

16th Annual Louisiana Studies Conference

“Lyrical Louisiana”

October 19, 2024

Conference Keynote Presentation: Ron Yule & The Medicare Stringband

Conference Co-Chairs: Donna J. Baker, University Archivist and Records Officer,
Cammie G. Henry Research Center, Northwestern State University

Jason Church, Chief, Technical Services, National Center for
Preservation Technology and Training

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Northwestern State University

Charles Pellegrin, Professor of History and Director of the Southern
Studies Institute, Northwestern State University

Shane Rasmussen, Director of the Louisiana Folklife Center and
Professor of English, Northwestern State University

Conference Programming: Jason Church, Chair

Shane Rasmussen

Conference Hosts: Scott Burrell, Director, The Dear School of Creative and Performing Arts and
Professor of Theatre. Northwestern State University

Leslie Gruesbeck, Associate Professor of Art and Chair, Department of Fine
+ Graphic Arts, Northwestern State University

Francene Lemoine, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Northwestern
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NSU Louisiana High School Essay Contest: Shane Rasmussen, Chair

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Rebecca Macijeski, Creative Writing Program
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Thurman

Saturday's luncheon provided by Sodexo.

Conference Sponsors

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NSU College of Arts and Sciences
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Special thanks to the many other people who graciously donated their time and talents to the
Conference.

CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

Please note: All events take place in CAPA (Creative and Performing Arts)

Saturday, October 19, 2024

8:00-9:00 a.m.	Conference Registration, CAPA, 2 nd Floor
9:00-9:15 a.m.	Conference Welcome, CAPA 206
9:30-10:45 a.m.	Presentation Session 1, CAPA
11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.	Keynote Presentation, Magale Recital Hall
12:00-12:30 p.m.	Awards Ceremony, Magale Recital Hall 16 th Annual NSU Louisiana High School Essay Contest
12:30-1:45 p.m.	Light Lunch and Reception, Hanchey Gallery
2:00-3:15 p.m.	Presentation Session 2, CAPA
3:30-4:45 p.m.	Presentation Session 3, CAPA
4:45 p.m.	Conference Close

SCHEDULE

Please note: All events take place in CAPA (Creative and Performing Arts)

Saturday, October 19, 2024

8:00-9:00 a.m. **Conference Registration** *CAPA, 2nd Floor*

9:00-9:15 a.m. **Conference Welcome** *CAPA 206*

9:30-10:45 a.m. **Presentation Session 1**

Panel 1A Louisiana Lyricism CAPA 205

Session Chair: Bruce R. Magee, Louisiana Tech University

Bruce R. Magee, Louisiana Tech University

Stephen Payne, Independent Scholar

“The Music of *Liberty in Louisiana*”

Lisa A. Kirby, Collin College

“Redefining the American Other: Emerging Identities and the Power of Lyricism in Wendy Chin-Tanner’s *King of the Armadillos*”

Derek Foster, Upper Iowa University, Alexandria

“‘The sensuous leaves that used to sway / Each has vanished on its way’: Lyrical Ambivalence in Arna Bontemps’ Early Poetry”

Panel 1B Latin Louisiana CAPA 206

Session Chair: Nick Taylor, Northwestern State University

Richard Winters, University of Louisiana at Lafayette

“Colonial-Period Spanish Surnames in Contact with French: Transition and Replacement”

Nick Taylor, Northwestern State University

“*Latino Living*: Giving Voice to an Underrepresented CENLA Population, Exploring Hispanic Culture and Language Through the Multimedia Lens of Podcasting to Create Meaningful Cultural Conversation”

Panel 1C *Chansons de Louisiane****CAPA 207***

Session Chair: Nathan Rabalais, University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Esteban A. Quispe, University of Louisiana at Lafayette

“Three French Songs from Avoyelles Parish”

Nathan Rabalais, University of Louisiana at Lafayette

“*Chanter sans comprendre* (Singing without understanding): Politics of Language and Identity in Contemporary Cajun Music”**11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. *Keynote Presentation******Magale Recital Hall******Ron Yule & The Medicare Stringband*****“Influential & Popular Fiddle Tunes & Styles of 20th Century Louisiana”**

Join Ron Yule and The Medicare Stringband for a musical history of Louisiana folk music!

The Medicare Stringband

Samuel O’Kelley – fiddle, guitar

Sarah O’Kelley – fiddle

Ron Yule – fiddle

Ron Yule began playing the fiddle in 1968 while a student. In 1973, Ron began producing fiddle contests and promoting bluegrass shows throughout Louisiana and southeast Texas. He and his wife Georgia produced the first bluegrass/fiddle club and newsletter in the state of Louisiana, the Southwest Louisiana Fiddler and Bluegrass Club, from 1974 to 1976. Ron continues to promote several bluegrass shows each year, including the Beauregard Parish Fair Fiddle Contest, an event that has been viable since 1925. After retiring, Ron began amassing all the data and pictures he had collected over the previous 30 years and started a written documentation of fiddling, bluegrass, Cajun, and country music in Louisiana with a focus on southwest Louisiana. His books include *When the Fiddle Was King*, *My Fiddlin’ Grounds*, and *Iry Lejeune: Wailin’ the Blues Cajun Style*. The 2000 and 2019 Louisiana State Fiddle Champion, Ron continues to do what he loves best, which is to “play music with bluegrass, country, and Cajun friends at jam sessions, festivals, nursing homes and anywhere they’ll allow the noise.”

