

ENGL-352g: BOOKPACKING NEW ORLEANS

- a cultural and literary journey

Maymester Class 2024

Section: 32708

'Bookpacking' classes at USC are immersive experiences in which students read classic and contemporary novels on location. They combine cultural exploration with literary adventure.

This Maymester class offers students the chance to go 'bookpacking' through New Orleans and the bayou regions of Southern Louisiana.

'Bookpacking' is all about cultural connection, using fiction to make empathetic connections with the world around us. New Orleans makes for a wonderful destination for this kind of 'bookpacking' experience because it's so culturally dynamic, formed of a fusion of folk pathways (French, Creole, Cajun, Haitian, African-American, White Protestant) unlike anywhere else in America.

Over the course of a four week journey, we will explore this vibrant region through a handful of classic and contemporary novels, which we will read as we travel - using fictional texts as cultural guidebooks through which we can 'unpack' place and people, past and present.

The class is led by Andrew Chater, a contemporary educator and award-winning BBC historian who has designed a variety of classes for USC students on the 'Bookpacker' model. Please visit www.bookpackers.com for a wealth of content on bookpacking at USC, and www.andrewchater.com for more information on the class instructor.

The class is accredited for General Education - all majors welcome.

When May 13 to June 7, 2024 (Maymester 2024)

Where New Orleans and Grand Isle, Louisiana

Instructor Andrew Chater chater@usc.edu

Office hours by appointment Fall Semester 2023 - on Zoom

Spring Semester 2024 - THH-404G Tu/Th 11am-1pm

USCDornsife
Department of English

'MAYMESTER' CLASSES

'Maymester' classes at USC are 4-unit classes which count towards the Spring Semester load, but which are taken as a continuous block, on location, in the month following Commencement. Maymesters offer students exceptional opportunities for immersive learning in locations across the US and beyond.

There is no extra tuition cost for taking this class; tuition costs are met out of the student's Fall load. Students are billed approx \$1600 to cover accommodation. (Accommodation is organized and booked by the program). Students must also book their own flights to and from New Orleans, and pay for their own food.

The program pays for all other costs - museum entry, transportation in Louisiana / New Orleans, plus three 'group meals'.

A \$500 non-refundable deposit is due upon student acceptance of a Maymester course. While most spring courses allow for an add/drop period, Maymester courses require immediate commitment due to travel arrangements and budgeting.



SCHEDULE OVERVIEW

One week in Grand Isle, Louisiana (May 13th to 17th)

Three weeks in New Orleans (May 18th to June 7th)

The Maymester breaks down into four interconnected thematic blocks.

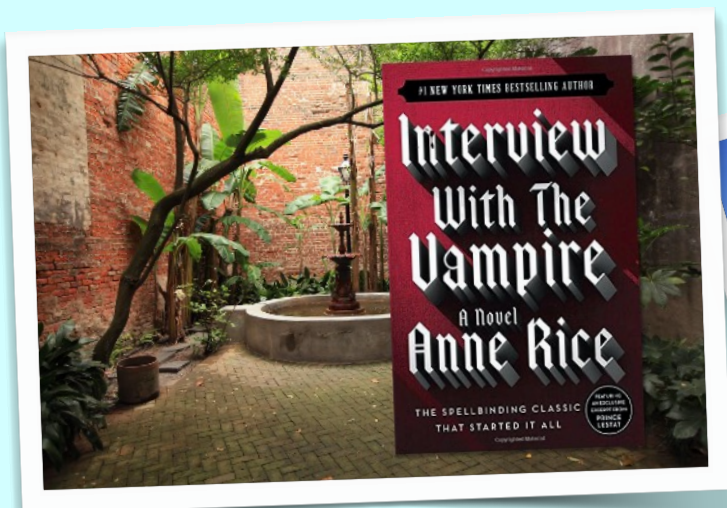
Block 01 - ORIGINS

We'll start by exploring the origins of New Orleans, and the emergence of a Creole identity from a fusion of cultural strands (French, Spanish, Black, Haitian). We look at the attributes of early city - Catholic, decadent, superstitious - and explore the contrasts between this vibrant world and the culture of Protestant America that annexed Louisiana in 1803.

