

Media and New Orleans

Comm 3110-001

Prof. Gil Rodman

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office hours (253 Ford): TuTh 10-11:15a, W 10-11:30a, and by appointment

Syllabus

Fall 2008

Course description

New Orleans is a city with a rich history. It's the birthplace of jazz and (arguably) the blues and rock 'n' roll as well. It's long been one of the busiest ports in the US. It's a city of incredible diversity: one that's often described as the most European of US Cities . . . and as the northernmost Caribbean city . . . and as one of the classic cities of the old South. It's home to the largest and most famous Mardi Gras festival in North America. And, of course, it was devastated by Hurricane Katrina in 2005: three years later, nearly half the pre-Katrina population of the city remains displaced.

We will spend a lot of time this semester talking about Katrina -- the impact of the storm on the city, the short-term news coverage of the event, the longer-term media attention (or lack thereof) to the post-storm recovery efforts -- but first we will set the stage for that story by studying New Orleans as a major site for both music and tourism. Focusing on music and tourism in the first part of the semester will not only help us understand a bit more about pre-Katrina New Orleans, but it will also help us better understand some of the ways that the people of New Orleans have responded to the aftermath of the storm.

Music and tourism may seem like unusual focal points for a course on media -- but only if one takes a very narrow view of what counts as media. Neither music nor tourism necessarily appear to be media-centered phenomena -- one can hear music performed live, after all, and being a tourist often involves detaching oneself from one's usual media habits -- but part of what this course will suggest is that both of these spheres of activity are, in fact, tightly interwoven into the contemporary US mediascape.

Perhaps most importantly, though, we will spend the semester thinking critically and complexly about the relationship between media and New Orleans. By necessity, this will force us to examine difficult questions of race and class, poverty and privilege, community and mobility, tradition and development, and then some. None of these questions come with easy or simple answers, and we will not necessarily end the semester with any of them settled once and for all. How well you do in this class will depend on your ability to think critically about the issues involved and your ability to argue your position(s) well, rather than your ability to memorize and repeat the "right" answers.

Readings/videos

Our required book -- Kevin Fox Gotham, *Authentic New Orleans* -- is available at the University Bookstore in Coffman Union. The rest of our readings will be made available in PDF format.

The documentary, *When the Levees Broke*, is also available (in DVD format) at the University Bookstore in Coffman Union. Please note that while it is listed there as "recommended," it is required viewing.

Grading

Final course grades will be calculated using the following schedule:

Reading/viewing responses	30%
Critical response papers (3 @ 10% each)	30%
Take-home final exam	40%

Accumulated grade point totals translate to final course grades as follows:

A	93-100	B	83-86	C	73-76	D	60-66
A-	90-92	B-	80-82	C-	70-72	F	0-59
B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69		

"I" grades will only be given under *extraordinary* circumstances (i.e., major life emergencies).

Attendance/participation

Our class meetings will be structured around seminar-style discussions rather than formal lectures. This means that you should *always* come to class (1) having done the assigned readings/viewings carefully and thoughtfully, and (2) prepared to contribute to our discussions about that material in productive ways. This class is *not* a spectator event, and I will expect *everyone* who shows up for class to be able and willing to participate meaningfully in our conversations. Please note that "being prepared" does not require you to have fully mastered the assigned reading/viewing: it simply requires you to have done the reading/viewing closely enough to contribute thoughtful questions and/or comments to our discussions.

Reading/viewing responses

You will write and submit a minimum of fifteen (15) short reading/viewing responses, each of which will consist of a significant comment or question about a different one of our assigned readings/viewings. Each response is due by 11:15 am *the day before* the class period for which a given reading/viewing is assigned.

Critical response papers

You will write three critical response papers (750-1000 words each) over the course of the semester, each of which should be a critical (i.e., thoughtful and analytical) response to the assigned readings/viewings from a particular unit of the course. Due dates (with associated readings) are as follows:

Paper #1 (4-30 Sep)	7 Oct
Paper #2 (2-30 Oct)	4 Nov
Paper #3 (4 Nov-4 Dec)	9 Dec

Take-home final exam

This exam (due by 10:30 am on 16 Dec) will consist entirely of three essay questions (1000-1250 words each) and will be based on the assigned readings/viewings and our in-class discussions. It will consist of one mandatory question and two questions that you will choose from a larger selection.