12:00-12:30 p.m.***Awards Ceremony******Magale Recital Hall******16th Annual NSU Louisiana High School Essay Contest*****12:30-1:45 p.m.****Light Lunch and Reception*****Hanchey Gallery*****2:00-3:15 p.m.****Presentation Session 2**

Panel 2A *Digging in the Stacks***CAPA 205**

Session Chair: Kent W. Peacock, Northwestern State University

Arthur S. Williams, Independent Scholar

“Reflections on the Correspondence of Cammie Henry and Caroline Dormon”

Sara Rebstock, Northwestern State University

“Collection Talk: The Dr. Corinne Saucier Papers”

Anna T. MacDonald, Northwestern State University

“Researching the Eugene P. Watson Memorial Library Public Art Collection”

Kent W. Peacock, Northwestern State University

“Louisiana Creole Folktales and Developing ‘Creole 101’ for Educators, Parents, and Community Members”

Panel 2B *Tangible to the Intangible***CAPA 206**

Session Chair: Benjamin Baaske, Texas A&M University, Department of Architecture

Clayton Delery, Faculty Emeritus, Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts

“Demented Women and Other Heroes: How New Orleans Drag Queens Lip-Synched for Life”

Benjamin Baaske, Texas A&M University, Department of Architecture

Megan S. Reed, National Center for Preservation Technology and Training

Catherine Cooper, National Center for Preservation Technology and Training

Isabella Jones, National Center for Preservation Technology and Training

Jason Church, National Center for Preservation Technology and Training

“High-tech Digital Archiving of Underrepresented and At-risk Heritage: The Slave Cabin and Tenant Farming House, LGBTQ+, and Louisiana Rosenwald Schools Projects”

Corey Saft, University of Louisiana at Lafayette

“the SOUND of a NEIGHBORHOOD / the SPIRIT of a PLACE”

Panel 2C New Orleans Shapes Louisiana Culture

CAPA 207

Session Chair: Ashley Steenson, The University of Alabama

Ashley Steenson, The University of Alabama

“Lillian Hellman’s New Orleans”

Christopher Stacey, Louisiana State University of Alexandria

“New Orleans and the Louisiana and Mississippi Deltas: The Origin of a National Blues Age”

3:30-4:45 p.m. Presentation Session 3

Panel 3A Rhyming Louisiana

CAPA 205

Session Chair: Rebecca Macijeski, Northwestern State University

John P. Doucet, Nicholls State University

“Coastal Louisiana: A Poetic Gaze”

David Middleton, Nicholls State University

“On the Eve of Jubilee: Fifty Years of ‘Rhyming’ Louisiana, Coda to a *Collected Poems* (2025)”

Rebecca Macijeski, Northwestern State University

“Becoming from Here: Learning to Live in Louisiana—A Poet Comes Home”

Panel 3B Louisiana Lagniappe

CAPA 206

Session Chair: Sadeem El Nahhas, Northwestern State University

Sadeem El Nahhas, Northwestern State University

“Wading Through the Water: An Exploration of Louisiana in Post-Katrina Poetry”

Seth Bovey, Louisiana State University of Alexandria

“Meet the Residents: Louisiana’s Very Own Avante-Garde Musical Group”

Matthew Stokes, Louisiana State University of Alexandria

“Spirituality and Echoes of the Negro Spiritual in the Poetry of Arna Bontemps”

Panel 3C *The Roots of Louisiana Music*

CAPA 207

Session Chair: Heather Salter Dromm, Northwestern State University

Anna Kathryn Vaughn, Northwestern State University

“*Down on Rigolette*: The Music of Steve Conn”

Bernard Gallagher, Louisiana State University of Alexandria

“When Lyrics are True: James Lee Burke, *Swan Peak*, and Authentic Country Western Music”

Heather Salter Dromm, Northwestern State University

Keith Dromm, Northwestern State University, Louisiana Scholar’s College

“The Dangers (and Opportunities) of Nostalgia in Louisiana Country Music”

4:45 p.m.

Conference Close

PRESENTATION ABSTRACTS

Benjamin Baaske, Texas A&M University, Department of Architecture

Megan S. Reed, National Center for Preservation Technology and Training

Catherine Cooper, National Center for Preservation Technology and Training

Isabella Jones, National Center for Preservation Technology and Training

Jason Church, National Center for Preservation Technology and Training

“High-tech Digital Archiving of Underrepresented and At-risk Heritage: The Slave Cabin and Tenant Farming House, LGBTQ+, and Louisiana Rosenwald Schools Projects”

For the past four years, the Digital Recording Team at the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training (NCPTT) within the National Park Service (NPS) has focused on a multi and mixed media approach to the recording of architectural narratives in Louisiana and throughout the country. Buildings are documented to the utmost precision with laser scanning technologies. These same buildings are then recorded using 360 photogrammetry, creating immersive, interpretive tools. They are also photographed extensively at various scales of focus: architectural detail, overall spatial context, architectural elements, construction connections, and recognizable impact views. Oral histories are recorded by community members with stories pertaining to these buildings, but which quickly become comprehensive histories of the individuals, individual relations, the community, intra relations between groups within the community, and inter relations between communities. Through the Digital Recording Team’s various projects in Louisiana and the southern United States, they have demonstrated how the building is just the tip of the proverbial iceberg.

The team uses terrestrial and mobile laser scanning technologies: Leica RTC 360, Leica BLK 360, Leica BLK 2GO, and FARO Focus. Laser scan data are translated to virtual environments for dissemination to both researchers and the general public. These data are also used to develop current-condition architectural drawing sets at graphic standards set by the Historic American Building Survey (HABS). Digital archiving of these data retains raw scan data, raw registered data, and finished scan data in multiple universal formats. 360 photogrammetry is carried out using Matterport’s Pro 2 and Pro 3 tripod cameras. Individual stations stitch together interior scenes using overlapping photographs to create an immersive virtual environment. Connections between community members and cultural heritage agencies in the area are fostered in order to record and share oral histories pertaining to these structures and the community at large.