Our texts in this first part of backpacking experience are Kate Chopin's classic Creole novella 'The Awakening' (1899), and Anne Rice's richly evocative slice of gothic horror 'Interview With A Vampire' (1976).

Immersive explorations -

- The first few days of the class will take place on Grand Isle on the Louisiana Gulf Coast, where we'll live together in a spacious holiday house, unwind, and discover how it feels to go "backpacking".
- Grand Isle is the setting of Kate Chopin's 'The Awakening', and we'll read this classic Creole novella on the very beach where the story opens - a richly immersive experience, and a new way to encounter the pleasures of reading classic literature.
- We'll explore Grand Isle, the islands and the bayou regions. We'll go on a swamp tour and explore the ecology of this exciting region.
- At the end of the first week, we'll move to New Orleans, and we'll begin our exploration of this fascinating city - beginning with the French Quarter, as described in 'The Awakening' and 'Interview With The Vampire'.



Block 02 - TRAUMAS

In the second part of the class we will explore the story of race in New Orleans, from the days of enslavement to the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

We'll read Michael Ondaatje's 'Coming Through Slaughter' (1979), the story of jazz pioneer Buddy Bolden, whose raucous improvisations spoke of trauma, survival, resilience and resurgence. And we'll read 'The Yellow House' by Sarah M. Broom (2019), which gives to the Black experience a 'centrality, a leading role, so to speak, in the story of New Orleans, which is to say, the story of America.'

Immersive explorations -

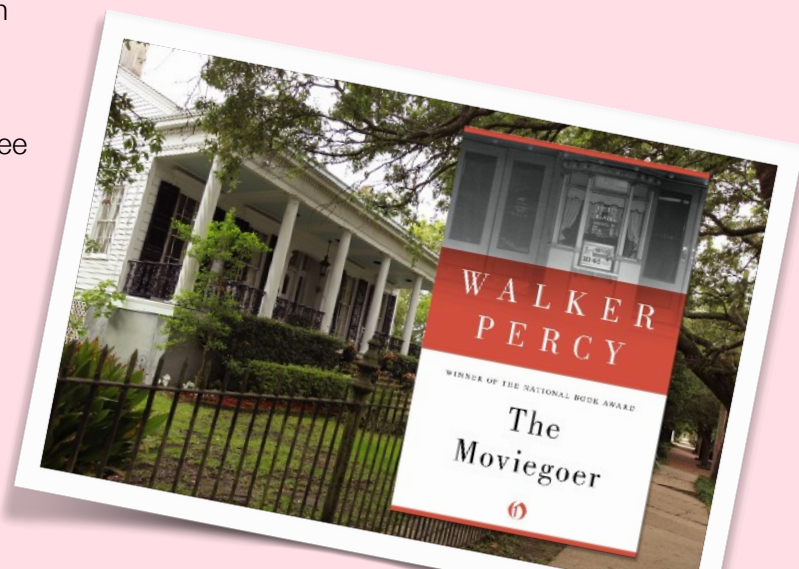
- The second week of the Maymester is full of rich experiences, focusing on New Orleans' African American story.
- We'll explore the Marigny and the Treme - the faubourgs east and north of the French Quarter where populations of 'Gens du Colour Libre' (Free People of Colour) flourished in the Antebellum era.
- We'll visit the Voodoo Museum and the Backstreet Museum, and we'll experience jazz in street parades and in performance at Preservation Hall.
- We'll take a day trip out of the city to visit the Whitney Plantation - the only plantation house on the 'river road' dedicated to the history of Enslavement.
- We'll visit the Lower 9th Ward - the Black neighborhood worst hit in Hurricane Katrina - and New Orleans East, the neighborhood described in Sarah M. Broom's memoir.



Week 03 - MYTHOLOGIES

In the third part of the class we'll look at New Orleans as a self-consciously literary city, endlessly mythologized - and we'll come to understand how these tropes of New Orleans connect with story of the South and the Myth of the Lost Cause.

We'll read Walker Percy's 'The Moviegoer' (1961) - an existential classic that can only be understood in the context of the Old (White) South. We'll explore the shifting moods of the city as represented by Tennessee Williams and Truman Capote. And we'll explore the New Orleans of Ignatius J. Reilly, the quixotic, ribald, flatulent hero of John Kennedy Toole's riotous comic novel, A Confederacy of Dunces (1963).