Written assignments: general rules

(a) Where/how to submit assignments. Critical response papers and the take-home final *must* be submitted in *both* printed *and* digital versions, and the text of each version must be identical. Reading/viewing responses *must* be submitted in digital form.

- Printed versions should be double-spaced and stapled (do *not* use plastic covers/binders).
- Digital versions should be e-mailed to rodman@umn.edu.
- Acceptable digital formats are OpenOffice, WordPerfect, Word, RTF, PDF, HTML, and plaintext.
- I will *not* print out hard copies of digital submissions, and you will *not* receive written feedback from me unless you submit a printed version.
- If you submit printed versions outside of class, *either* hand such work directly to me *or* place it in my campus mailbox in 250 Ford. Do *not* submit work under my office door. Please note that 250 Ford is only open between 8 am and 4 pm on weekdays.

(b) Deadlines. Except for the take-home final (which is due at 10:30 am), all submission deadlines are *11:15 am* on the relevant due date. The *minimum* penalty for late assignments will be one full letter grade. Critical response papers will be considered “on time” (a) if at least one of the two required versions is submitted on time *and* (b) if the other version is submitted no more than 24 hours after the official deadline. Reading/viewing responses will *not* be accepted after the deadline. Deadlines are *not* negotiable or subject to extensions, except in cases involving:

- major life emergencies (with suitable documentation (hospital receipts, funeral notices, etc.)) or
- major religious holidays (with written notice presented at least a week in advance).

(c) Grammar/spelling/etc. Assignment grades will be based primarily on content and argument, rather than form and style: insightful, smartly argued essays that contain a few spelling errors will almost always receive higher grades than grammatically flawless papers that have weak arguments. Nonetheless, grammar, spelling, and style still matter to the effective presentation of a strong argument, and assignments suffering from significant “form” problems will be penalized accordingly.

Academic integrity

The following is a *partial* list of major examples of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism in any of its forms,
- copying assignments (in whole or in part) written by other students,
- having someone else research and/or write substantial portions of any graded assignment, and
- knowingly assisting someone else in their efforts to engage in any of the above practices.

The minimum penalty for academic dishonesty is a *zero* for the assignment in question.

Further information about the University’s official policies with respect to academic dishonesty can be found online at <http://writing.umn.edu/tww/plagiarism/>

Etiquette

- Our discussions will cover topics that are likely to evoke strong differences of opinion within the group. I do not expect our class meetings to produce unanimous agreement about the issues under discussion, but I *do* expect *all* of our conversations to be characterized by mutual respect and collegiality. Strongly expressed opinions are acceptable in this class; verbal bullying and personal attacks, on the other hand, will *not* be tolerated under any circumstances.
- Significant disruptions of the normal flow of course-related business -- e.g., using cell phones in class, excessive side chatter -- may result in grade penalties.
- If you wish to, you may make audio recordings of our class meetings, provided you can do so without disrupting the ordinary flow of the class. The purchase and/or sale of either written notes or audio recordings of our class meetings, however, is strictly prohibited.

Reading/assignment schedule

2 Sep	no readings
4 Sep	Carey, "A Cultural Approach to Communication"
9 Sep	Frith, "Towards an Aesthetic of Popular Music"
11 Sep	Winner, "The Sound of New Orleans"
16 Sep	Ventura, "Hear That Long Snake Moan"
18 Sep	Lipsitz, "Mardi Gras Indians: Carnival and Counter-Narrative in Black New Orleans"
23 Sep	Lipsitz, "That's My Blood Down There"
25 Sep	Roach, "History, Memory, and Performance"
30 Sep	Roach, "Carnival and the Law"
2 Oct	Gotham, ch. 1
7 Oct	Critical response paper #1 due Gotham, ch. 2
9 Oct	Gotham, ch. 3
14 Oct	Gotham, ch. 4
16 Oct	Gotham, ch. 5
21 Oct	Gotham, ch. 6
23 Oct	Gotham, ch. 7
28 Oct	Gotham, ch. 8
30 Oct	Gotham, ch. 9
4 Nov	Critical response paper #2 due T.B.A.
6 Nov	T.B.A.
11 Nov	T.B.A.
13 Nov	T.B.A.
18 Nov	T.B.A.
20 Nov	NO CLASS
25 Nov	T.B.A.
27 Nov	NO CLASS
2 Dec	T.B.A.
4 Dec	T.B.A.
9 Dec	Critical response paper #3 due T.B.A.
16 Dec	Take-home final due (10:30 am)