

Reconstructing New Orleans: Class, Race and the Ownership Society

<http://academic.evergreen.edu/curricular/nola/>

Spring 2006

Faculty

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Program Description

Many questions have been raised about what caused the high level of devastation to New Orleans and the subsequent human tragedy in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. There is also great interest in who will benefit from the reconstruction and how it will be organized. This program is designed to investigate some of those questions and to organize a College-wide spring symposium to present some answers to those questions. We'll organize our investigation in four inter-related areas.

First, we establish the setting by learning about the history of New Orleans itself, paying particular attention to how the interplay of class and race has shaped the city's socio-economic order and its residential and commercial patterns. Our goal here is to come up with an accurate portrait of how New Orleans fits into the larger US and global political economy.

Next, we'll examine the present pattern of corporate & governmental interaction known as neoliberalism. This decades-long interaction involves the pursuit of an "ownership society" through the implementation of policies such as governmental de-regulation, privatization of public services and the promotion of "personal responsibility" rather than public well being. Our goal here is to see how these policies will condition the governmental and corporate response to Katrina's devastation as well as to the reconstruction of the area. We'll strive to assess the meaning of an "ownership society" in terms of class and race by examining alternative responses that have met comparable natural disasters and reconstruction efforts in other time periods and in other countries.

In our third segment, we want to look at how the citizens of New Orleans reacted to the devastation and organized for survival both in the flood, during the relief effort and after their

"rescue" and displacement to other communities. Our goal here is not just to catalog the types of responses, but also to evaluate the present state of and organizational level attained by these "evacuees" and their positions with regards to New Orleans.

Finally, we want to see how the reconstruction proposals by the various governmental and private "Katrina commissions" deal with the interaction between the needs of the evacuated citizens, i.e., redress, and the demands of financial interests, i.e. "re-development." Our goal here is to systematize our learning to prevent future disasters and to consider how to reconstruct a more just socio-economic order.

Our hope for this program is that it becomes a community of researchers jointly investigating this national tragedy and jointly organizing our Spring Symposium for maximum public benefit.

Books

Dyson, Michael Eric. *Come Hell or High Water: Hurricane Katrina and the Color of Disaster*. New York: Basic Civitas, 2006.

Medley, Keith Weldon. *We as Freeman: Plessy v. Ferguson*. Gretna, La.: Pelican Pub. Co., 2003.

Gill, James. *Lords of Misrule: Mardi Gras and the Politics of Race in New Orleans*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997.

Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press, 2005.

Research & Symposium

All students will be expected to complete a research project in research teams. Research teams will consist of 8 people who will investigate various components of the group's chosen subject area. For example, if a group is looking at reconstruction and education, one person might look at privatization and charter schools and another person might look at the teacher's union and another at displaced students and another at reconstruction and historically black colleges in New Orleans, and so on. We'll form groups around common interests early in week two. These groups will organize themselves to formulate a plan for coordinating research, sharing information, and writing an executive summary. The research projects will be presented at our Symposium May 26-27. All students will also be expected to assist in planning and putting on the symposium. Individually, each student will submit - on 5/2 - an abstract, outline and annotated bibliography on their own component.

Mid-Term Exam

In addition to the work on the research projects and symposium planning, there will be a take-home mid-term exam due 4/28. It will require you to synthesize program materials thru 4/24 including texts, films, lectures, discussions, etc. You will receive more information in week 3.

Weekly Class Schedule

Mondays	10-12:30 1:30-4:30	Lecture, Film, Etc. Dan's Seminar Tony's Seminar	B1105 B1107 D3107
Tuesdays	10-12:30 1:30-3:00	Workshop Dan's Seminar Tony's Seminar	C1107 B2107 B2109
Fridays	10-12 1-3	Lecture, Film, Etc. Dan's Seminar Tony's Seminar	A1105 D2107 D2109

Credit Policy

Sixteen quarter-hours of credit will be awarded to students who fulfill all of the following requirements:

- submission of all assignments by the deadlines announced in the syllabus unless otherwise agreed upon by the student and faculty;
- regular attendance at all class activities (More than 2 excused absences will result in the loss of credit);
- active collaboration in research team and presentation of research in class (5/2) & at the symposium (5/26-7);
- active and responsible participation as part of a planning team for the symposium
- draft of written self-evaluation and faculty evaluation before evaluation conference.

Academic Honesty

The work we submit—in discussion, writing, etc.—must reflect our own ideas. When we incorporate the ideas of others, be those published authors, filmmakers, or classmates, we should acknowledge our sources. While much of the work in this program will be collaborative and the ensuing ideas will reflect the contributions of more than one person, we will get in the habit of acknowledging the people and ideas that have influenced us. Failure to cite copyrighted sources, or presentation of the work of others as one's own, is plagiarism and will be treated in accordance with the provisions of the Social Contract.