CLASS SYLLABUS, Spring 2012

Food, Identity & Culture:
Intensive Graduate Seminar in New Orleans

Course Number: FOOD-GE.2271.S.095.SP12
Field Trip: March 12-18, 2012, plus 1 orientation and 2 class meetings at NYU
3 credits

New York University
Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development
Department of Nutrition, Food Studies and Public Health

Professor Meryl Rosofsky
Cell: 917.892.9978
Email: mr186@nyu.edu

Dates:
Orientation Session:
Friday February 3rd, 5:30-7:00pm, Pless Hall (82 Washington Square East), 5th fl. Conf. Room

Pre-Trip Class at NYU:
Friday March 2nd, 4:30-7:00pm, Pless Hall (82 Washington Square East), 5th fl. Conf. Room

Field Trip:
Monday March 12th through Sunday March 18th, 2012

Post-Trip Final Class at NYU:
Friday May 4th, 4:30-7:00pm, 35 West 4th Street (Education Bldg.), rm. 1078

Context & Course Description:
In few places in the world is food more defining than in New Orleans. Together with its music and architecture, its cuisine—a rich pastiche of Creole, Cajun, Afro-Caribbean, French, Spanish, and other influences—is nearly synonymous with the soul and culture of the city. Providing far more than physical nourishment, the food of New Orleans is a potent marker of identity and forger of community for those who live there, and a symbol and tourism magnet for those who don’t.

Through firsthand study of and immersion in the foodways of New Orleans, we will explore the ways in which culture, ethnicity, race, class, geography, and history mesh—and clash—to forge cultural meaning and identity in this complicated, fascinating city. In addition, we will examine the serious challenges still faced by the people of New Orleans 6½ years after the devastation of Katrina, and the vital role of food and food-related institutions in the ongoing
recovery and renewal of the city. We will also explore the economic, ecological, and cultural impact of the BP oil spill on the Gulf fisheries and seafood industry.

While the food and culture of New Orleans are the specific focus of this course, students will be encouraged to think more broadly about the intersection of culture, meaning, and identity as they shape, and are shaped by, food traditions and practices.

**Course Objectives—Students should be able to:**

- Demonstrate a deep understanding of the food and culture of New Orleans, in the context of its unique history, geographic location, ethnic influences and immigration patterns
- Critically assess the ways in which New Orleans’ food traditions and rituals serve to both mark and bridge classic divides across race, class, and ethnic groups
- Identify issues and challenges created or exacerbated by the aftermath of Katrina, and ways in which local visionaries and activists at both the grassroots and institutional level are working to overcome these challenges, with a focus on:
  - Food supply and access (fishing and shellfishing industries; agriculture; grocery stores, community gardens, and farmers’ markets; chefs, restaurants, and restaurant workers; nutrition and safety; etc.)
  - General infrastructure and well-being (health; education; transportation; housing; neighborhood development and urban planning; the economy; the environment)
- Synthesize learnings from our New Orleans field experience and apply them more broadly to general questions of food, meaning, and identity, e.g.:
  - How is culture transmitted and preserved through food? How do people use food to define themselves as individuals, groups, or whole societies?
  - How can food have different meanings and uses for different people?
  - How does food function both to foster community feeling and drive wedges among people?
Course Schedule & Trip Itinerary

Pre-Trip Meetings in NYC:
Friday, Feb. 3rd: Orientation Session at NYU,
Pless Hall 5th fl. Conference Room
5:30-7:00pm: Introductions/orientation. Review of course objectives, preliminary trip itinerary, and logistics. Health forms and travel waivers. Selection of topics for March pre-trip assignments (iconic food/person essays + presentations and critical oral presentations on select readings).

Friday, March 2nd: Pre-Trip Class at NYU,
Pless Hall 5th fl. Conference Room
4:30-7:00pm: Regrounding in syllabus. Student presentations on select NOLA food topics and other readings. Hand in short (2-3-page) essay on the NOLA food/person topic you chose. (See Assignments, below). Possible screening of select documentary films.

TRIP ITINERARY in New Orleans, March 12-18, 2012:
(Itinerary subject to change)


Day 1, Monday, March 12: Arrival in New Orleans; Orientation
3:30pm: Convene in Carousel Bar at Hotel Monteleone for welcome and quick run-through of week’s itinerary.

- For those who arrive at the hotel earlier, you may want to take an audio tour of the historic hotel; inquire in the coffee shop in the lobby about this free 25-minute self-guided tour.
- You could also consider stopping en route from the airport (if you’re coming in by taxi) at Crabby Jack’s for one of their famous po-boys.

4:00pm: Start walking over to the home of Liz Williams and her husband Rick Normand, at 1110 Burgundy Street, on the other side of the French Quarter. (For those not arriving in time to meet at the hotel, you can just meet us at Liz’s when you can.) Liz is the founder and president of the Southern Food & Beverage Museum, author of the forthcoming New Orleans: A Culinary Biography, and an invaluable resource to our group.

4:15pm--8:30pm: Cooking Demo, Guest Speakers, & Dinner at Liz’s home.

Woven throughout the evening we will have:

- Cooking Demonstration with chefs Tess Monaghan and Matt Kopfler of PPX New Orleans (www.ppxneworleans.com/). Learn how the locals make dark roux
and chicken gumbo, as Liz, Tess and Matt share history, techniques, and insights into some of what makes New Orleans cuisine unique.

