FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR PROPOSAL

COURSE TITLE: New Orleans in Literature/Film: From the Old St. Louis Hotel to Hurricane Katrina.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: “There are a lot of places I like,” writes 2016 Nobel Laureate Bob Dylan, “but I like New Orleans better. There's a thousand different angles at any moment.” Due to its status as a mercantile port, New Orleans was/is where much of what we now think of as “American” originally entered America, either literally or metaphorically. These different angles include the direct and indirect results of slavery, colonialism, immigration, war, corruption, and natural disaster. Over the course of the semester, we will read writers such as Tennessee Williams, John Kennedy Toole, and Anne Rice, as well as viewing films such as A Streetcar Named Desire, Beasts of the Southern Wild, and When the Levees Broke as a means of considering the relationships between slavery, colonialism, etc. and words that more often come to mind when one considers New Orleans—jazz, Bourbon Street, “The Big Easy.” How does thinking about New Orleans help us think differently about America in general, as well as even larger concepts such as time, memory, history, and place?

FACULTY BIO: GREG WEISS is a Language Lecturer in the Expository Writing Program. His first book of poems, Interstate, came out in 2014, and he’s currently at work on his second.

A preliminary syllabus begins on the next page.
New Orleans in Literature/Film: From the Old St. Louis Hotel to Hurricane Katrina

Instructor: Greg Weiss.  
Email: gw50@nyu.edu. I'll always respond to emails within 24 hours—usually much sooner but guaranteed by then.  
Office Location: Dibner 116, Tandon School of Engineering.  
Office hours: By appointment—just ask me after class or via email. We'll set up a time and place to meet.  
Class meetings: ________________.

Course Description

“There are a lot of places I like,” writes 2016 Nobel Laureate Bob Dylan, “but I like New Orleans better. There's a thousand different angles at any moment.” Due to its status as a mercantile port, New Orleans was/is where much of what we now think of as “American” originally entered America, either literally or metaphorically. These different angles include the direct and indirect results of slavery, colonialism, immigration, war, corruption, and natural disaster. Over the course of the semester, we will read writers such as Tennessee Williams, John Kennedy Toole, and Anne Rice, as well as viewing films such as *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, and *When the Levees Broke* as a means of considering the relationships between slavery, colonialism, etc. and words that more often come to mind when one considers New Orleans—jazz, Bourbon Street, “The Big Easy.” How does thinking about New Orleans help us think differently about America in general, as well as even larger concepts such as time, memory, history, and place?

Required Texts

Rebecca Solnit, *Unfathomable City*  
Kate Chopin, *The Awakening*  
Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*  
John Kennedy Toole, *A Confederacy of Dunces*  
Anne Rice, *Interview with the Vampire*

A couple notes on the reading:

1. This course is reading-intensive, and you should expect to read 60-100 pages per week. If you haven’t done the reading (or watched the film if we’re watching a film that week), the class session that is structured around that reading will be a total waste of time for you. Your completing the reading is essential for you to (a) enjoy the course and (b) do well in the course.

2. You must bring any reading materials that we're discussing to class. You will not be able to participate meaningfully in class discussion if you don't have the reading material with you.
Discussion Leaders
Working in pairs, students will lead the class in discussion. I'll distribute a sign-up sheet the second week of class, and we'll discuss the specifics of how you're going to lead discussion at that time.

Graded Writing Assignments
• Reaction Papers (1 page): Between Week 2 and Week 13, students will be responsible for writing 7 reaction papers, in which you will respond informally but thoughtfully to the reading/film for that week.
• Midterm Paper (4-5 pages): A paper that asks an intellectual question about at least one of the readings and offers insightful reflection in response to that question.
• Final Project (6-8 pages): This paper may be either an academic essay or a creative project. If you choose to pursue a creative project, you will still need to hand in a written component—i.e., script, reflection. All final projects will include a significant element of research.

Your essays should be formatted according to MLA guidelines. Those guidelines can be found at https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/.

