What is the Common Curriculum?

All Loyola students take a series of courses in Composition, Literature, Fine Arts, History, Natural Sciences, Mathematics, Philosophy, Religious Studies and Social Sciences. While there are several options in all areas, the courses are developed to focus on:

- Examining the world from different but interconnecting disciplines;
- Helping students relate their major to a larger educational context;
- Helping students to think critically about their world and to act justly in it;
- Helping students understand and participate in value-oriented education;
- Helping students develop their critical thinking, writing and speaking skills.

What is the Freshman Seminar?

The freshman seminar is, in a sense, your introduction to the importance of and the value of the Common Curriculum. During this course, you will literally be making a transition from high school reading, writing and thinking to college level inquiry, analysis, evaluation, argument and assessment. Further, the seminar will introduce students to an interdisciplinary approach to thinking and learning, and it will help students engage in Loyola’s educational mission of thinking critically and acting justly.

Course Description: Students will explore the unique religious landscape in New Orleans, learn about the history of the ethnic communities and their respective traditions that are part of the New Orleans religious gumbo, and discover how congregations and religious individuals have changed and coped as a result of the Katrina disaster. Religious congregations to be explored range from Catholic, Protestant and Greek Orthodox churches to Voodoo communities, to the variety of Jewish temples and synagogues, to representatives of world religions such as Hindu temples, Buddhist sanghas and Muslim mosques.
Course Objectives are:

- To gain basic literacy concerning religions in New Orleans, and religious traditions more generally;
- To gain appreciation of the uniqueness of New Orleans’ religious peoples and their cultures;
- To gain appreciation of the diversity of peoples, religions and cultures, and their shared humanity and creativity;
- To acquire the tools to research, investigate and think critically about one’s own and others’ religious traditions.

The tools of investigation include:

- The ability to ask good questions of data;
- Textual research;
- Interviews;
- Participant-observation.

The modes of analysis include:

- The ability to distinguish reliable sources of information from unreliable ones;
- The ability to bracket one’s own assumptions and worldview to be able to understand the worldviews/points of view of others;
- Analysis utilizing historical categories;
- Analysis utilizing theological categories;
- Observation of connections between beliefs/worldviews and actions;
- Race, ethnicity, class and gender analysis in relation to religions;
- Sociological analysis of religious organizations and their relations to society.

Assigned Readings:


Selections available on BLACKBOARD from:


WESSINGER: Catherine Wessinger, “Religious Responses to Disaster in New Orleans and the American Gulf Coast” (unpublished paper).

BLACKBOARD: Selected articles.
T Aug. 31  *Introductions – Nature of the Course*

R Sept 2  *Lovers of New Orleans*

T Sept 7  *Methods of Inquiry and Research: Asking good questions; reading of texts in print, Internet, and electronic media; participant-observation; interviews. Discussions of Research and Writing Assignments*

R Sept 9  *Colonial New Orleans and Religions*
BERRY, 80-86.

T Sept 14  *Antebellum New Orleans*
LONG: “Antebellum City,” 26-46.
BERRY, 86-95.

R Sept 16  CLASS VISITORS: Utilizing the Library’s Resources; Utilizing the Writing Across the Curriculum Lab

T Sept 21  *Basic Religious Expressions in New Orleans*

R Sept 23  *Congo Square*

T Sept 28  *Marie Laveau & Voodoo in New Orleans*
BERRY, 95-101.
R Sept 30  Attend Mass of the Holy Spirit, 11:00 a.m.

[FIELD TRIP, Saturday, October 2: French Quarter and St. Louis #1 Cemetery Walking Tour guided by Sharon Keating.]

T Oct 5  Discussion of French Quarter Walking Tour - Catholic and African Influences

R Oct 7  BLACKBOARD: Patrick Strange, “The Strength to Leave the Charge.”
EXAMINE WEBSITES: Mary Queen of Vietnam Development Corporation, Inc., <http://www.mqvncdc.org/>;
MOVIE: A Village Called Versailles (1 hr.)

[FIELD TRIP: Attend a Mass at Mary Queen of Vietnam Church, New Orleans East.]

T Oct 12  Discuss Mary Queen of Vietnam Field Trip.

R Oct 14  Discussion of the Writing Assignments So Far

T Oct 19  No Class – Fall Break

R Oct 21  Second Lines and Mardi Gras Indians
BERRY, 101-09.