Seth Bovey, Louisiana State University of Alexandria

“Meet the Residents: Louisiana’s Very Own Avante-Garde Musical Group”

The Residents, a San Francisco-based troupe of avant-garde performance artists and musicians, have been active for over half a century. Even more amazing is the fact that The Residents originated in North Louisiana; all four founding members of the Cryptic Corporation—the umbrella organization that manages The Residents—met and bonded during the 1960s as students at Louisiana Tech University in Ruston. After graduating, the two core members of the nascent Residents relocated to the Bay Area, where they began tape recording impromptu jam sessions; The Residents’ avant-garde activities grew out of these primal musical experiments.

Using Renato Poggioli’s concepts from *The Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1963), we can see that what makes The Residents’ music avant-garde is not necessarily its “weirdness,” but its antagonism toward mainstream pop music. In 1974, The Residents released *Meet the Residents*, “The First Album by North Louisiana’s Phenomenal Pop Combo.” A direct parody of *Meet the Beatles!*, the LP’s cover art defaces the images of the Fab Four with hand-drawn fangs, horns, crossed eyes, mustaches, tongues, and so on. Obviously meant to satirize the world’s top pop combo, this LP was The Residents’ first attack on the star-making machinery of the pop music industry. Their second blow against the music industry came in 1976 with the release of *The Third Reich ‘N’ Roll*, an album that conflates Naziism and pop music. The cover art of this LP features Dick Clark, the main “influencer” of 1960s pop, dressed in a Nazi uniform and holding a carrot, suggesting that the music industry is fascistic in its attempts to control and shape the musical tastes of the world’s youth. These anti-pop sensibilities, however, were attitudes that The Residents brought with them from North Louisiana before finding the means to express them artistically on the West Coast.

Clayton Delery, Faculty Emeritus, Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts

“Demented Women and Other Heroes: How New Orleans Drag Queens Lip-Synched for Life”

Because we now understand HIV transmission and know multiple effective ways to prevent it, and because AIDS has become a largely manageable condition, it’s easy to forget an era forty years ago when people literally lived in fear of being in the same room as an infected person, and when AIDS was regarded as an imminent death sentence.

During the height of the AIDS crisis, many people who were diagnosed with AIDS were sent to hospitals where there was no effective treatment, and kept there until it became clear hospice care was the only remaining step. Some went home to lovers or family members, but a substantial number of people had neither.

In New Orleans, the solution came from an unlikely alliance: The Catholic Church, and a rag-tag group of drag queens who named themselves the Demented Women. The Archdiocese donated a building, but no funding and no staff. The Demented Women held fundraising drag shows to furnish the building, and were instrumental in coordinating volunteer labor, both to provide care for the residents and to maintain the facilities.

This presentation reviews the genesis of both the Demented Women and Project Lazarus, and discusses how the two needed each other during one of the greatest public health crises of the twentieth century.

John P. Doucet, Nicholls State University

“Coastal Louisiana: A Poetic Gaze”

As many are aware, Coastal Louisiana is suffering the most severe land loss in the world. Built over thousands of years from deluged Mississippi River sediments as they poured down a mid-continent rift, the Louisiana coast is a ply of overlaid river deltas formed from west to east and back. In the 21st century, we see these prehistoric deltas starved of replenishment, subsiding, subject to saltwater incursion, and facing sea level rise. Louisiana’s Coastal Master Plan has directed construction projects that help mitigate this loss and protect historical marshland settlements and economy. However, the net result remains loss: With land loss is loss of opportunity, loss of residence, loss of population, loss of culture, and loss of history. Coupled to such insidious physical loss is a paucity of written records. With educational opportunities widely available only in the past couple of generations, what we know of the history of settlements in the coastal marshlands is largely transmitted orally, and fewer are alive today who remember and can speak of the land and life that was. It befalls the current generation then to build a literature that remembers and preserves the human story of this vital part of Louisiana.

A lifelong resident of deltaic southeastern Louisiana, Doucet has joined this effort and created a body of writing that helps capture and preserve stories from Louisiana’s vanishing coastal marshlands. This reading will consist of a selection of his poetry that narrates topics from the history and culture of marshland communities primarily of the southern aspect of Lafourche Parish, where land loss is most severe.

Heather Salter Dromm, Northwestern State University

Keith Dromm, Northwestern State University, Louisiana Scholar’s College

“The Dangers (and Opportunities) of Nostalgia in Louisiana Country Music”

In his 2016 song “Louisiana” Tim McGraw longs to go back in time when he was innocent and “wild and free as the Mississippi.” Like many country music recording artists, he sings about the “good old days,” a time in the past, often only vaguely identified, during which all sorts of things were better. Nostalgia is even reflected in its name. In its original meaning, nostalgia meant longing for a place. The country, i.e., rural America, is that place where, according to country music, those better times are still preserved, insulated from the changes that take us further and further from them. In most cases, Southern small towns are these idealized places. Nostalgia in country music can also be anticipatory as in McGraw’s lines “The moment you’re living right now/Will soon become your past.”

As our title suggests, we will discuss the dangers and opportunities of nostalgia in the country music of Louisiana. We distinguish between aesthetic, epistemological, and political (or social)

dangers. Epistemologically, nostalgia can get the past wrong. It presents a misleading picture of the past that exaggerates its positive aspects so much that it obscures the negative ones. Politically, the past that country music venerates was not good for everyone. Aesthetically, nostalgia can inhibit innovation, which is also a political danger of nostalgia. But not all is bad with the nostalgia of country music. Its preservation of old sounds and styles serves several good goals. There is the benefit to our historical knowledge of music. It reminds us of where we have been. Such knowledge can help us prepare for the future. Politically, nostalgia helps preserve Louisiana communities.