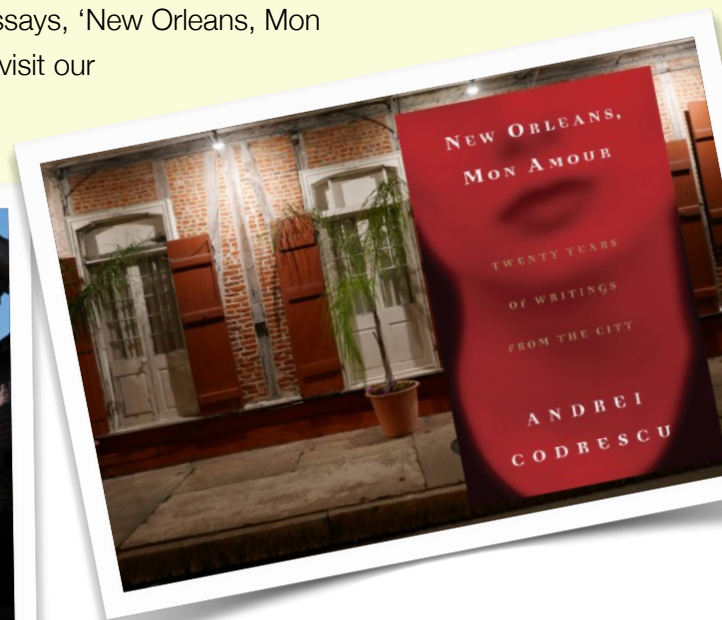
Immersive explorations -

- In this third part of the class, as the city becomes more familiar to us, we'll seek out a more subtle understanding of the attributes of the city.
- We'll visit Audubon Park and Algiers, a sleepy suburb across the Mississippi. We'll revisit the Quarter in twilight, we'll sit in cafes and jazz bars, and we'll become more a conscious part of the street life of the city.
- We'll seek out the melancholic, the existential and the eccentric, coming to understand the different attributes of New Orleans that have made the city such a magnet for literary and creative sensibilities.



Week 04 - REFLECTIONS

As the class comes to a close, we'll have an opportunity to reflect on what the city has come to mean for us individually. Inspired by Andrei Codrescu's collection of essays, 'New Orleans, Mon Amour' (2006), we'll complete our blog assignments, and revisit our favorite New Orleans locations.



FULL DAILY SCHEDULE

The schedule that follows contains a full breakdown of what we will be doing on a daily basis. It gives details of seminars, explorations and assignments.

It is subject to change and revision according to weather and whim - but all such changes will be communicated on our GroupMe thread.

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|--------------------|------|--|---|--|
| May 13 | Mon | <p>Travel Day - meet in New Orleans</p> <p>Students are responsible for booking and paying for their own flights to New Orleans International Airport (MSY).</p> <p>Students will assemble at the airport at 4pm on Monday May 13th. Please make arrangements to arrive in good time to commit to this 4pm rendezvous. For instance, if coming from LA, we suggest booking Southwest flight #2671 (leaves LAX 9.20, arrives MSY 3pm).</p> <p>At 4pm the group will travel all together to Grand Isle, Louisiana in a Mercedes Sprinter Van.</p> | | |
| 1 - ORIGINS | | | | |
| GRAND ISLE | | | <i>Accommodation details:</i> "Sol et Terre" Grand Isle, LA 70358 | |
| May 14 | Tues | <p>9.30am - Seminar (@ Sol et Terre) <i>Fresh Perspectives on US History / Introduction to Backpacking</i></p> <p>11am-5pm - Backpacking on Grand Isle - time to read, relax, explore</p> <p>5pm - Seminar <i>Kate Chopin's Creole World / Introduction to the Blogging Portal</i></p> <p>Evening - The Starfish</p> | - Try to read two thirds of 'The Awakening' on this day | |
| May 15 | Wed | <p>9.30am - Seminar <i>Kate Chopin's Grand Isle</i></p> <p>11am - Backpacking on Grand Isle cont.</p> <p>2pm - Explore Grand Isle -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cemetery - Grand Isle State Park - Hurricane Ida rebuilding projects) <p>5pm - Seminar <i>'The Awakening' Critical Study</i></p> <p>Evening - Golden Hour photos for the blog portal</p> | <p>Blogging begins</p> <p>Finish reading 'The Awakening' in time for 5pm discussion</p> | |