- **Talk by guest speaker Rien Fertel**, Ph.D. candidate in American History at Tulane. Rien will share with us his work on the origins of gumbo and on historic Creole cookbooks and the formation of Creole identity in New Orleans. (We’ll be meeting with his uncle Randy Fertel later in the week.)

- **Talk by guest speaker Dr. David Beriss**, Anthropology Department, University of New Orleans: “*Restaurants & Recovery: The Restaurant Culture of New Orleans Pre- and Post-Katrina*” and “*The Color of Roux.*”

- **Gumbo Supper**: We’ll feast together on our creations. Since this is Monday night, our hosts will also make some (vegetarian) red beans & rice for us.

~8:30pm: **Dessert Party** at the antiques-filled home of antiquarian and historian Peter Patout, a block from Liz’s home in the French Quarter. Chance to mingle with some locals and learn about the history of the sugar industry in Louisiana.

http://countryroadsmagazine.com/Profiles-People-Places/peter-patout

---

**Day 2, Tuesday, March 13: Introduction to the Food & Culture of New Orleans**

9:20am: Board Dillard mini-bus in front of hotel.

10:00am-11:30am: **“New Orleans Cuisine: African Antecedents & the Caribbean Connection,”** by guest lecturer **Dr. Jessica Harris**, author, culinary historian, co-founder of the Southern Foodways Alliance, and Ray Charles Chair at Dillard University. We may also view part of DVD “Lost Restaurants of New Orleans.”

Location: **Dillard University**, an important Historically Black College & University (HBCU).

12:00pm: Lunch at **Dooky Chase**, Leah Chase’s iconic Creole restaurant in Tremé, considered the oldest African-American neighborhood in the United States, 2301 Orleans Avenue. Dr. Jessica Harris will join us for lunch to continue our conversation, and Mrs. Chase will meet with us during lunch as well, a real treat. (Everyone will be responsible for getting back to the French Quarter on your own.)

3:15pm-6:30pm: **Culinary & cocktail walking tour of French Quarter** with Elizabeth Pearce, culinary historian and original curator of Southern Food & Beverage Museum. Introduction to the historic and culinary landmarks of the storied French Quarter, with tastes and sips along the way. Tour will include a roving version of Elizabeth’s seminar “History in a Glass,” the story of the music, cuisine and architecture of New Orleans as revealed by iconic drinks such as the Sazerac and Hurricane. We’ll meet Elizabeth at the historic Hermann-Grima House, 820 St. Louis Street in the French Quarter.

http://www.elizabeth-pearce.com/

http://www.hgghh.org/
Evening on own.
Optional late night: **Rebirth Brass Band** at the Maple Leaf (go/pay on own)

**Day 3, Wednesday, March 14: Village de l’Est/Vietnamese Community, Edible Schoolyard, and Cocktail Party with guests from the food security/food justice community**

10:50am: Board Hotard mini-bus in front of hotel to head to New Orleans East to visit with members of the Vietnamese community. (We will try to screen DVDs *en route* that bring to life some of the issues and challenges facing people in the fishing/shrimping/oystering industries, many of them Vietnamese, Croatian, and Isleños from the Canary Islands, or a film with oral histories on the impact of the BP oil spill on people’s lives, as we drive through coastal fishing communities in St. Bernard Parish.)

11:30am-2:15pm: Tour, talk, and lunch with Daniel Nguyen of the Mary Queen of Viet Nam Community Development Corporation (MQVN CDC), through New Orleans’ Vietnamese community Village de l’Est, hard hit by Hurricane Katrina and the BP oil spill. View plans for **Viet Village Urban Farm**, an inspiring project encompassing community gardens, commercial agriculture, a major produce market, and a **Sustainable Aquaculture Park** (for which Daniel is the project manager), and learn about ways the MQVN CDC is supporting community farmers and fisherfolk, helping them organize around environmental justice issues and, in the case of those who lost their livelihoods in the fishing industry due to the oil spill and other forces, migrate to new economic opportunities such as aquaponics.

Lunch either at traditional Vietnamese restaurant in New Orleans East (this would be a pay-on-your-own meal) or with local community members who may cook traditional Vietnamese dishes for us using produce they have grown [we are still working this out]. You may also choose to sample food from one of the many taco trucks cropping up here and in other parts of the city with the ongoing influx of Latino workers after Katrina.

3:00pm-4:00pm: **Edible Schoolyard** New Orleans at the Samuel J. Green Charter School, 2319 Valence Street. Talk and tour of school garden and teaching kitchen with April Neujean, Chef Teacher and (her schedule permitting) Denise Richter, Network Garden Manager. [http://www.esynola.org/](http://www.esynola.org/)

~5:30pm: Head on own to home of Daphne Derven (details below) at 3818 Cleveland Avenue (one block off Canal, between S. Cortez and S. Scott. It’s possible to get here by the Canal Streetcar, or you may choose to group up and come by taxi. Everyone will be responsible for getting to/from Daphne’s place on their own.)

6:00pm-8:00pm: “**Transforming Hunger in New Orleans.**” Talk and cocktail reception with Daphne Derven, Special Projects Manager for the Emeril Lagasse Foundation, at her Mid-City home.

We’ll have a chance to talk and mingle with other guests, who include Natalie Jayroe, President & CEO of **Second Harvest Food Bank** of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana ([http://no-hunger.org/](http://no-hunger.org/)); Janet Davas, Executive Director of **Liberty’s Kitchen**
(www.libertyskitchen.org; see below); Rashida Ferdinand, Executive Director of Sankofa CDC which includes the Sankofa Farmers Market and the Sankofa HEAL (Health, Education, Agriculture, Leadership (www.sankofacdcnola.org); Justin Nystrom (http://chn.loyno.edu/history/bio/justin-nystrom) who is involved in a variety of food related projects and classes at Loyola; and, schedule permitting, Karen DeSalvo, MD, Health Commissioner for the City and a Tulane faculty member.

