

Fall 2015

ENGL 2043

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University of New Orleans

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ENGL 2043: NEW ORLEANS LITERATURE

Professor: **Dr. Elizabeth Steeby**

Office: Liberal Arts Building, Rm 269

Office Hours: MWF 1-2:30 pm and by appointment

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: New Orleans has long occupied a special place in the U.S. imaginary as the most “exotic” setting, rural or urban, in the nation. At times the city and its residents are depicted as the most decadent, cosmopolitan, or spectacular, and at other times (or perhaps in the same breath) as the most lawless, diseased, and corrupt. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina and the ensuing FEMA disaster, people voiced a common refrain that something irreplaceable stood in danger of being lost. In this course, we will look at fiction, poetry, film, and music to consider how New Orleans has come to be imagined as a national exception and a space of contradiction. For example, we will look at the cultural genealogy that links George Washington Cable's short stories to Zora Neale Hurston's folkloric studies and contemporary documentary films. The course will explore how historical and social processes—such as European colonization, slavery, immigration, segregation—as well as “natural disasters,” like hurricanes and floods, have both informed and been shaped by culture and literature. The course will begin in the nineteenth century, before the Civil War, and extend to our contemporary moment. In our analysis, we will pay close attention to the ways in which race, gender, sexuality, and class are represented in the tension and dynamism of New Orleans literature and culture. Texts will include the following books as well as additional articles, excerpts, and short pieces.

TEXTS:

Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (New Directions, ISBN-10: 9780811216029)

Kennedy, *Aunt Alice vs. Bob Marley* (UNO Press, ISBN-10: 1608010139)

Wilson, *Snowbird* (ISBN: 978-0-615-82234-1)

Student Learning Outcomes

After successfully completing the requirements for this course, students will be able to:

Consider New Orleans literature as a representation of cultural, social, and historical movements

Define major movements, styles, and themes in New Orleans literature

Analyze modes and genres of writing in relation to their social and historical context

Synthesize the significance of various texts from different literary and historical periods in relation to one another

Produce complex written arguments in essay form that address the prominent themes and topics represented in the New Orleans literary texts that follow

Assignments:

- Bi-weekly 1pg Response Papers that address (at least) one of the week's assigned readings, due each Monday in class (6 in total)
- Periodic Reading Quizzes
- Midterm Exam
- Midterm Paper—5-7 pages
- Final Paper—5-7 pages
- Final Exam**

**Honors students will be expected to complete additional assignments to fulfill course requirements. These will include a longer final essay assignment and 3-5 pg. paper on an additional reading or local literary/cultural performance. Look for details to be posted to Moodle.

Course Requirements: Classes will highlight important material addressed in the assigned readings, so you must complete all the readings and be prepared to discuss the relevant topics and themes when you come to class. Be an active reader! Take notes and bring them to class. We will discuss the readings as a class and within smaller workshop groups.

Grades: Midterm Exam: **20%**; Midterm Essay: **20%**; Final Essay: **20%**; Final Exam: **20%**; Class Participation and Short Writing Assignments: **20%**

Assigned reading responses and pop quizzes will be factored into your participation grades.

Come to Class/ Bring Your Books

Attendance is required. Students are allowed 3 absences, but after that your grade will be penalized. If you cannot attend class for some reason, email me and explain why. Your attendance at every class session is especially important. The class participation portion of your final grade will be automatically decreased by 5% for each absence exceeding three.

Be on time. Students are also required to come to class on time. Do not walk into class 5, 10, or 15 minutes late. It is disruptive to the class. You are also expected to bring the assigned text to each class. Please turn off all electronic equipment, including cell phones. **NO TEXTING or SOCIAL MEDIA TROLLING IN CLASS.**

Please come with questions about readings to each class, and be prepared to discuss the material in a thoughtful manner. Assigned readings are to be completed before class. I expect you to participate in class actively and conduct yourself in a professional manner. Please treat your fellow classmates with respect, and be courteous when others are speaking. Any comments or actions that instigate or contribute to a hostile environment in the classroom will not be tolerated. Any individuals who, as a result of their words or behavior, harass or silence their classmates will be held accountable. Policies on sexual harassment and discriminatory speech/ behavior are outlined on the UNO website. See:

<http://studentaffairs.uno.edu/manual.cfm>

E-mail Account/ Moodle Access:

If you do not already have one, please sign up for a free UNO e-mail account for class use as soon as possible. The Help Desk is located in Room 101T of the Computer Center (CC) and is managed by Derek Rodriguez. I may make announcements by e-mail, so check your inbox daily. Students must have Internet access to www.uno.edu and the Moodle portion of ENGL 2043. All communications, including the posting of grades will be done through Moodle. Students are responsible for all e-mail communications from the instructor to their UNO email drop box. Help with Moodle can be accessed at: <http://www.uno.edu/moodle>

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: [Students who qualify for services will receive the academic modifications for which they are legally entitled. It is the responsibility of the student to register with the Office of Disability Services \(<http://ods.uno.edu/>\) each semester and follow their procedures for obtaining assistance.](#)

Academic Integrity:

Students are expected to do their own work as outlined in the UNO Policy on Academic Integrity published by the Division of Student Affairs: <http://www.studentaffairs.uno.edu/Judicial/>. Acts of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated, and any student who engages in suspicious conduct will be confronted and subjected to the disciplinary process. See: <http://studentaffairs.uno.edu/pdfs/AcademicDishonestyPolicy.pdf>

Assigned Texts/ Reading Schedule:

Week 1: 8/19

Wed: Course introduction and syllabus

Week 2: 8/24- 8/26

Longview of Tradition

Mon-Wed: *By Invitation Only* (dir. Rebecca Snedeker, 2009) and in-class discussion

Week 3: 8/31- 9/2

Legacies of Plantation Slavery

Mon: Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave*, Ch. 1, 2, 6 (1853)—Moodle/pdf

The Invention of the City and Creole Identity

Wed: Lafcadio Hearn, short pieces (1877)—Moodle/pdf

Week 4: 9/7- 9/9

Mon: **LABOR DAY HOLIDAY/ NO CLASS**

Wed: G.W. Cable, “Belles Demoiselles Plantation” (1879)—available online

Week 5: 9/14- 9/16

Women and Social Critique

Mon: Kate Chopin, “A Respectable Woman” and “The Story of an Hour” (1894)—available online

Wed: Alice Dunbar-Nelson, “Natalie” (1898)—Moodle/pdf

Week 6: 9/21- 9/23

Mob Violence and Shifting Demographics

Mon-Wed: Annie Proulx, “The Accordion Maker” from *Accordion Crimes* (1996)—Moodle/pdf

Week 7: 9/28- 9/30

Mon: Annie Proulx, “The Accordion Maker” from *Accordion Crimes* (1996)—Moodle/pdf

Wed: Midterm Exam (in class)

Week 8: 10/5- 10/7

Poetic Return to Storyville

Mon-Wed: Nathasha Trethewey: *Bellocq’s Ophelia* (2002)

****MIDTERM PAPER DUE IN CLASS ****

Week 9: 10/12- 10/14

(De)Mystifying Voodoo

Mon-Wed: Zora Neale Hurston, *Mules and Men* (1935)—Moodle/pdf

Week 10: 10/19- 10/21

Working Class Romance and The Kindness of Strangers

Mon-Wed: Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947)

Week 11: 10/26- 10/28

Mon-Wed: Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947)

Week 12: 11/2- 11/4

The Free Southern Theater and BLKARTS Legacy

Mon-Wed: Tom Dent, "Ritual Murder" (1968) –available on JSTOR, via UNO Library database

Week 13: 11/9- 11/11

After the Flood: Post-Katrina Poetry

Mon-Wed: Poetry unit: selected poems by Niyi Osundare, Kalamu Ya Salaam, and spoken word by Sunni Patterson (Moodle/YouTube)

Week 14: 11/16- 11/18

Documenting "Recovery" From 6 Angles

Mon-Wed: In-class documentary film screening and discussion, *Land of Opportunity* (dir. Luisa Dantas, 2010)

Week 15: 11/23- 11/25

Contemporary Literary Scenes/ New Voices/ Multimedia and Graphic Memoirs

Mon-Wed: Kareem Kennedy, *Aunt Alice vs. Bob Marley* (2009)

Week 15: 11/30- 12/2

Mon-Wed: Erin Wilson, *Snowbird* (2013)

****Final Paper due in class****

****Final Exam Week, 12/7- 12/11. Date and time to be announced.****

This syllabus is subject to change throughout the semester. Please check Moodle for updates and amendments.