Derek Foster, Upper Iowa University, Alexandria

“The sensuous leaves that used to sway / Each has vanished on its way”: Lyrical Ambivalence in Arna Bontemps’ Early Poetry”

American poets of the twentieth century have often written about justice and cultural identity. In a letter to W.E.B. Du Bois, dated December 30, 1943, Arna Bontemps exclaims, “I loved the way you sailed into the taboo subject—so easy, so confident, and so *right!*” From his father’s telling him not to “act colored,” to his questioning breaking with the folk tradition, Bontemps, at times, felt conflict with his cultural heritage, though not to the point of resentment. Rather, instead of being vehemently vocal, he chose to compose reflective poetry with quiet and contemplative themes.

Though he physically did leave the South at various points in his life, Bontemps metaphorically never left Jim Crow Louisiana. As a result, a dichotomy of sorts develops in his work—the American Dream juxtaposed with the reality of living in, and of being part of, a marginalized community. Though most of his work as a whole examines a racial consciousness devoid of hate, Bontemps’ early poetry hints at an unstated ambivalence of the Black experience. Though he writes with dignity and a sense of purpose, he cannot forget the past—even *his* past.

Arna Bontemps knew firsthand the plight of race, let alone ethnicity. In his quest to remember the past, even though sordid at times, Bontemps skillfully turns poetic phrases that teem with dignity, introducing speakers who search for identity not only through summoning up, but also examining the past. Thus, Bontemps employs an individual style where tone and irony can achieve a subtle effect. In doing so, then, Bontemps’ early poetry enriches and preserves a Louisiana-influenced, Black cultural heritage unique to the twentieth century.

Bernard Gallagher, Louisiana State University of Alexandria

“When Lyrics are True: James Lee Burke, *Swan Peak*, and Authentic Country Western Music”

Music shows up repeatedly in the Robicheaux novels of James Lee Burke. One of his novels, *Jolie Blon’s Bounce*, specifically references Charlie Barnet’s song “Cherokee” (Burke 215). *Burning Angel* references Zydeco bars; *Robicheaux* (the novel) mentions Johnnie Scat Davis, Louis Prima, and Sam Butera (38). *Dixie City Jam* repeatedly references jazz and specifically mentions Brother Oswald Flat (61), Marcia Ball (161), and Sam Phillips (369); *The*

Glass Rainbow mentions Chet Baker (14), Gatesmouth Brown (24), Clifton Chenier (284), and others. *Swan Peak*, like so many other Robicheaux novels, repeatedly references music as well. However, it differs from these other novels in at least three ways: first, it shifts the focus of Robicheaux from jazz, blues, and zydeco-Cajun folk music to country western music; second, it uses the focus on country western music to develop two of its main characters, Jamie Sue Wellstone and Jimmy Dale Greenwood; and third, it implicitly draws a distinction between what Robicheaux might consider authentic and commercial country and western music. In effect, Burke's *Swan Peak* implicitly argues that authentic country music (or any art for that matter), lays bare the real suffering and real mistakes of its characters, unlike commercially successful country and western music, which offers false hope to its audiences or parodies rather than commiserates with that audience. What I hope to do in this paper, then, is to demonstrate how the rehabilitation of Jimmie Dale Greenwood and Jamie Sue Wellstone is tied not to an escape into wealth and fame from trailer parks and honky-clubs but to a return to their country-western roots where they sing and write about the truth of their lived experience.

Lisa A. Kirby, Collin College

“Redefining the American Other: Emerging Identities and the Power of Lyricism in Wendy Chin-Tanner’s *King of the Armadillos*”

Wendy Chin Tanner’s 2023 *King of the Armadillos* is a powerful coming-of-age novel with strong Louisiana connections. In the 1950s, Vincent Chin is a 15-year-old boy living with his family in the Bronx when he is diagnosed with Hansen’s Disease and sent to live in the Carville National Leprosarium in Louisiana. While Vincent’s stay at Carville is at first frightening, he comes to find value in his time there after making a number of friends and, perhaps most importantly, discovering the power of music. Learning to play piano provides Vincent not only an escape from the pain of his illness and the trials of his days at Carville but also helps him connect with the other residents.

Vincent’s time at Carville also prompts a time of reflection on his life and identity. As Ernesto Mestre-Reed points out, “once there, he is forced for the first time to be on his own and to come to terms with parts of himself, his family’s past and his adopted country’s deformities — things that he would have never confronted without the spur of his illness.” As Vincent struggles with his illness, he also grapples with his varying identities—working-class, Chinese-American, disabled—to establish his place in the world. This presentation will provide a literary analysis of *King of the Armadillos*, focusing on identity construction and the historical context of Carville. It will also discuss Chin Tanner’s novel and its focus on community, resilience, healing, and the power of music.

Works Cited

Chin Tanner, Wendy. *King of the Armadillos*. Flatiron Books, 2023.

Mestre-Reed, Ernesto. “Doctor’s Orders.” *The New York Times Book Review*, 27 Aug. 2023, p. 21. *Gale Literature Resource Center*, link.gale.com/apps/doc/A762339186/GLS?u=txshracd2497&sid=bookmark-

GLS&xid=a580f5e9. Accessed 22 May 2024.