Light refreshments will be catered by Liberty’s Kitchen, an innovative non-profit that helps at-risk youth develop life and employability skills in a culinary setting and prepares healthy, from-scratch food for over 600 schoolchildren at New Orleans College Prep Charter School each day.

Late evening on own.
Ideas: Drinks and snacks at Twelve Mile Limit or dinner at Mandina’s, both very close to Daphne’s, if you’re still hungry/thirsty!

**Day 4, Thursday, March 15: Cultural Icons & Institutions**

10:00-11:30am: Southern Food & Beverage Museum (SoFAB). 1 Poydras Street, Riverwalk (~1 mile walk from French Quarter). Guided tour of permanent and special exhibits (including a new exhibit on the story of coffee and the ever-popular Galerie d’Absinthe) and talk with museum founder and president Liz Williams. [http://southernfood.org/](http://southernfood.org/)

Self-guided tour of the Museum of the American Cocktail on the same premises.

11:30am-12:30pm: Special meeting with Mardi Gras Indian Chief Howard Miller, leader of the Creole Wild West tribe, accompanied by Ashlye Keaton of Tulane University (we’ll stay at SoFAB for this). Discussion of the unique history, culture, and “masking” rituals of the (African-American) Mardi Gras Indians, and their food-related traditions associated with gumbo file, Santeria and St. Joseph’s Day. [http://www.mardigrasneworleans.com/mardigrasindians.html](http://www.mardigrasneworleans.com/mardigrasindians.html)

1:30-3:30pm: Lunch at Cochon (pay on own; please note the restaurant can do a total of 4 separate checks for our group, not separate checks for everyone), 930 Tchoupitoulas Street (walking distance from SoFAB). Award-winning Cajun Southern restaurant by renowned Executive Chef Donald Link and Chef/Owner Stephen Stryjewski.

Special guest speaker at lunch: Randy Fertel, PhD, author of The Gorilla Man and the Empress of Steak, son of Ruths’ Chris Steakhouse founder Ruth Fertel. Please come prepared for a lively, interactive discussion with Randy about his book and other readings.

Afternoon & evening on own (see list of food and cultural places at end of this itinerary for suggestions of places you may wish to explore independently. Be sure to check hours first to make sure places are open). You may wish to use some of your free time to gather research/materials for your final projects.
Optional evening activity: Kermit Ruffins & the Barbecue Swingers at Vaughan’s Lounge in the Bywater. Kermit usually serves up barbecue at the club before his sets. May also enjoy wine and cheese in tropical courtyard at funky Bacchanal, wonderful place near Vaughn’s at 600 Poland Avenue.

Another optional evening activity (you’ll want to reserve your spot well in advance; I believe cost is $150 pp and includes a 4-course meal) is a Dinner Cooking Class with the amazing Chef Frank Brigtsen starting at 5:30pm, at the New Orleans Cooking Experience. The March 15th class menu includes Baked Oysters LeRuth, Roast Duck with Tart Dried Cherry Sauce, Popcorn Dirty Rice, and Ponchatoula Strawberry Shortcake. http://www.neworleanscookingexperience.com/classes.htm

Day 5, Friday, March 16: Cajun Country: Acadian Cultural Experience in Des Allemands and Erath, Louisiana.

7:10am: Board Hotard mini-bus in front of hotel.

~8:30am: Cajun breakfast buffet at Badeaux’s ($13 per person, incl. tax and tip; pay on own, in cash please-- if anyone does NOT want to participate, please let me know in advance so the restaurant prepares the right amount of food, as they are opening the restaurant just for us) in the Acadian-German town of Des Allemands. Buffet will feature from-scratch beignets, biscuits, Cajun omelets, grits, and other Cajun/Southern specialties.

~11:00am: Hebert’s Meat Market and Race Track, a Cajun boucherie in Abbeville, to watch them make boudin, sausage, and cracklin’. Owner Albert Luquette will give us a tour of the operations, and Dr. Robert Carriker, head of the History Department at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and a leading expert on boudin, will talk to us about this iconic Cajun food.

~12:00pm-4:15pm: Crawfishing/Cooking/Cajun Music experience and Acadian Museum in Erath. Museum Director Dr. Warren Perrin and his wife Mary, along with some of their family and neighbors, will host us at their farm, with crawfish ponds, rice fields, duck blinds, and organic vegetable gardens, where we’ll watch cooking demonstrations, go crawfishing, and hear Cajun music performed live by twice Grammy-nominated Cajun musician D. L. Menard (the “Cajun Hank Williams”). Mr. Allan Simon, a Cajun "traiteur," will teach us about this age-old local rural spiritual healing tradition. We’ll enjoy some typical Cajun dishes with our generous hosts, who ask that we all pitch in and help with clean-up afterward. From the farm, we’ll head to The Acadian Museum for a tour and talk on Acadian history with Dr. Perrin. http://www.acadianmuseum.com/

~7:30pm (maybe closer to 8:00pm): Arrive back at hotel.