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| May 16 | Thurs | <p>9.30am - Seminar <i>Lestat's New Orleans</i></p> <p>11am - Bookpacking on Grand Isle cont.</p> <p>2pm - Introduction to the blogging portal.</p> | <p>Start reading 'Interview With The Vampire' - nb parts 1, 2 and 4 only</p> |
| May 17 | Fri | <p>9.30am - Seminar <i>Cajuns and Acadiana</i></p> <p>10.30am - Pack up "Sol et Terre"</p> <p>11am Depart Grand Isle, travel to Houma</p> <p>Lunch in Houma, LA - Downtown Jeux Coffee Cafe Two hours to eat, read, blog</p> <p>Leave Houma by 2.30pm, travel to Laplace, LA 4.15-5.45pm - Cajun Pride Swamp Tour</p> <p>6pm - Travel to New Orleans Check into Lafayette LuxUrban, New Orleans</p> <p>(Andrew off-hires Sprinter van)</p> | <p>(Paper 1 set)</p> <p>Continue reading 'Interview With The Vampire'</p> |
| NEW ORLEANS | | | <p><i>Accommodation details:</i> The Lafayette by LuxUrban 600 St. Charles Avenue, New Orleans 70130</p> <p><i>Location for Seminars:</i> The Shop at the CAC Contemporary Arts Center, 900 Camp St, Suite 4C4</p> |
| May 18 | Sat | <p>11am - meet in reception and walk into the French Quarter for a full day exploring and mapping locations from 'Interview With the Vampire. Visit -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Place d'Armes (Jackson Square) and the St Louis Cathedral - The Ursulines Convent - Royal Street <p>Visit the Old Pharmacy Museum and the Historic Voodoo Museum</p> | <p>Continue reading 'Interview With The Vampire'</p> |
| May 19 | Sun | <p>(Morning off)</p> <p>4pm - Divine Ladies Second Line Parade</p> | <p>Finish reading 'Interview With The Vampire' on this day</p> <p>Deadline to post 1st Blog Post, on Grand Isle / The Awakening</p> |

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|--------------------|-------|--|--|
| May 20 | Mon | <p>9.30am - Seminar <i>1803 and after</i></p> <p>11am - St Charles Streetcar to the Garden District, and explore -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Mansions of the Garden District - Anne Rice House - Lafayette Cemetery - Garden Street Bookshop | Start reading 'The Yellow House' |
| May 21 | Tues | (Day off) | Continue reading 'The Yellow House' |
| 2 - TRAUMAS | | | |
| May 22 | Wed | <p>9.00am - Induction at The Shop</p> <p>9.30am - Seminar <i>Vampires and Voodoo</i></p> <p>11am - Tour African American history in New Orleans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Louis Armstrong Park and Congo Square - The Tremé and the Backstreet Cultural Museum - The African American Museum | <p>Continue reading 'The Yellow House'</p> <p>Aim to post 2nd Blog Post</p> |
| May 23 | Thurs | <p>9.30am - Seminar (@ The Shop) <i>Slavery / The Problem of Memory</i></p> <p>Walking tour: the Business District - the epicenter of the Slave Trade in New Orleans</p> | Continue reading 'The Yellow House' |
| May 24 | Fri | <p>8.30am - Andrew collects Sprinter van</p> <p>9.30am - depart for The Whitney Plantation</p> <p>Morning tour of The Whitney Plantation, return by 12pm</p> <p>4.00pm - Screening, '12 Years a Slave', 2013</p> | Continue reading 'The Yellow House' |
| May 25 | Sat | (Day off - time for blogging / writing Paper 1 etc) | <p>Continue reading 'The Yellow House'</p> <p>Deadline for Paper 1 - deliver by email to Andrew by 8pm</p> |