Anna T. MacDonald, Northwestern State University

“Researching the Eugene P. Watson Memorial Library Public Art Collection”

The spaces we occupy and how we decorate them reflect our tastes and identities. However, when considering public buildings, various factors influence the selection of art and artists to represent architectural, institutional, and societal values.

This project has two primary objectives. Firstly, it consists of documenting the current art displayed throughout the library including identifying the original pieces acquired during the library’s opening in the fall of 1972 and distinguishing them from later donations and acquisitions. Secondly, the project explores the collection's history to better understand its artistic significance and curatorial development over time.

Join me as I present preliminary research regarding the art collection at Watson Library, including some interesting discoveries I have uncovered along the way.

Rebecca Macijeski, Northwestern State University

“Becoming from Here: Learning to Live in Louisiana—A Poet Comes Home”

This presentation is an exploration of how genre and geography affect us as writers. I moved to Louisiana as a poet from New England. I was only familiar with Louisiana secondhand—as a subcategory of the vague designation “The South.” Now that I’ve lived here for seven years, I am noticing a marked shift in how I see myself and my writing, especially in context with the people and places I’ve made my community. When I first moved here, I felt like the consummate outsider. When I filled out my application for a new bank account, the clerk looked at my last name, then up at me, and said, “I haven’t seen that on any of the gravestones.” Now I’ve made my home here. The history of this place has become part of my history like nowhere else I’ve lived.

Of particular interest is an exploration of lyric time, which “demonstrate[s] how time may not follow a chronological, linear, cause-and-effect sequence of events, but rather take a particular moment or event and use shape. . . to show how that moment echoes (spirals, ripples, fractals) outward, repeating itself” (Czerwiec 24). My experience of living and writing in Louisiana is one of lyric time. Whether it’s the magnolias as old as dinosaurs or the live oaks or the snakes who cause a power outage whenever they slither into another jungle of power lines, something keeps connecting me to this place, to a larger sense of time.

Bruce R. Magee, Louisiana Tech University

Stephen Payne, Independent Scholar

“The Music of *Liberty in Louisiana*”

For while upon yon tower, her banners wave,
This land no tyrant ever shall enslave.

— Workman

Liberty in Louisiana by James Workman is the oldest known extant play about Louisiana. Workman wrote the play in 1803 with the goal of supporting the impending Louisiana Purchase. To that end, he set this comedy of manners on December 20, 1803 — the date of the handover of colonial Louisiana to the United States. The narrative’s plot develops the idea that the Americans’ arrival will set right the corruption and injustice of the old Spanish régime. Of course, to give the comedy a light, entertaining touch, Workman includes several songs in the script. The first one at the beginning of the play is a familiar tune at the time, “Oh, My Kitten,” its lyrics recast as, “Oh, My Whisky.” The song is itself funny, but it serves the additional purpose of establishing the character of the singer, Phelim O’Flinn, as a picaro, a lovable rogue spreading chaos in his wake. The songs in *Liberty in Louisiana* definitely help make the play entertaining, but they are also relevant to the plot development and reveal more about the characters’ personalities.

David Middleton, Nicholls State University

“On the Eve of Jubilee: Fifty Years of ‘Rhyming’ Louisiana, Coda to a *Collected Poems* (2025)”

In 2025 Texas Review Press will publish *Time Will Tell / Collected Poems / David Middleton*. This volume will bring together my five full-length collections, one long poem, and a selection of uncollected or unpublished poems dating from 1974 through 2024. *Time Will Tell* will thus mark a “Jubilee”: 50 years of publishing mature work in verse.

Many of these poems are about Louisiana – either my native north Louisiana where I was born in 1949 or else south Louisiana where I have lived since 1971. Some of the poems can be described as “*lyrical*” – that is, short poems directly expressing personal emotion. Other poems, however, may be best characterized as either *short narrative* poems or as *post-symbolist* poems, that is, poems in which the rational understanding and the resulting properly motivated feeling are developed through controlled association – realistic yet symbolic descriptions of the natural and human worlds.

Furthermore, as I reread my poems for *Collected*, it struck me that beyond the division of the poems into mainly three kinds, there were other, deeper structures holding the poems together. And the word “lyrical” suggested to me that “music” – broadly taken – was the word that best described what I found in going through my verse.

Then, from “music,” other words came to mind such as rhyme, rhythm/meter, assonance, consonance, dissonance, the weight of silence around the sounds, caesura, enjambment – as well as deeper polyphony-like correlations such as themes, repetition, counterpoint, correspondence, likeness and unlikeness (simile and metaphor), variation, sequencing, and patterning.

Since some of these kinds of “music” emerge most fully when a poem is read aloud, I propose to read and comment briefly on a few representative poems from the *Collected*.

This reading will thus be a summing up (coda) of my half a century as a Louisiana poet.

Sadeem El Nahhas, Northwestern State University

“Wading Through the Water: An Exploration of Louisiana in Post-Katrina Poetry”

Louisiana has been a source of inspiration for many artists since its purchase in the early 19th century. It moved the imaginations of Walt Whitman and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. In his poem “I Saw in Louisiana A Live-Oak Growing,” Whitman marveled at an oak tree growing “all alone.” He described how “Without any companion it grew there uttering joyous leaves of dark green,” with a “look” that was “rude, unbending, [and] lusty.” Whitman saw in this tree a reflection of himself, but also a reflection of Louisiana’s true, unbending spirit. The nascent state suffered the ravages of the Civil War shortly after joining the United States. It also endured more than its fair share of natural disasters such as flooding, drought, and hurricanes. Perhaps the most indelible scar on Louisiana’s history was left by Hurricane Katrina, which devastated the state almost 20 years ago. This presentation explores how poets responded to the storm’s aftermath, capturing the trauma, loss, and fractured sense of community. By analyzing works of poetry published since 2005, we will see how Louisiana’s writers continue to use their lyrical voice to not only lament the tragedy but also celebrate the enduring resilience of its people and culture.