Evening on own. May want to hear Ellis Marsalis at Snug Harbor on Frenchmen Street, where he plays most Friday nights.
Day 6, Saturday, March 17: To Market, To Market; Jazz Brunch; and St. Patrick’s Day, New Orleans Style

Very early morning, optional trip on own out to Vietnamese Farmers Market in New Orleans East, open ~6am-9am (you may need to team up and rent a car if you want to do this. It could take ~30 mins to get there, so plan accordingly if you go. We will have been in New Orleans East on Wednesday, but the market is only open on Saturday.)

9:00am-10:30am: Crescent City Farmers Market, Downtown. 700 Magazine Street at Girod Street. Presentations and market tour by Emery Van Hook, Director of Markets for Market Umbrella, and talk with Richard McCarthy, Executive Director. We’ll try to meet with producers of Creole cream cheese, a heritage food that Slow Food has helped revive, and shrimpers from the White Boot Brigade, among others. http://www.crescentcityfarmersmarket.org/

12:30pm: Festive Jazz Brunch at Commander’s Palace, renowned New Orleans landmark, in the heart of the Garden District. If available, one of the Brennan family members will share with us the history of this famous institution dating back to 1880. Following brunch, the captain will invite us on a tour of the restaurant and kitchen, and we may get to meet Chef Tory McPhail, a semi-finalist for the 2012 James Beard Award for Best Chef in the South. 1403 Washington Avenue, at the corner of Coliseum Street in the Garden District (you can take the St. Charles streetcar; the stop is very nearby. You’ll be responsible for getting to/from here on your own). Please note that attire is business casual or weekend festive, and something green in honor of the holiday would be most appropriate; no shorts or t-shirts.

5:00pm: Guest lecture/pre-parade talk with Dr. Madelon Powers, former chair of History Department at University of New Orleans and author of Faces Along the Bar: Lore and Order in the Workingman’s Saloon, on the history and folklore of saloons as places of community-building for the working class. Meeting place: home of Elizabeth Pearce, 1019 Desire Street in the Bywater (2 blocks from start of the Irish parade to follow).

6:30pm: Downtown Irish Club’s annual St. Patrick’s Day Parade, starting at the corner of Burgundy and Piety in the Bywater neighborhood and winding its way through the Marigny and French Quarter. Watch out for cabbages and carrots—paraders throw the makings of Irish stew out to the crowds along with beads and other prize “throws”!

Late evening on own. You may wish to witness more St. Paddy’s Day celebrating at Parasol’s in the Irish Channel (home of the annual St. Patrick’s Day block party), though it will be VERY crowded!

Sunday, March 18: Mardi Gras Indians Super Sunday Parade and pre-St. Joseph’s Day Altar Fundraiser (both optional/on own); Departure

Morning on own (you may wish to visit the Historic New Orleans Collection that opens at 10:30am on Sunday). I know some of you have to depart early on Sunday, which is fine. All
activities today are purely optional. Be sure to check out of hotel by 12 noon, unless you’ve made other arrangements with the hotel.

~12:00pm: For those flying out late enough, you may wish to attend the Mardi Gras Indian’s Super Sunday parade in the afternoon, the day before St. Joseph’s Day-- Chief Howard Miller will share details about the parade route with us when we meet him on the 15
th, but he says the parade will begin ~12 noon on Sunday from Washington Ave. and LaSalle St.

3:00pm-6:00pm: pre-St. Joseph’s Day locavore altar and special guest agronomist Dr. Oran Hesterman, author of Fair Food: Growing a Healthy, Sustainable Food System for All. Fundraiser event celebrating the patron saint of workers, families, and social justice, sponsored by Crescent City Farmers Market, in support of their community programming. The altar will feature a beautiful display of locally baked, grown, and caught foods. Location: Bittersweet Confections, 725 Magazine St. (near Girod). Tickets $30 in advance, $35 at door (pay on own); includes Pasta Milanese (prepared by John Besh’s Domenica) and 2 drinks. http://www.marketumbrella.org/market/grow-with-st-joe.html

Departure to airport (transportation on own).

*For anyone still in New Orleans on Monday, March 19
th, you may want to check out the elaborate St. Joseph’s Day altar and annual “Feeding of the Saints” ritual at St. Louis’ Cathedral in Jackson Square, the oldest Catholic cathedral in continual use in the United States. This special St. Joseph’s Day event takes place in St. Anthony’s Garden behind the Cathedral; enter on Royale Street. Following the ceremony, you may, for a small donation, share a communal lunch with parishioners and members of the community, sample traditional Sicilian cookies from the St. Joseph’s Day altar, and collect dried fava beans, a symbol of good luck on this feast day.

Post-Trip Meeting in NYC:

DATE/location TBD (early May): Final Class at NYU
4:30-7:00pm: Reflections on the field trip and readings. Student presentations and discussion of final research projects.
(Please note: Final papers are due on Tuesday, May 1
st)

Be sure to consult “Assignments” below for due dates for other assignments throughout the semester.
COURSE READINGS:
Many readings are available electronically on Blackboard and/or online via links below. (The Blackboard postings are organized thematically and with color-coding as on the reading list below, for ease of navigation.) **Books marked with an asterisk (*) are on reserve at Bobst Library** and are available on Amazon.com or other booksellers. Many of the readings are short (and most are very interesting and enjoyable) so don’t be daunted by the long list! Please complete readings prior to arrival in New Orleans.

You may also find it helpful to have a copy of a local guidebook to New Orleans such as Fodor’s or Frommer’s, both of which tend to include reflections on the post-Katrina experience and good information on the food and music scene. (Both publishers have 2012 editions available. If you pick up an older edition, look for Frommer’s *New Orleans* 2010 edition written by New Orleans resident Mary Herczog; I think it is particularly thoughtful and well written).