[F Oct 22 – Mid-Term Grades Due]

T Oct 26  Jazz Funerals

R Oct 28  Spiritual Churches
BERRY, 25-52; 57-80; 109-22; 125-37.
GUEST SPEAKER: Jason Berry

T Nov 2  No class.

R Nov 4  St. Augustine Church
MOVIE: Shake the Devil Off (1 hr.)
WEBSITE: http://www.staugustinecatholicchurch-neworleans.org/

[FIELD TRIP, Sunday, November 7: Mass at St. Augustine Church, Sunday, 10:00 a.m., 1210 Gov. Nicholls Street.]

T Nov 9  Discussion of St. Augustine Church Visit

R Nov 11  The Katrina Experience and Religious Responses
WESSINGER, 1-22.
MOVIE: Hexing a Hurricane (44 minutes)

T Nov 16  Diverse Individual and Congregational Religious Responses to Katrina
WESSINGER, 22-47.

R Nov 18  Civil Religious and Quasi-Religious Responses to Katrina
WESSINGER, 47-58.

[FIELD TRIP, Sunday, Nov. 21: worship service at First Grace United Methodist Church, 11:15 a.m., 3401 Canal Street.
View website before attending the service: http://www.firstgraceumc.org/]

T Nov 23  Discussion of First Grace United Methodist Church Visit

R Nov 25  No Class - Thanksgiving

T Nov 30  Wiki and Religious Visit Reports: Jewish Congregations (reports on 3 congregations). Options include: Temple Sinai; Touro Synagogue; Gates of Prayer in Metairie; Chabad House-Lubavitch on Freret Street; Shir Chadash Conservative Congregation in Metairie; Congregation Beth Israel (currently meeting at Gates of Prayer).

R Dec 2  Wiki and Religious Visit Reports: Ethnic and Alternative Christian and Christian-derived Congregations (reports on 3 congregations). Options include: Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral; Mary Queen of Vietnam Church in New Orleans East; St. Patrick’s Church on Camp Street; Greater St. Stephen’s Full Gospel Baptist Church on Read Blvd.; Metropolitan Community Church; a Seventh-day Adventist Church; First Church of Christ Scientist; Unity Temple; First Unitarian-Universalist Church; Community Church Unitarian-Universalist.

T Dec 7  Wiki and Religious Visit Reports: Congregations Representing Various World Religions (reports on 3 congregations). Options include: International Society for Krishna Consciousness Temple on Esplanade Avenue; Sri Veera Venkata Satyanarayana Temple in Kenner; Masjid Abu Bakr al-Siddiq in Metairie; Masjid al-Tawbeh in Terrytown; activities of the Atlas Interfaith Foundation; Chua Bo De near Belle Chasse; Tu Vien Lien Hua on Stumpf Blvd. in Terrytown; Trung Tam Phat Giao Van Hanh (Van Hanh Buddhist Center) in New Orleans East; Cao-Dai Temple in Harvey; Blue Iris Sangha; Flowering Lotus Meditation and Study Center; Zen Center;
R Dec 9  Discussion of Written Reports; Wrapping Up


COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Grading Scale and Requirements

The grading scale follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90-100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80-89.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70-79.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60-69.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59.5% or below</td>
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</table>

Scale for final grade:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86.5</td>
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<tr>
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<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79.5</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>73-76.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69.5</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>63-66.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59.5 and below</td>
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The final grade is based on a 100-point scale broken down as follows:

30 pts. Reading assignments, class attendance, turning in a discussion question for each reading assignment, participation in class discussions, presenting summaries of readings.
20 pts. Participation on Course Blog.
10 pts. Two reflection papers, 5 pts. each, on the two field trips prior to mid-term point.
10 pts. Two reflection papers, 5 pts. each, on two public events [to be specified] on campus relating to this course.
10 pts. Two reflection papers, 5 pts. each, on the two field trips after the mid-term point.
10 pts. Wiki report with a partner on background research on a specific New Orleans congregation.

Class Attendance and Class Discussion

Class attendance and participation in class discussions will be graded: 15 pts. before the Mid-Term, and 15 pts. after the Mid-Term. Participation in class discussion is crucial for this seminar. The student should read each assignment carefully before class and be prepared to discuss the issues related to the readings. The instructor will be looking to see if the student’s comments in class reflect that he or she has read the assignments and has thought about them. Regular attendance is counted in this grade.

The student is required to turn in a question for discussion for each reading or viewing assignment on the day it will be discussed, and this is counted as part of the attendance and discussion grade.