Kent W. Peacock, Northwestern State University

“Louisiana Creole Folktales and Developing ‘Creole 101’ for Educators, Parents, and Community Members”

In 2024 the Creole Heritage Center began an initiative to update and expand its resources for educators, parents, and community members to aid in accurately teaching about the culture and contributions of Louisiana Creoles. These resources center on a set of lesson plans aligned with the state of Louisiana’s Department of Education’s Social Studies standards for grades six through eight, although they will be adaptable for other grade levels and states. This presentation will be an opportunity to review progress, gather feedback from attendees, and discuss challenges and successes so far in working on this initiative. In particular (and in recognition of the conference theme), the presentation will highlight the development of a set of lesson plans connected to Louisiana Creole folktales that came to be a part of this “Creole 101” initiative because of a partnership with Cane River Creole National Historic Park. I hope the presentation will help other educators, parents, and community members working on or wanting to develop educational resources on Louisiana’s vibrant heritage, while also giving attendees an early peek at this forthcoming resource from the Creole Heritage Center.

Esteban A. Quispe, University of Louisiana at Lafayette

“Three French Songs from Avoyelles Parish”

In the light of a current digitization project being done at the Center for Louisiana Studies regarding the Saucier Phonodiscs Collection housed at the University of New Orleans, I would like to propose a musical performance of three French songs priorly sung by two French Creoles of Avoyelles Parish. This project marks a significant milestone for Avoyelles' French musico-oral tradition, as before now much of what was available consisted of some sixteen commercial recordings done in 1929. The three specific songs to be performed, "Renaud," "Les hirondelles," and "Rossignol du verbocal," were sung *a cappella* by Raphaël Courville, of Norma, and Sanville Gaspard, of Dupont. Dr. Corinne Lelia Saucier recorded these songs in 1949 with a Willcox-Gay Recordio machine for her dissertation *Histoire et traditions de la paroisse des Avoyelles en Louisiane*. By doing so, she essentially mediatized these songs from an oral state to a state of mediatized orality. Given the recent digitization of these songs from phonodiscs into WAV and MP3 files, we are witnessing what can be considered the *digital mouvance* of these "texts" or lyrics. In the spirit of cultural recycling, as termed by Dr. Barry Jean Ancelet, this performance seeks to once more reinvigorate these songs, in effect taking their texts from a digital state back into the oral. Although these songs were originally sung *a cappella*, not all French songs of oral tradition in Avoyelles were sung without instrumental accompaniment. Prime examples of this phenomenon are Blind Uncle Gaspard's songs "Sur le bord de l'eau" and "Aux Natchitoches," otherwise called "L'embarquement de la fille aux chansons" and "La chappelle," whose texts are accompanied by the guitar. Taking inspiration from said Avoyelles' singer-instrumentalist, this performer seeks to enrich the melodies of the songs "Renaud," "Les hirondelles," and "Rossignol du verbocal" with the accompaniment of a hurdy gurdy (*vielle à roue*).

Nathan Rabalais, University of Louisiana at Lafayette

"*Chanter sans comprendre* (Singing without understanding): Politics of Language and Identity in Contemporary Cajun Music"

Linguists and cultural activists of French in Louisiana have long recognized Cajun music as a driving force in maintaining the status and visibility of French in Louisiana and encouraging people, especially the youth, to engage with the culture. Surprisingly, despite the decline in the number of French-speakers in Louisiana, Cajun music continues to be sung and composed almost exclusively in French, even – and quite often – by singers do not actually speak French themselves.

This title of this presentation is a nod to Steve Riley and Mamou Playboys' original song of 2011 "Danser sans comprendre" (Dancing without Understanding) that brings to light the existential threat of language and culture loss ironically juxtaposed to the enjoyment and accessibility associated with Cajun music. If one can celebrate one's heritage and "dance without understanding," does it matter what the singer is saying?

What do Cajun songwriters write about? What role does language and identity play for songwriters whose primary audience in Louisiana do not necessarily understand their lyrics? What place do more militant songwriters like Zachary Richard have in Louisiana?

Based on the research of Paul Zumthor and Marie-Laure Boudreau, I will demonstrate how the creation of a “standard” repertoire of popular Cajun songs (mostly written in the 1950s to 70s) have made it exceedingly difficult for today’s songwriters to make new songs popular. In those rare cases examined here (Bruce Daigrepoint, Cammy Doucet, and Jourdan Thibodeaux), a discourse centered on tradition and French language seem to be at odds with the notion of a more accessible and open view of Cajun music. I argue that the examination of these less “popular” songs forces us to reconsider the image of Cajun music as fixed repertoire filled with songs of heartbreak, and to see it alongside similar identity discourses in Louisiana literature.

