Ethnic Studies 199: Ethnicity and America

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Office Hours: Wednesday, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. and by appointment
Office: 350H McKenzie Hall

Course Meets: MW 12:00-1:20 p.m.
Chapman Hall 204

Course Description: When Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast in 2005, a number of Americans observed that the storm’s damage and aftermath laid bare the country’s deepest divisions of race, class, and culture. The rebuilding efforts revealed the nation’s deep need for New Orleans to regain its cultural vibrancy. In this course, we will consider the hypothesis of “New Orleans as America” by exploring the ways in which the city has been historically and culturally constituted. What makes New Orleans critical to America’s definition of itself, and what discourses arise through the city? How does geography shape identity? Does the famed multiculturalism of New Orleans make the city an exception or an example of America? Our materials will include tour guidebooks, musical recordings, short stories, historical texts, documentary films, and scholarly articles. Assignments will include a short paper (analysis of tour guidebooks), an in-class midterm exam, a prospectus for the final paper (brief description of project with preliminary bibliography), and a final project that explores course themes through a cultural medium such as music, film, literature, media reports, or other form.

Course Requirements: Attendance and participation in class is required. Students are expected to arrive at class on time and to be prepared to discuss the assigned readings for that day. The attendance and participation grade will depend largely on regular in-class writing assignments. Two short papers will be due in the third and fifth week of the term: an analysis of a New Orleans guidebook, and a proposal for the final project with a preliminary bibliography. The mid-term exam in week seven will feature a short answer and short essay format. The final project is due on June 11 (finals week) by 5 p.m.; there will be no final exam.

The course grade will be based on the following:
  Attendance and participation: 20 percent
  Tour guide analysis (3-4 pages): 20 percent
  Project proposal with preliminary bibliography (3-4 pages): 20 percent
  Mid-term exam (in-class): 20 percent
  Final paper (8-10 pages): 20 percent

Late Paper Policy: Extensions for papers will be granted if requested in advance in extreme situations, such as serious illness or death in the family. Otherwise, late papers will be penalized by one-third of a grade reduction for each weekday it is late.

Electronic Course Reader (ECR): Students are expected to print out materials from the Electronic Course Reader and bring them to class on the assigned date.

Required Texts:
  Electronic Course Reader (ECR)
  Dyson, Michael Eric. Come Hell or High Water: Hurricane Katrina and the Color of Disaster.
  Lee, Spike. When the Levees Broke (On Reserve)
Course Schedule
This schedule is subject to change.

Ap 2  Introduction: Mapping New Orleans


      American Cultural Studies, 1-18

Ap 11  Frymer, Strolovitch, & Warren, “New Orleans is Not the Exception” (ECR)

Ap 16  American Cultural Studies, 22-43
      Bush, “We Will Do What it Takes” (ECR)
      SHORT ESSAY DUE

Ap 18  American Cultural Studies, 78-101
      Armstrong, “Growing Up in New Orleans” (ECR)

Ap 23  Lee, When the Levees Broke, Act I (film)
      American Cultural Studies, 176-198

Ap 25  Dyson, Come Hell or High Water, 1-75

Ap 30  Lee, When the Levees Broke, Act II (film)
      Dyson, Come Hell or High Water, 77-107

M 2   Dyson, Come Hell or High Water, 109-138
      PROSPECTUS DUE

M 7   Dyson, Come Hell or High Water, 141-212

M 9   American Cultural Studies, 134-168
      Bobo, “Katrina: Unmasking Race, Poverty, and Politics in the 21st Century” (ECR)

M 14  MID-TERM EXAM

M 16  Elliott & Pais, “Race, Class, and Hurricane Katrina” (ECR)

M 21  New Orleans Black Indians (film)
      Goodman, “Indian Tribes and Hurricane Katrina” (ECR)
      King, “Estrangements: Native American Mascots and Indian-Black Relations” (ECR)

M 23  Kao, “Where are the Asian and Hispanic Victims of Katrina?” (ECR)
      Lie, “The Last Last Wave” (ECR)

M 28  MEMORIAL DAY HOLIDAY
M 30  Airreiss, “Creating Vietnamese Landscapes and Place in New Orleans” (ECR)
       Butler, “Fairy Tale” (ECR)
       American Cultural Studies, 47-73

Ju 4   Hurricane Katrina, The Soundtrack
       Woods, “Do You Know What it Means to Miss New Orleans?” (ECR)

Ju 6   American Cultural Studies, 287-309

**Finals Week:** Final Papers due to the Ethnic Studies Office (201 McKenzie Hall) by 5 p.m. on June 11.