Please note that additional readings may be added once the itinerary is finalized, to give you flavor and background on specific people you’ll be meeting with.

### 1. New Orleans & Louisiana: General Context on History, Culture, Cuisine, & Local Color


> Please read Gaudet’s Preface and Ch. 13, “Is It Cajun, or Is It Creole?”


> *This book is in preparation; Liz will share the unpublished manuscript with us this spring.*

*Hard copy on reserve at Bobst.*
2. Creole & Cajun Cooking and Specific Iconic Foods


Please read Ch. 12 “The Social and Symbolic Uses of Ethnic/Regional Foodways: Cajuns and Crawfish in South Louisiana” by C. Paige Gutierrez. You may also enjoy the chapter on King Cake by Gaudet (Ch. 5).


Please read the first chapter, “Setting the Table in New Orleans” (pp. 3-27) and use the rest as reference for your iconic food essays and personal interest.


3. Restaurants

“Culinary Tradition Bearer of Tremé: Leah Lange Chase.” *Tremé’s Cookin’: Rebuilding Healthy Communities and Rich Traditions.*


> You can read just the 2 excerpts available on BlackBoard, “Eshu on the Bayou” (from the Kenyon Review) and “The Empress of Sizzzzzzlze: Mom Buys a Steakhouse” (excerpted in New Orleans Magazine). The book is a fun, colorful read and we’ll get to meet with the author in New Orleans, so you may wish to read the whole book, but this is optional.

**4. Post-Katrina Impact & Recovery; the Deepwater Horizon Gulf Oil Spill; Hunger & Hope in New Orleans**


http://www.gastronomica.org/content_1101_fertel.html

LaBan, Craig. “A city cooking up a storm, as it were.” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 27, 2006, p. A1, via Lexis-Nexis, http://ezproxy.library.nyu.edu


http://www.thenation.com/doc/20090921/olpade

Rosofsky, Meryl. “What to Think When the Big Easy is Anything But.” Unpublished essay, March 2006 (available on BlackBoard)


Southern Food & Beverage Museum. “Gulf Coast Oil Spill Data Collecting Clearing House: Cultural Impact Research.” http://southernfood.org/sofab/?p=1156 (compendium of ongoing research efforts to catalogue and analyze the cultural impact of the oil spill)

5. Frames: Culinary Tourism, Gender, Folklore, Region & Ethnicity
[If you're feeling overwhelmed, it’s fine to pick just a few of the readings in this section to focus on, though you may find they’re all useful to cultivating a Food Studies framework of analysis for your work going forward]


This list is here for inspiration and reference. It includes memoirs, academic texts, cookbooks, and fiction (even a graphic novel), all chock full of Louisiana lore and cultural history. You may wish to peruse some or all of these books, some of which are written by people we will be meeting with or will be hearing about. The list is by no means comprehensive.


*If you do pick this one up, I especially recommend the Preface, Ch. 1 (“Unnatural Disasters: Race and Poverty”), Ch. 9 (“Frames of Reference: Class, Caste, Culture, and Cameras”), and the Afterword.*


*I especially recommend Ch. 3, “Matzoh Ball Ya Ya: The Creole and Jewish Worlds of New Orleans and Natchez,” pp. 89-139.*


  We’ll be meeting with Dr. Madelon Powers on St. Patrick’s Day so you may especially enjoy reading her book.


OPTIONAL FILMS TO VIEW ON OWN

You may find these on Netflix, through the Southern Foodways Alliance (SFA), at the NYU Libraries, or through websites below. Feel free to bring to class’s attention other films you find on your own.

• **Above the Line: Saving Willie Mae’s Scotch House**, by Joe York and the Center for Documentary Projects (SFA), ~57 minutes.
  “A documentary that chronicles the SFA’s rebuilding of the Scotch House, a New Orleans restaurant operated by 92-year-old fried chicken maven Willie Mae Seaton.”
  \[http://southernfoodways.org/documentary/film/willie_mae.html\]

• **Faubourg Treme: The Untold Story of Black New Orleans**, by Dawn Logsdon & Lolis Eric Elie, 2008, ~68 minutes (3 minute trailer available online and on full piece on reserve at Bobst Library).
  “Arguably the oldest black neighborhood in America and the birthplace of jazz, Faubourg Tremé was home to the largest community of free black people in the Deep South during slavery and a hotbed of political ferment. Here black and white, free and enslaved, rich and poor cohabitated, collaborated, and clashed to create America’s first Civil Rights movement and a unique American culture. Faubourg Tremé: The Untold Story of Black New Orleans is a riveting tale of heartbreak, hope, resiliency and haunting historic parallels.”
  \[http://www.tremedoc.com/\]

• **Marsaw**, by Joe York (SFA), ~12 minutes.
  “The tale of Martin Sawyer, bartender at the Omni Royal Orleans Hotel in New Orleans. Mr. Sawyer, a veteran of more than six decades of tending bar, witnessed the flood of 1927 and survived Hurricane Katrina.”
  \[http://southernfoodways.org/documentary/film/marsaw.html\]

• **New Orleans: American Experience**, by Stephen Ives (PBS), 2007, PBS Home Video, 120 minutes (on reserve at Bobst Library or for purchase at [http://www.shoppbs.org](http://www.shoppbs.org)).
  “New Orleans: the utterly original American city that lies at the mouth of the mighty Mississippi and at the beating heart of the great American experiment. Walled in on almost all sides by water, pressed together by the demands and dangers of geography, the crowded streets of New Orleans have always been a laboratory where the social forces that characterize American life play out in dramatic and, at times, disastrous fashion. Over the course of two provocative hours, American Experience tells the story of this remarkable city. Focusing primarily on the century from Reconstruction to school desegregation in the 1960s, the film offers a portrait of New Orleans that both explores its unique and distinctive culture and illuminates its central place on the American landscape.”