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| May 26 | Sun | <p>(Morning off)</p> <p>2pm - Seminar <i>Reflections on The Whitney / Discuss 'The Yellow House'</i></p> <p>3pm - MoneyWasters Second Line Parade in the Tremé</p> | <p>Aim to post 3rd Blog Post</p> <p>Finish reading 'The Yellow House'</p> |
| May 27 | Mon | <p>9.30 - Seminar <i>Mapping 'The Yellow House'</i></p> <p>11.30am - Driving tour of New Orleans East, seeking out locations from The Yellow House</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lower 9th Ward - Musician's Village - William Frantz Elementary School - New Orleans East <p>Lunch at NOMA in City Park, visit the Sculpture Garden</p> <p>Afternoon, driving tour continues in lakeside districts of New Orleans - Gentilly and Lake Pontchartrain</p> <p>(Andrew off-hires van)</p> | <p>(Memorial Day)</p> <p>Start reading 'Coming Through Slaughter'</p> |
| May 28 | Tues | <p>9.30 - Seminar <i>Discuss The Yellow House / Perspectives on Race in the Contemporary USA</i></p> <p>11.30 Visit the Presbytere (Exhibitions on Katrina and Mardi Gras)</p> <p>Visit the French Market and explore the Marigny</p> | <p>Continue reading 'Coming Through Slaughter'</p> |
| May 29 | Wed | <p>9.30 - Seminar <i>Storyville and Jazz</i></p> <p>2.15pm - Walk to 'Storyville' via Gravier + Baronne etc</p> <p>Walk into French Quarter and enjoy street music</p> <p>4.45pm - arrive Preservation Hall for 5pm performance</p> | <p>Finish reading 'Coming Through Slaughter'</p> |
| 3 - MYTHOLOGIES | | | |
| May 30 | Thurs | <p>9.30 meet in lobby and walk to Jackson Square</p> <p>10am - Seminar (held in Jackson Square) <i>Literary New Orleans</i></p> <p>11am - Coffee and beignets at Cafe du Monde</p> <p>Explore the 'Literary Map' of the French Quarter</p> <p>4.00pm - Screening - 'A Streetcar Named Desire', 1951</p> | <p>Start reading 'The Moviegoer'</p> <p>Aim to post 4th Blog Post</p> |

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| May 31 | Fri | 9.30 - Seminar <i>Discuss 'Coming Through Slaughter' / Decoding Southern Gothic</i> | Continue reading 'The Moviegoer' |
| | | 5.30pm - Walk to Algiers ferry ramp. Late afternoon / evening ferry trip across the river to Algiers. | |
| June 1 | Sat | 9.30am - Seminar <i>The Myth of the Old South / Huey Long's Louisiana</i> | Continue reading 'The Moviegoer' |
| | | Liberty Place, Lee Circle and Confederate Memorial Hall: deconstructing White memory in a walking tour of the Business District. | |
| June 2 | Sun | (Day off) | Finish reading 'The Moviegoer' |
| June 3 | Mon | 9am - Streetcar to Audubon Park | |
| | | 10am - Seminar in Audubon Park <i>Discuss The Moviegoer / Existential New Orleans / Binx Bolling and 'The Search'</i> | Start reading 'New Orleans, Mon Amour' |
| | | Explore Audubon Park | Aim to post 5th Blog Post |
| | | Time for reflections, blogging etc | |
| 4 - REFLECTIONS | | | |
| June 4 | Tues | 9.30am - Seminar <i>Eccentric New Orleans / Queer New Orleans / Discuss 'Confederacy of Dunces' / Walker Percy and John Kennedy Toole</i> | Continue reading 'New Orleans, Mon Amour' |
| | | Creole Cookery Class? - to be confirmed | |
| June 5 | Wed | 9.30am - Seminar (@ The Shop) <i>Attributes of New Orleans</i> | Continue reading 'New Orleans, Mon Amour' |
| | | Time for reflections, blogging etc | Deadline for Paper 2 - deliver by email to Andrew by 8pm |
| June 6 | Thurs | 9.30am - Seminar (@ The Shop) <i>Discuss 'New Orleans, Mon Amour' / Final Reflections / Course Evaluations</i> | Finish reading 'New Orleans, Mon Amour' on this day |
| | | Day for reflections, final blogging etc | |
| | | Evening - Final Team Dinner | |

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| June 7 | Fri | <p>TRAVEL DAY</p> <p>Check out of Hotel Lafayette by 11am</p> <p>Students are responsible for booking their flights - either returning to LA or to onward destinations as appropriate.</p> <p>We will coordinate shuttles to the airport once we know students' departure times.</p> | Post Final Blog Post | |
| June 8 | Sat | | Blog Portal closes 8pm PST | |



ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

Required Reading

- The Awakening - Kate Chopin (1899)
- Interview with the Vampire - Anne Rice (1976)
- The Yellow House - Sarah M. Broome (2019)
- Coming Through Slaughter - Michael Ondaatje (1976)
- The Moviegoer - Walker Percy (1961)
- A Confederacy of Dunces - John Kennedy Toole (1963, published 1980)
- New Orleans, Mon Amour - Andrei Codrescu (2006)

Assignments

Papers

- 2 x academic papers on themes emerging from the novels
- 1500 to 1750 words per paper = 3000 words total

Blog Posts

- A minimum of 5 multimedia blog posts, posted to bookpackers.com over our month on location, describing your reflections on our travels from a 'bookpacking' perspective
- Total cumulative blog posts should be approx. 5000 words plus multimedia elements

Grading

- Paper 1 - 20%
- Paper 2 - 20%
- Blog - 30%
- Discussion in Seminars - 15%
- Participation in field activities - 15%



MORE INFORMATION ON ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Participation

The most fundamental requirement on the course is that you are present, and that you participate to the best of your ability.

All the seminars are compulsory, and active participation in the seminars is expected.

All field activities are compulsory except when flagged as voluntary in the schedule, or if excused in advance by Andrew with good reason.

All start times must be adhered to. Don't be the group member that keeps us all waiting.

Whilst out and about as a group, participate. Be curious. Connect. The aim is to discover and explore regional culture. Don't just expect to be spoon-fed. Rather, use your eyes and ears, and engage with the world around you.

Help others in the group do the same; this is a shared group experience, not a competition.

Reading

Reading all the set books is a prerequisite for taking this class.

Please note:

- 'A Confederacy of Dunces' should be read before the course begins. It's a weighty novel, and there will not be time to read it in full whilst we travel.
- We will only be reading Parts 1, 2 and 4 of 'Interview with the Vampire'.

Aside from A Confederacy of Dunces, the aim is to read as we travel, as directed by the course leader, and not before; the critical sensation of reading whilst traveling is a part of the experiential fabric of the course.

The Daily Schedule - distributed on our departure - includes a key to help you plan your reading. If it says (for example) 'The Moviegoer 3/4', this means, "this is the third day of the four days allocated to read 'The Moviegoer'".

This key is advisory only, but it's important you neither slip behind, nor read too far ahead of the group.

In total, we'll be reading approximately 1200 pages over 26 days, which is 46 pages a day - a pleasure, not a burden - and time will be allocated for this.

2x Papers

Each paper should be 5 or 6 pages long (1250 to 1750 words), double spaced. Please proof-read for clarity, substance, and style.

Papers should be emailed to me in Pdf format. Late delivery may incur a grade reduction.

Paper 1

- Focus on either 'The Awakening' or 'Interview With The Vampire'
- Write a critical review of your chosen novel

This first paper invites a personal response. What did you think of the novel?

Essentially, what I'm looking for here is the kind of thing you might find in the books section of a contemporary newspaper. Such reviews balance objective criticism with personal reflection. They give the reader both a sense of the book, and what the reviewer thought of the book.

'Criticism' is usually understood these days in the negative sense, but the word is actually neutral - you can just as well write positive criticism. What I'm looking for is an honest, personal, interesting response. I want to know what you thought, and I want to see you back up your thoughts with considered and insightful argument.

Don't google around the subject. Don't quote any secondary sources. I have no interest in what other people think about the book, or what received wisdom is about the book. I am interested in you, and what's inside your head, and the originality, honesty and clarity of your thinking.

Don't give lengthy descriptions of plot. You might want to describe the plot briefly in broad overview, enough to give the reader a sense of what the book is 'about'. And you're likely to give some details of plot, to illustrate some of the points you're making. But I don't want a synopsis of 'what happens'.

Work out the 'big picture' of what you're trying to say, and structure your work accordingly, using paragraphs as the building blocks of good structure. The reader wants to be interested in the detail, but also to have a sense of where we're 'going'.

Quote from the text, enough to back up your arguments. Choose interesting and apposite quotes; find the quotes that are really telling and nail what you're trying to say, and to give a sense of the 'reader experience'. Please don't feel obliged to include citations; think more journalistically, and quote the text as a newspaper reviewer might quote the text - rather than as an academic might quote the text!