Sara Rebstock, Northwestern State University

“Collection Talk: The Dr. Corinne Saucier Papers”

The Dr. Corinne Saucier Papers were acquired from the Saucier estate in May 1962 by Northwest State University Librarian Eugene P. Watson as an addition to the Louisiana Room in Russell Library. Dr. Saucier was a longtime faculty member teaching French and Spanish, and Dr. Watson advocated for her research collection to be donated to Russell Library. Her scholarship includes *History of Avoyelles Parish*, her dissertation *Historie et geographie des Avoyelles en Louisiane*, and *Folk Tales from French Louisiana*. Her articles were published in the *Journal of American Folklore* and the *Modern Language Journal*. The papers are comprised of personal and professional papers housed in thirteen boxes or approximately six linear feet. The collection has been open to the public for research since the 1960s, first in the Louisiana Room, then at the Cammie G. Henry Research Center in the Eugene P. Watson Memorial Library at Northwestern State University, but recent interest and inquiries regarding the collection led the Center’s staff to reevaluate its arrangement, description, and accessibility. Considering the conference theme “Lyrical Louisiana,” and considering her scholarship on folk tales and folk songs native to Louisiana, it is appropriate to reintroduce the Dr. Corinne Saucier Papers to researchers. Archives Assistant Sara Rebstock will deliver this collection talk to provide an overview of the collection, to point out any alterations regarding description, and to illustrate items of scholarly interest.

Corey Saft, University of Louisiana at Lafayette

“the SOUND of a NEIGHBORHOOD / the SPIRIT of a PLACE”

FreeTown has been active as a mixed-race neighborhood in Lafayette since before the Civil War, but by the end of the 20th century, its name recognition had diminished considerably. Few outside the neighborhood seemed to use that term or could easily identify its boundaries. **Then**, in the first few years of the 21st century, *the Quarters*, a proposed and *crassly* named apartment complex reintroduced FreeTown to itself and to its community.

In 2005 *Capstone Development* proposed a 575-bed student housing community in one of the largest, undeveloped open spaces left in the downtown area. It had survived since the Civil War by offering many opportunities for public recreation: the circus when it came to town, a local baseball league, and even a boxing ring. The recently organized neighborhood *coterie* (*a neighborhood based, quasi-political organization*, sought to block the development **but** had not

ratified a master plan for their neighborhood **and so** the residents had little political sway to stop the project moving forward.

Was this development, and the new housing model it brought to the neighborhood, the moment gentrification began in FreeTown? Or was this typical development? The politics of planning, as throughout Freetown's existence, continued to be the hinge between these two forces: *community & capital*. Freetown, a place of **community and opportunity**, now was facing the specter of gentrification.

From Governor Alexander Mouton's letters home from New Orleans to visualizations of what the spirit of place looks like through both people and place, this presentation sketches out what gentrification means and what is at stake when it is unchecked.

Christopher Stacey, Louisiana State University of Alexandria

“New Orleans and the Louisiana and Mississippi Deltas: The Origin of a National Blues Age”

Most scholars recognize F. Scott Fitzgerald's iconic term “The Jazz Age,” which evokes images, myths, and truths about flappers, the Harlem Renaissance, and the United States' entrance into what many of the same scholars dub “modernity.” Jazz made an indelible mark on American society, but so did the blues. However, there was no “Blues Age” descriptor in popular culture or within the scholarly community. Adam Gussow claimed recently that the contemporary blues community “has a race problem.” His anthology incorporates history and two different (but related) ways to examine the blues: “Blues Universalism” examines the impact of the blues beyond just a genre created by African-American southerners, and “Black Bluesism” which is more of an exclusively Afro-American lens to examine the blues through black authenticity. Only by re-examining the scholarship of the blues can scholars examine the role of race through both Gussow's paradigms through more of an historical lens. By taking into account the litany of sociologists, musicologists, literary specialists, novelists, and cultural anthropologists, scholars can find new ways to examine the history of the blues. Through examining primarily New Orleans and the Mississippi and Louisiana Deltas, this presentation will show the diverse and often controversial historiography of the blues and black music in general in the early 20th century.

Ashley Steenson, The University of Alabama

“Lillian Hellman's New Orleans”

This paper examines the relationship between progressive Louisiana-born playwright Lillian Hellman and her hometown of New Orleans. Through considering sources from the early life and writings of Lillian Hellman, it will lay the groundwork for Hellman's attraction to political schools of thought like communism and connection to communist intellectuals like mystery writer Dashiell Hammett. The paper will specifically look at how stories about Hellman's Alabama family and the chaos growing up in New Orleans' French Quarter inspired and guided her unique and controversial political perspective. For example, Hellman's New Orleans

relatives had interests in corporations like United Fruit that provoked the young Hellman's ire and shaped her later activism. For this particular paper (and dissertation chapter), primary sources like Hellman's papers at the University of Texas Austin and visits to places related to her such as Mobile and Demopolis, Alabama coupled with secondary sources like biographies of Hellman work together to make an argument for Hellman's identity as a Southerner, though she left the South early on and did not market herself as one.

Matthew Stokes, Louisiana State University of Alexandria

“Spirituality and Echoes of the Negro Spiritual in the Poetry of Arna Bontemps”

Of all the forces that have contributed to spirituality in African American culture, the African American spiritual, also known as “the Negro Spiritual,” has had an indelible impact. Emerging in the pre-emancipated South, these slave songs served multiple purposes, ultimately leaving their mark on African American spirituality and by extension, African American literature. Specifically, these spirituals, which some consider to be lyric poems worthy of joining the canon of American literature (Ramey 361), at the very least, have influenced the poetry of other African American writers such as Alexandria, Louisiana native, Arna Bontemps. Bontemps made significant contributions to the genre of African American poetry. A close inspection of three of his poems, “A Black Man Talks of Reaping,” “Nocturne at Bethesda,” and “Miracles” reveals an intentional and intimate connection to African American spirituals such as “Wade in the Water,” “Precious Lord, Take My Hand,” “Swing Low Sweet Chariot,” “Deep River,” and “Listen to the Lambs.” While spirituality is not at the heart of all of Bontemps' poetry, select works undeniably point back to their roots in the Negro Spiritual. Bontemps is not merely recycling his ancestors' literary themes but instead preserves and illuminates vibrant themes whose origins are encapsulated in the slave songs of African Americans.