• **No One Ever Went Hungry: Cajun Food Traditions Then and Now**, by Kevin McCaffrey, 2011, 58 minutes.
  “This documentary film explores the color, the rich tradition, the musical resonance and the fragrant food traditions in today’s Cajun Louisiana, a place where a unique community of people, in touch with their roots, has happily survived in the face of huge environmental compromises, coastal erosion and America’s biggest oil spill disaster.”
Cajun foodways are a cultural continuum, starting with the traditions imported to the Louisiana landscape by Acadian immigrants of French descent, mixed with existing Native Americans, and German, Spanish, Isleno and Irish settler practices; and influenced by the range of minority immigrant populations co-existing in this place. All of these cultural ingredients, mixed with the accessibility of improving cooking technology, and the population’s inherent pragmatism and willingness to experiment, have been shaped and refined by the richly productive wetland and prairie habitats of the region.”

- **Tootie’s Last Suit**, by Lisa Katzman, 2006, 97 minutes; on reserve at Bobst Library. “As early as the 1700s, African Americans in New Orleans masqueraded as Native Americans in honor of the refuge local tribes offered runaway slaves in the bayous of New Orleans, and of bonds of friendship and marriage forged between these peoples. By the Civil War, the identity of New Orleans had been cast in the crucible of the city’s singular Mardi Gras celebration— one that consolidated the power of white ruling elites…. In the atmosphere of post-Reconstruction’s injustices and hypocrisies, ‘masking Indian’ was an implicit civil rights protest aimed at white elites and at segregation, in keeping with New Orleans’ carnivalesque spirit. [This film] explores the complex relationships, rituals, history, and music of New Orleans’ vibrant Mardi Gras Indian culture while telling the story of Allison “Tootie” Montana, former Chief of Yellow Pocahontas Hunters. In the aftermath of Katrina, TOOTIE’S LAST SUIT bears witness to the Mardi Gras Indians who, in picking up the threads of their torn lives and tradition, are the spiritual healers of New Orleans.”
  [http://www.tootieslastsuit.com/](http://www.tootieslastsuit.com/)

- **When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts**, by Spike Lee (HBO), 2006, ~256 minutes. (I put this on reserve at Bobst library.) “Spike Lee commemorates the people of New Orleans with a four-hour epic documentary that not only recounts the events of late August 2005 but asks why they unfolded the way they did in the first place. Weaving interviews with news footage and amateur video, Lee uses the film to give meaningful voice to the people who were left behind. With a detached and unsentimental eye, he delivers a poignant account of a major moment in recent U.S. history.”
  [http://www.netflix.com/Movie/When_the_Levees_Broke_A_Requiem_in_Four_Acts/70055578?tr kid=1660](http://www.netflix.com/Movie/When_the_Levees_Broke_A_Requiem_in_Four_Acts/70055578?tr kid=1660)
ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING:

1. **Participation**, including class before and after the field trip in New Orleans (10%)

2. **Short essay and mini-presentation on specific iconic Creole or Cajun food, OR an influential food personality (Chef/Restaurateur/Author),**
   due at our pre-trip class (10%)
   This assignment will help orient the class to such iconic foods/drinks as pralines, Sazeracs, po-boys, etc. and to some of the important food personalities in New Orleans/Louisiana. Choose one of the topics below (or feel free to propose something not on the list so long as the food or person has a strong place in Cajun or Creole cuisine)—we’ll have a sign-up sheet for topics at the Orientation session, to avoid overlap across students.

   Research your topic and write a short (~2-3 page), well-researched essay describing, for food topics, what the food/beverage is, its history, cultural uses and associations, and other interesting facets you uncover in your research; and for people topics, their background, culinary and cultural contributions/achievements, overarching food philosophy, and why they’re important to the people and culture of New Orleans (and beyond).

   Be sure to use multiple, quality sources for your research, and if you are intent on using Wikipedia and/or simple non-academic websites as your starting point, take all facts in them with a grain of salt and cross-reference everything! If you discover contradictions and discrepancies in your research, point these out and try to resolve them if you can. You must use at least 3-4 substantial/more academic sources in addition to any simple websites. Susan Tucker’s and Sara Roahen’s books are good references for many of the dishes. You may include a recipe as well, and bring in samples if you’re so inspired (we should have kitchen access at the pre-trip class); the recipe and your bibliography are not included in the page count.

   Be prepared to share a brief overview (3-4 minutes) of your topic in class.