Obviously, you're writing about books which are not contemporary. Keep in mind when they were written, and let that sense of period be a part of what you're reviewing. How well does the book hold up? How significant is the book as a historical artifact?

Paper 2

- Focus on one of 'Coming Through Slaughter', 'The Moviegoer', 'A Confederacy of Dunces', or 'A Lesson Before Dying'
- Either - Write a critical review of your chosen novel
- Or - Discuss a thematic aspect of your chosen novel

For Paper 2 you can either write another critical review, as per Paper 1, or you can dig deeper into a particular theme that interests you, showing how that theme is developed in the book, and how well you think the author handles this theme. Again, I'm interested in your own thoughts and opinions here - I'm not expecting you to strive for objectivity.

- General notes on Writing Style and 'Voice'

You'll have gathered, from what I'm outlining above, that I'm suggesting you break from the norms of academic writing. What you write for me might be very different in tone from what you write for other professors, and I'm inviting you to shake off some of the academic strictures you may be used to.

Last semester, I had a student who wanted to compare two novels, and he began a paragraph, "In the context of an intertextual paradigm...". Yuk! This is not how people speak in the real world. This kind of language is alienating and elitist. In the real world we want clarity, and we want 'voice'.

Your voice matters. The way you write is an opportunity to discover your voice. So - write with personality. Translate the way you speak to a written style that flows on the page. That doesn't mean abandoning good grammar; grammar is incredibly useful. But rules are meant to be broken, provided you break the rules in your 'voice', and with style (or what the French call 'panache').

So. Loosen up your style, and write for the real world - without being lazy or slapdash.

It's a challenge, and you may find it hard after years of 'academic' thinking. But please, enjoy the process!



- What am I looking for when I'm grading papers?

Grading is subjective. There is no formula for writing good essay. My grading style will differ from that you may be used to with other professors.

But let me reiterate some of the key points I've outlined above:

- What I'm looking for is an honest, personal, interesting response. I want to know what you thought, and I want to see you back up your thoughts with considered and insightful argument.
- I am interested in the originality, honesty and clarity of your thinking.
- Write with personality. Let me hear your 'voice'. Translate the way you speak to a written style that flows on the page.

Blogs

Throughout your time backpacking in New Orleans and Southern Louisiana, you will be writing and posting blog items to a dedicated blog portal at Bookpackers.com.

During our time in Grand Isle, I shall give you all access codes for your personal blog page. It's simple to use, but very stylish. You can upload

- Text
- Quotes (from the various novels)
- Photos, either individually or in galleries, with captions
- Video or audio, if you wish (not compulsory)

As the course progresses, you'll learn how to make your blog more attractive, with banner pics, thumbnails, maps and so forth.

The blogs will remain hidden until you have all uploaded your first blog posts (approx 6 days into the course). At this point the page on the website will go 'live', and we will share the blog address with friends and family, and (if you wish) link them to your social media profiles.

You should upload a minimum of five posts over the course of the journey, but you may find a steady stream of shorter posts is more your style. I have put a suggested pattern of blog postings (six in total) into the schedule, but you need not adhere rigidly to these suggestions.

The blog posts should be directly related to the experience of backpacking. This is the key difference between the papers and the blogs; whereas the papers will focus on your relationship with the texts / books, the blogs will focus on places, through the prism of the text. We will talk about this distinction more during the first few days of the course.

In total, your final combined blog pieces should contain a total of somewhere between 5000 and 6000 words. If you are inventive with other media, you may wish to rein back on the word count - but please ensure your blogs have substance, and deliver your impressions of the "backpacking" experience.

If you want some inspiration as to what is possible, feel free to visit bookpackers.com and read some of the blog posts I have written in my own travels as a bookpacker - for instance, here: <https://www.bookpackers.com/master-feed/2018/5/24/searching-for-buddy-bolden>. These posts, I hope, demonstrate how it's possible to combine travel journalism, cultural exploration and literary reflection into one interweaving package. Please note, they are unashamedly personal; they reflect my thoughts and feelings. It may be a challenge for you to shake off the rigid and objective academic style that is expected of you as students - but I'm inviting you to delight in a looser, more personal and journalistic approach. Enjoy it!