Grading
• Reaction Papers: 20% of your grade for the course.
• Discussion Lead: 15% of your grade for the course.
• Participation: 10% of your grade for the course.
• Midterm Paper: 22% of your grade for the course.
• Final Paper: 33% of your grade for the course.

A note on participation: While I encourage all of you to contribute vocally to class discussions, speaking in class is only one form that participation may take. Participation involves, at a minimum, (a) showing up to class, (b) doing the assigned reading and writing assignments completely and as well as you can, and (c) contributing to your classmates’ intellectual experiences.
Please note that religious observance, documented illness, and family emergency are grounds for an absence to be excused.

Computers and Phones
You’re free (and encouraged) to bring your computers to class for taking notes or any other class-related activity.

The Writing Center
The Writing Center is a place where any NYU student can get help with any piece of writing except for exams. Students work one-on-one with writing faculty,
and are encouraged to make an appointment at any stage in their writing processes (i.e., you can go in if you’re having trouble thinking of an idea to write your paper about, or when you’re totally done with your final draft and just want for somebody to look it over one last time before you hand it in). To learn more about the Writing Center, and to make an appointment, go to http://cas.nyu.edu/ewp/writing-resources/writing-center.html.

**Academic Integrity**

Plagiarism (presenting others’ work without adequate acknowledgement of its source, as though it were one’s own) and cheating (deceiving a faculty member or other individual who assesses student performance into believing that one’s mastery of a subject or discipline is greater than it is) are not permitted. We’ll go over this in more detail during the first week of class, but please ask me at any point in the semester if you’re unsure if something that you would like to do is allowable under NYU’s Academic Integrity Policy. That policy can be found at http://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/academic-integrity-for-students-at-nyu.html.

**Disability Resources**

The Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities provides comprehensive services and programs for undergraduate and graduate students with hearing and visual impairments, mobility impairments, learning disabilities and attention deficit disorders, chronic illnesses, and psychological impairments. The Moses Center functions to determine qualified disability status and to assist students in obtaining appropriate accommodations and services. Services provided are designed to encourage independence and self-advocacy, backed by a comprehensive system of supports. Learn more about their services and programs at nyu.edu/csd.
**Provisional Schedule**

**Week 1**
Introduction + selection from *Chronicles, Vol. 1* (Bob Dylan)

**Week 2**
Have Read: Selection from *Unfathomable City* (Rebecca Solnit).

**Week 3**
Have Read: Selections from *Unfathomable City* (Solnit), *Clotel* (William Wells Brown), and *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (Harriet Beecher Stowe).

Discussion Leaders 1 and 2

**Week 4**
Have Read: *The Awakening* (Kate Chopin).

Discussion Leaders 3 and 4

Write: Midterm Paper (4-5 pages)

**Week 5**
Have Read: *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Tennessee Williams).

Discussion Leaders 5 and 6

Due: Midterm Paper (4-5 pages)

**Week 6**
Have Watched: *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Have Read: Selection from *Unfathomable City* (Rebecca Solnit).

Discussion Leaders 7 and 8

**Week 7**
Have Read: Selection from *A Confederacy of Dunces* (John Kennedy Toole).

Discussion Leaders 9 and 10

**Week 8**
No Class—Spring Break.
Week 9
Have Read: Selection from *A Confederacy of Dunces* (John Kennedy Toole).

Discussion Leaders 11 and 12

Week 10
Have Read: Selection from *Interview with the Vampire* (Anne Rice).

Discussion Leaders 13 and 14

Week 11
Have Watched: *Interview with the Vampire*.

Have Read: Selection from *Interview with the Vampire* (Anne Rice).

Week 12
Have Watched: Selection from *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts*.

Have Read: “Wading Toward Home” (Michael Lewis).

Week 13
Have Watched: *Beasts of the Southern Wild*.

Due: Paper Proposal for Final Paper.

Week 14
Research Day.

Due: Rough Draft for Final Paper.

Week 15
Workshop Day.

Due: Rough Draft for Final Paper.

The final paper (6-8 pages) is due electronically three days after the Workshop Day, by midnight.