Possible food topics include:

- Andouille, boudin and tasso
- Beignets
- Café brulot
- Calas (rice fritters)
- Crawfish boil
- Etouffée
- Gumbo
- Jambalaya
- King cake
- Muffuletta
- Oysters Rockefeller and Oysters Bienville
- Po-boys
- Pralines
- Ramos Gin Fizz
- Red beans & rice
• Sazerac cocktail and Herbsaint liquor
• Tabasco, Crystal Hot Sauce, Louisiana Hot Sauce, & other local hot sauces
• Turducken
• Turtle soup

Possible People (Chefs/Restaurateurs/Authors) include:
• Donald Link
• Ella Brennan
• Emeril Lagasse
• Jessica Harris
• John Besh
• John Folse
• Lafcadio Hearn
• Leah Chase
• Paul Prudhomme
• Ruth Fertel
• Susan Spicer

3. **Familiarity with assigned readings PLUS short oral presentation** at pre-trip class meeting (10%)
   At our orientation, we’ll divide up the meatier readings and each person will select/be assigned 1-2 articles, chapters, or essays from the reading list (not related to the food topic you choose for assignment above) and be prepared to give a brief (3-4 minute) presentation in our pre-trip class summarizing the readings, highlighting any interesting issues, questions, or debates they raise, and sharing your personal insights and thoughts raised by the readings. Aim to complete the rest of the readings prior to our field trip.

4. **Journal** due at the end of field trip (5%)
   Keep a notebook during the trip in NOLA, jotting down observations, ideas, surprises, data for your paper, etc. This can help focus your observations during the trip and provide useful fodder and data for your post-trip research/writing. You’ll be asked to turn this in at the end of the trip for me to look at briefly and return to you before you leave New Orleans so you’ll have it as reference as you develop your papers.

5. **Short Reflection Essay** due March 25th, a week after end of trip (15%)
   Write a short essay (~2-3 pages; this can of course be longer if you’re inspired) synthesizing your key experiences and insights gained from the field trip in NOLA: What were the most meaningful aspects of this experience and the key takeaways for you? What did it illuminate about issues related to culture, food, meaning, and identity? Did it change your thinking on these issues, and if so, how?

6. **Response paper**, also due March 25th (15%)
   Choose a topic from choices below and write a short (~2-page) response paper:
   [I will likely propose some additional topics at the end of the field trip based on specific hypotheses and controversies raised during the week]
A) It has been said (by Dr. Jessica Harris and others) that in order to understand the character and gestalt of New Orleans, the city needs to be seen as less an “American” city than a city resting on the northernmost edge of the Caribbean. Explain how this could be so, with regard to food as well as other cultural and material elements. At the same time, people often characterize New Orleans as more “European” than “American.” In what ways would this be true (again, with regard to food as well as other elements)?

B) Because of the dramatic and incredibly destructive damage done by Hurricane Katrina and the ensuing levee breaks it is almost impossible for us to examine any aspect of New Orleans food and culture without noting a “pre-” and “post-” hurricane state (ex: restaurants, food markets, St. Joseph’s Day altars, agriculture and seafood production pre- and post-Katrina). Choose one aspect of NOLA food and culture we’ve explored on the trip, and offer some pre- and post-Katrina comparisons. Is there any aspect of NOLA culture that remains untouched by the hurricane? How have things changed in the 6½ years since Katrina?

C) It is impossible to understand NOLA culture and society without understanding the area’s long history of occupation and colonialism, especially the legacy of slavery. The city’s history is fraught with remarkable pain, yet remarkable also in the congeniality and intimacy that have crossed class and racial boundaries. New Orleans food, like its music, is a direct product of this history. Pick one of NOLA’s signature dishes, drinks, or food products and show its connection to the city’s multi-layered history.

D) John Urry’s article “The Tourist Gaze ‘Revisited’” explores the multi-faceted nature of the tourist experience. Urry explains, “the tourist experience involves something that is visually different and distinguished from otherwise mundane activities” and that the “tourist gaze endows the tourist experience with a striking, almost sacred, importance.” He notes that “tourist gazes” —places, objects or views that are designated as signs or symbols of something larger and thus their meaning is amplified—are first, often self-consciously organized by professionals; second, are authorized by different discourses of tourism (health, or education); and third, can take various forms, including “romantic,” “collective,” “spectatorial,” “environmental,” and “anthropological” (184). Employ Urry’s “tourist gaze” in evaluating your own experience as a tourist in New Orleans. How does New Orleans “perform” itself to and for tourists? How does this differ from (or is similar to) how New Orleans is lived and consumed by its residents? How does the post-Katrina experience affect the tourist gaze?

E) Elizabeth Pearce, David Beriss and others talk about the notion of authenticity, or perhaps more accurately, legitimacy, of various iconic foods of South Louisiana, gumbo being a prime example. A number of questions arise: Is it “real” or legitimate if the cook uses canned roux or other convenience products? Does the color of one’s skin or place of one’s birth make a difference in determining the authority of the cook? Or, as Dr. Beriss puts it rather succinctly, “Who stands for the food?,” that is, who has the right to cook it and represent it, and does this go against the notion of Creole food as a seamless mixed “gumbo”? Consider in your response who and what determines legitimacy, ownership and authenticity when
it comes to Creole dishes that are flavored by a long and often fraught history of migration, slavery, colonialism, commerce/commercialism, and cultural boundary-building and commingling.

F) A number of people have argued that post-Katrina New Orleans has become, by necessity, a **crucible for innovation** (which is not to say the disaster was in any way a good thing, but rather that it brought the urgency and need to reinvent as a matter of survival). Indeed, New Orleans is replete with innovative examples like Edible Schoolyard NOLA, the urban farms and community gardens supported by New Orleans Food & Farm Network, and the leading-edge public markets spearheaded by Market Umbrella, along with a vibrant restaurant scene that’s absorbing and responding to new ethnic influences and the recent push for local ingredients. Yet New Orleans’ identity is firmly rooted in the past—few places in the country have a food culture and cuisine as codified, identifiable, and traditional as that of New Orleans. What are the tensions and contradictions you’ve observed between **innovation** on the one hand and **traditionalism/conservatism** on the other, as it applies to the food culture and community of New Orleans post-Katrina?