Missing classes and/or sitting silently in class will adversely affect this portion of the grade.

In each class meeting (except designated classes), two students will be responsible for presenting the main points of the assigned readings (no more than 10 minutes each). These presentations should contain comments and questions for general discussion. The presentations count toward the class discussion grade.

Participation on the Course Blog

Participation on the Blog will count a total of 20 pts.: 10 pts. before the midterm point and 10 pts. after the midterm point. Students should post at least two thoughtful reflections on the Blog weekly in response to readings, guest speakers, field trips, movies, speakers and/or performances on campus. The students should seek to relate the content of reading and viewing assignments to their experiences in the New Orleans religious landscape. The instructor will read all postings and evaluate them for the thoughtfulness of their content. A superficial comment for the sake of posting a message will not be given the same weight as a thoughtful comment. Blog reflections should be
posted by Saturday of each week. Comments posted a week or more later will not be counted for the week in question. Students should plan to log in 2-3 times each week, read the other students’ comments, and contribute to the overall discussion. Keep in mind that everyone on the Internet can read your posts to this public blog. They can, and some will, respond to these posts.

**Reflection Papers on Field Trips**

There will be two field trips prior to the midterm point, and two field trips after the midterm point. A reflection paper, counting 5 pts., is due in the Tuesday class following the field trip. Guidelines will be provided for the reflection papers. The reflection papers should seek to relate what has been observed on the field trip to the content of the course reading and viewing assignments.

If a student is unable to go with the class on a particular field trip, in consultation with the professor the student may elect to undertake a field trip alone, and then write a reflection paper worth 5 pts.

**Assignments outside the Classroom**

Students are required to attend two events on campus outside the class period that relate to the subject matter of this course. These events will be announced.

After attending the event, the student is required to turn in a reflection paper the Tuesday following the event, worth 5 pts.

**Wikis and Religious Visit Reports**

Students will be paired to research the historical background and beliefs of a congregation in New Orleans, which they will select with input from the instructor. The students will research the background and beliefs of the congregation and report these together on a Wiki, which will be worth 10 pts.

The students may visit the congregation together or singly. Each student must write a Religious Visit Report according to the guidelines provided. The Religious Visit Report will be worth 10 pts.

The report on the Wiki and the hard copy of the Religious Visit Report must be completed (and the hard copy turned in) by the date on which the students will report in class on the congregation and their visits. The oral presentation will count toward the attendance and discussion grade.

**Extra Credit Opportunity**

There are numerous events on and off campus that can be attended, as well as places that can be visited, that are relevant to this course. The student, in consultation with the
instructor, has the option of selecting one of these events or sites to attend or visit, and then write a reflection paper worth 5 pts.

**Late Work Policy**

All written assignments must be turned in on the stipulated due date. No written assignments will be accepted after the due date unless the instructor is notified ahead of time by telephone of a health or family emergency.

**Policy on Laptops, Cell Phones, and Smart Phones in the Classroom**

It has become evident that with the introduction of wireless access to the Internet, laptops have been used as distractions in the classroom. This is a small seminar class in which students will be graded on their participation in discussion. Therefore, all laptops must be closed during the class. Students should have paper and pen ready to take notes.

All cell and smart phones must be turned off or muted during class. Any student observed text-messaging in class will be counted absent.

As the need arises, laptops and smart phones may be used in class to look up a topic online that is relevant to the discussion. The student must announce to the class that they are looking up a topic before beginning to do so.

**Student is responsible for avoiding plagiarism.**

Every student at Loyola has the responsibility to know what plagiarism is and to avoid committing plagiarism.

“**Plagiarism**—the use of another person’s ideas or wording without giving proper credit—results from the failure to document fully and accurately. Ideas and expressions of them are considered to belong to the individual who first puts them forward. Therefore, when you incorporate ideas or phrasing from any other author in your paper, whether you quote them directly or indirectly, you need to be honest and complete about indicating the source to avoid plagiarism. Whether intentional or unintentional, plagiarism can bring serious consequences, both academic, in the form of failure or expulsion, and legal, in the form of lawsuits. Plagiarism is a violation of the ethics of the academic community.”


For more information on plagiarism and how to avoid it, go to: <http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/wts/plagiarism.html>.

For Loyola University’s policy on plagiarism go to: <http://bulletin.loyno.edu/2007undergraduate/academic_regs/contents.php#integrity>.