Nick Taylor, Northwestern State University

“*Latino Living*: Giving Voice to an Underrepresented CENLA Population, Exploring Hispanic Culture and Language Through the Multimedia Lens of Podcasting to Create Meaningful Cultural Conversation”

“*Un podcast para todos*,” or, in English, “A podcast for everyone.” This is the closing line to each episode of the NSU Hispanic Student Journalism (HSJA)/Department of New Media, Journalism, and Communication Arts (NMJCA) sponsored podcast, *Latino Living*. The podcast's primary purpose is to give voice to issues/news, trends and themes surrounding Hispanics living in the Central Louisiana region (CENLA). The podcast's format is guided discussion. The hosts, members of NSU's HSJA, sit with a technical director and guest(s). The podcast is recorded in both audio-only (WAV) and audio/video (H.264) formats.

Latino Living is more than a service-learning project, this region has a need for this format of media. Hispanic media is underrepresented in CENLA. *Latino Living* is produced on the campus of NSU in Natchitoches, LA. Within a 150-mile radius of the Natchitoches, LA campus, there are no Spanish-language television/radio stations, newspapers or (consistently published) magazines. Essentially, the areas surrounding Natchitoches from Shreveport to Alexandria and

beyond, representing a population of over 300,000 people, has limited availability to Spanish-language multimedia. This limited accessibility disallows audiences of all heritages in search of multimedia Hispanic viewpoints and discussions to discover those invaluable voices.

Northwestern State University and the surrounding community have recognized the value of *Latino Living*, as the podcast has met with success. To date, the podcast has earned two national awards, one at the professional multimedia level, and grant awards totaling \$26,000. Further, the Department of NMJCA uses the podcast as a recruitment tool. The proposed presentation would focus on recognizing the need for a bilingual podcast, development of the media, topics covered, success of the podcast and a discussion of lessons learned. For this presentation discussion will be led by the current advisor for both HSJA and *Latino Living*.

Anna Kathryn Vaughn, Northwestern State University

“*Down on Rigolette: The Music of Steve Conn*”

Pineville native Steve Conn captures the essence of his home in his music. The multi-instrumentalist-singer-songwriter speaks to the souls of his listeners by bringing them into the experience through lyrics that complement the melody. Conn calls the genre “Roots music” and has written ballads that share a reality of Southern experiences set to music. Conn defines Roots music as “a reflection of real life – dreams, pain, love, despair, joy.” Conn explains that his music comes from “observations of loss and innocence, hope and regret, cynicism and optimism.”

Conn’s methodology begins with a melody formulating in his head. Lyrics rarely rhyme in a Steve Conn song; a chorus provides emphasis when necessary to move the plot along. Conn fits the story into the melody he hears mentally by “singing the way you would say.” Most of Conn’s body of work tells a story from the beginning to end.

One such song is *Down on Rigolette* (pronounced Ro-gully). Published in the late 1990’s, the setting is the real Rigolette Bayou in Rapides Parish. Conn explains his memory of the family incident seems to be a combination of reality embellished with imagination. In other words, Steve says the “inspiration as one foot in the truth, but I get so involved I can’t remember whether all of it is the truth or not.” Conn confirms a secret fit into the melody inside his head.

Decades later, a contemporary of Steve Conn from the other side of the Red River would take the song and write a short story. Retired Lafayette lawyer and Alexandria native James Lambert has penned a narrative based on the lyrics of the song, *Down on Rigolette*. Lambert’s version has put a new spin on the tale of a small bayou community.

Steve Conn meets the criteria of a Louisiana lyricist.

Arthur S. Williams, Independent Scholar

“Reflections on the Correspondence of Cammie Henry and Caroline Dormon”

A connection between the conservationist Caroline Dormon and the plantation mistress Carmelite (Cammie) Henry was well established by the early 1920s and endured until Cammie's death in 1948. Accounts of their friendship in books by Fran Holman Johnson and Pat Austin Becker, however, tend to be mostly anecdotal and reveal little about the complex interactions between the two women, interactions frequently carried out through letters. Letters were, in fact, both an expression and a constituent of a friendship that was often, of necessity, enacted at a distance. Both the gratifications and frustrations of an intimate yet complex friendship appear through their letters, and particularly those of Mrs. Henry addressed to Dormon. Cammie's letters reveal much about her circumstances as plantation mistress and patron while evincing both genuine affection and powerful emotional needs of her own. This combination of needs and motives creates complex undercurrents in her friendship with Dormon, undercurrents that find expression in her correspondence.

Richard Winters, University of Louisiana at Lafayette

“Colonial-Period Spanish Surnames in Contact with French: Transition and Replacement”

In the early 1770's, in the aftermath of the Seven Years' War, France ceded to Spain its North American colonial territory of Louisiana west of the Mississippi River as well as the city of New Orleans. The local Spanish authorities soon realized that New Orleans was vulnerable to attack, and to bolster its defenses, the Spanish Crown recruited soldier-colonists from its Canary Islands colony. These soldier-colonists, and their families, were assigned to settlements at strategically-chosen sites above and below the city on the banks of the Mississippi.

Through contact with French speakers and the dominance of the French language in the 19th and early 20th centuries, various surnames of these Spanish colonists underwent Gallicization. This process resulted in the replacement of Spanish names with French names. The extent to which this process applied, or failed to do so, is exemplified with four Spanish surnames borne by those Spanish colonists. Additionally, an examination of obituaries and vital records from the post-Louisiana Purchase period reveals that the use of one surname or the other at a given period could vary even within a single family, vividly illustrating the process of surname transition.