Examples of blogs from the 2017-2022 Maymesters can be seen here: <https://www.bookpackers.com/new-orleans>



COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

The practical objective of this course is to reach a critical and empathetic understanding of the eclectic cultures of Los Angeles. What are the particular characteristics of the city and of its people, and what makes it different to other cities of the US? How was this distinctive character forged, and how has it evolved over time?

The course offers an exciting and unconventional approach to the study of Literature. The idea behind 'bookpacking' is to use novels as guidebooks to place and people, as much as for their literary value. It shows how the study of text can interact with the real world. This is truly a cross-humanities course, weaving together literature, history, geography, politics and social studies - a holistic form of study which will push students to think in surprising ways.

The course is immersive - half in the classroom, half 'on the road'. Immersive study involves a different set of learning parameters - logistically, academically and pedagogically. It involves physical and personal interaction with places and with people. It involves an element of journalistic inquiry. It encourages and necessitates respect for the environment. And it can provoke a more active sense of understanding and empathetic reflection than can be achieved, we believe, in a purely academic context.

The assessment elements of this course - especially the blog and 'special project' - have been tailored especially to encourage these elements of empathetic reflection.

Other Learning Outcomes

1 – Critical and creative. Students will learn:

- to understand in depth the complex relations between a culture and its representations
- to grasp the skills and theories of interpretation and to see how interpretive interests shift with time and place
- to study a range of contrasting narratives from the perspective of several disciplines
- to engage in self-directed research
- to exercise their own skills in writing, generating new ideas by controlling and shaping language

2 – Philosophical and empathetic. Students will learn:

- to study behaviors of complex characters leading uncertain lives with competing values, weighing human costs and human benefits
- to test attitudes and understandings that are beyond their own immediate experience
- to engage with complex literatures as a preparation for understanding complex lives

3 – General Education (Humanistic Inquiry). Students will:

- cultivate a critical appreciation for various forms of human expression, including literature, language, philosophy, and the arts, as well as develop an understanding of the contexts from which these forms emerge;
- read and interpret actively and analytically, think critically and creatively, and write and speak persuasively;
- evaluate ideas from multiple perspectives and to formulate informed opinions on complex issues of critical importance in today's global world;
- collaborate effectively through traditional and new ways of disseminating knowledge.

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC CONDUCT AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Computer Policy

In this class you are invited to take notes in your book and in a notebook. Please do not use an electronic device (computer, phone, iPad, etc.) to take notes, unless you have a documented disability that requires it (in which case, please provide me with this notification).

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism - presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words - is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Section 11,

Behavior Violating University Standards <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the Department of Public Safety <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Faculty and staff must report any information regarding an incident to the Title IX Coordinator who will provide outreach and information to the affected party. The sexual assault resource center webpage <http://sarc.usc.edu> fully describes reporting options. Relationship and Sexual Violence Services <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp> provides 24/7 confidential support.

Support Systems

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information <http://emergency.usc.edu> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology. Dornsife provides a full range of mental health resources, which can be found at <https://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling/>

COVID Safety

Students are expected to comply with all aspects of USC's COVID-19 policy. Failure to do so may result in removal from the class and referral to Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards.

Support Systems

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

- studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling
- Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call

- suicidepreventionlifeline.org
- Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call

- studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault
- Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)- (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298

- equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu
- Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

- usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report
- Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity |Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Student Accessibility Services - (213) 740-0776

- osas.usc.edu
- Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Campus Support & Intervention - (213) 821-4710

- campussupport.usc.edu
- Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

- diversity.usc.edu
- Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

- dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu
- Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

- dps.usc.edu Non-emergency assistance or information.

Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

- ombuds.usc.edu
- *A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.*

Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice - (323) 442-3340

- chan.usc.edu/otfp or otfp@med.usc.edu
- *Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.*

BEHAVIOR / DISCIPLINARY ISSUES

Throughout the course, students will be expected to behave as per campus rules.

You are ambassadors for USC throughout the duration of the course - even during 'free time' - and your behavior should reflect this.

The course leader will pass any behavioral issue on to the Associate Vice Provost, Student Affairs. Any serious breach of conduct will result in dismissal from the course.

Adjustments to this Syllabus may be made during the course of the semester.