G) Liz Williams of the Southern Food and Beverage Museum makes the argument that the food of the south is truly American cuisine. She further observes that it’s “hard to find a truly ethnic restaurant here” (in New Orleans) because the cuisines of new groups, e.g. Vietnamese and Latino, get merged into the dominant cuisine and lose their own identity. She believes it is the **French colonial history** of New Orleans that accounts for its well-developed cuisine and strong food/restaurant culture (vs. the Anglo/Puritan influence in the 13 original English colonies). Do you agree? Why or why not?

H) Dr. Madelon Powers discusses bars in New Orleans as vital “first responders” in the aftermath of Katrina, yet saloons have long been the “black sheep” of social institutions. What do you think it is in the **culture, history, and social constitution of New Orleans** that allowed **neighborhood bars to function as a vital part of the civic and communal and psychological recovery** of New Orleans after Katrina, and could or do bars function that way anywhere else?

I) **What else** is important/prominent/significant about food and culture in New Orleans that hasn’t been addressed in the other questions? State your observations and analyze.

7. **Final Research Paper on topic of choice** (35% for paper + presentation)
   A) **1-page outline** due Monday April 9th
   B) **Research paper** due Monday April 30th
   C) **Brief oral presentation** of your project at final class, Fri May 4th

Research and write a 10-14 page (double-spaced) paper on topic of your choice (see Guidelines below).
Prepare a short (~5-6 minute) oral presentation on your project for our last class. You may use slides/visual aids if you like, but this is not required.

If desired, you may team up in a pair or trio for your final research project, each exploring different but complementary aspects of a unified overarching topic. Please note that if you go this route, which I fully welcome you to do, each person should still count on doing the same amount of research and writing as if you were doing an individual paper.

**Final Research Paper—Topic Selection & Research Guidelines**

It is possible that the topic for your final paper will present itself to you early on from the readings, even before our intensive field trip. It is more likely that it will evolve from your New Orleans experience. It may also be a spin-off of one of the Response Paper topics. Once you land on your topic, prepare a short outline laying out the thesis/argument of your paper and the themes/elements you plan to cover. Your outline should also describe the research methods/source materials you plan to employ.

Use your paper as an opportunity to think critically and analytically about the issues, challenges, and debates raised throughout the course. Clearly state your main thesis/argument and then elaborate and explore it, supporting your assertions with data. Even if you select a very focused topic, place it in a broader context to synthesize key themes related to food culture and identity.

Research papers should be comprised of both secondary sources (books and articles, scholarly and journalistic) as well as primary data gathered during and after the trip (e.g. menus and other written materials, participant/observation, interviews, surveys, photographs, food products, archival material, etc.) Your papers should conform to standard expectations of a research paper.

**GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS**

Please submit all written assignments to me via email at mr186@nyu.edu. You may submit hard copies as well, but this is not required (except for your journal, which for most of you will probably be handwritten). Late assignments will be docked a grade unless cleared with instructor in advance.

All written assignments should be double-spaced and are expected to be free of typographical and grammatical errors. (You may find it helpful to consult the Writing Center for feedback and support.) Aim for clarity and originality of thought, eloquence, and a critical, well-supported argument in your writing.

Plagiarism is, of course, completely unacceptable and may result in a failing grade. Cite all original quotes and paraphrased information. Consult a standard writing manual and NYU’s policies for additional information on plagiarism. Any academic style of citation is acceptable; list all sources you consulted at the end, in addition to whatever format you use for specific citations. Page length guidelines do not include your bibliography and any title page.
NYU Course Evaluation Standards

**A=Outstanding.** High level of commitment to class in attendance, participation and preparation; this means that reading assignments are read fully and appraised, original opinions are formed and articulated, and compelling questions are raised. Written work is skillfully executed, and reflects both thoughtful interpretation of materials and original insight, with virtually no grammatical errors. Primary and secondary source materials are documented consistently, and in an acceptable format such as The Chicago Manual of Style or The Publication Manual of the APA. During the intensive fieldtrip, there is a high level of focus and constructive verbal participation, resulting in a positive contribution to the total experience. [A=94-100; A-=90-93]

**B=Good.** Although commitment is less than exemplary, preparation and participation are generally positive. Ability is clear, but skills may be under-utilized; assignments are not completed in an optimal manner, and well thought out questions are not often raised. Written work demonstrates a complete and accurate understanding of the material, with a reasonable degree of insight, but stays at a general or predictable level. Work is carefully proofread, but some errors in grammar as well as documentation may remain. During the intensive fieldtrip, the level of focus is reasonably high, and there is some verbal participation and interaction with both the class and the presenters. [B+=87-89; B=84-86; B-=80-83]

**C=Fair.** No visible commitment to class. Reading assignments may be incomplete, or completed with only a perfunctory assessment of the materials. Questions are rarely raised, and there are few cogent comments. Written work is superficial, with significant errors in style and grammar. Arguments lack concrete, specific examples; source materials are insufficient. During the intensive fieldtrip, there is a lack of both interest and verbal participation. There is neither constructive interaction with the class nor the presenters. [C+=77-79; C=74-76; C-=70-73]

*Any student attending NYU who needs an accommodation due to a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility and/or learning disability, or is Deaf or Hard of Hearing should register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212 998-4980, 240 Greene Street, www.nyu.edu/csd.*