohemianism; Screening of *A Streetcar Named Desire*; Midterm Papers due

Readings:

Adler, Foreword (in McKinney)
Brothers, Chapters 6 & 8
Reed, “Neo-HooDoo Manifesto” (E)

Week Seven 2/16

Louisiana flood, 1927; New Orleans R&B; Screening of more excerpts from *Make It Funky*

Readings:

- Barry, Excerpt from *Rising Tide* (E)
- Lichtenstein & Dankner, Excerpts from *Musical Gumbo* (E)
- Reed, *Mumbo Jumbo*, first third

Listening:

- Dr. John, tracks 10-18

Week Eight 2/23

Ishmael Reed, New Orleans & Neo-Hoodoo Aesthetics; Cajun Country

Readings:

- Reed, *Mumbo Jumbo*, second third
- McKinney, 187-200

Week Nine 3/2

Conclusion of *Mumbo Jumbo*; New Orleans as Metaphor for Multiculturalism; Hurricane Katrina; Screening of *When the Levees Broke*, Part I

Readings:

- Reed, *Mumbo Jumbo*, last third
- Horne, “An Imperfect Storm” & “Real Ugly, Real Fast” (E)

Week Ten 3/9

Screening of *When the Levees Broke*, Part II; Media Portrayals of the Crisis; The Politics of Emergency; Newman’s “Louisiana 1927” as Post-Katrina Anthem; Some concepts from Racial Formation Theory

Readings:

- Grunwald, “Par for the Corps” (E)
- Welch, “They Shoot Helicopters, Don’t They?” (E)
- Thompson, “Katrina’s Hidden Race War” (E)
- Omi & Winant, Excerpt from *Racial Formation Theory* (E)

Listening:

- Newman, “Louisiana 1927” (download)

Week Eleven 3/16

The New Orleans diaspora; New Orleans in recovery; New Orleans in the imagination; The Concert for NOLA; Screening of *Piano Players Rarely Ever Play Together*
Final papers due

Suggested Format for Journals

For a given reading, fill up about a page responding to the following questions:

1. What is the reading about? (Try to be concrete and literal at this point; don't jump to "interpretation".)
2. Describe something from your own experience you are reminded of by the reading.
3. What is the most important passage in the reading? Why?
4. Which other reading seems to most agree with this one? Which other reading seems most to disagree? Explain your choices.
5. Pretend the reading is *not* about whatever you said it was about in #1. Pretend it's about something else, something hidden or unstated. What is this other thing that the reading is "really" about?