

Call for Papers
France and Louisiana: “A Special Relationship?”
Bordeaux Montaigne University, France
June 7-10, 2023

On June 7-10 2023, Bordeaux Montaigne University will host an international conference that will explore various aspects of the 300+-year-long relationship between France and Louisiana.

From 1682 – when the “land of Louis” became a place name in French colonial North America – to the joint celebrations of New Orleans’s tricentennial in 2018, the relationship between France and Louisiana has been tumultuous, to say the least. Ceded to Spain in 1762, returned to France in 1800, purchased by the United States in 1803 and subsequently divided into several states, including the current state of Louisiana (1812), Louisiana nonetheless retained close ties with France and the French-speaking world throughout the nineteenth century. In 1809, for instance, some 10,000 black and white refugees from Saint-Domingue (Haiti) disembarked in New Orleans, including 3,000 free people of color. This last group more than doubled the size the existing New Orleans free black community and over the years merged and intermarried with native free people of color of francophone ancestry. Tens of thousands of French-born émigrés (including radically progressive journalists exiled by Napoléon III who helped stir thoughts of a more equitable society within Creole circles) also integrated and reinforced the existing New Orleans white francophone community. In 1921, the Louisiana state legislature prohibited the use of French as a language of instruction in local public schools, in accordance with the national policy of “Americanization.” The creation of the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL) in 1968, however, fostered efforts to promote francophone cultures in Louisiana that led to a reported “French Renaissance.” In recent years, the Louisiana Purchase bicentennial celebrations and the tricentennial celebrations of New Orleans’s founding have revived scholarly and popular interest for Louisiana’s French colonial past and Creole French.

Building on the most recent scholarship (see bibliography below), participants from a variety of disciplines—including anthropology, archeology, geography, history, linguistics, literature, musicology, and sociology—will be expected to provide new perspectives on:

- French colonial Louisiana, including its earliest cartographic renderings, native-French interactions, the development of an Afro-Creole culture, the connections between French Louisiana and other parts of the French empire, the Mississippi Valley during the French and Indian War, the 1768 revolt, etc.
- The continued French influence during the Spanish colonial period (1769-1800)
- The Louisiana Purchase and its legacy

- The diplomatic, economic, political, and cultural connections between Louisiana and France since 1803, including the “dual world” of immigrants from southwestern France, the Parisian careers of Afro-Creole musicians like Sidney Bechet, visits of French officials to New Orleans from the marquis de Lafayette to De Gaulle, the signing of the French-Louisiana Accords in 2016 (re-signed in 2021) and of the sister-city partnership between Orléans and New Orleans in 2018
- The productive frictions between the French language and other languages since the colonial period, and their role in the creation of a unique linguistic identity
- French-speaking communities of Louisiana in the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries, including their demographic characteristics, settlement/migration patterns, linguistic specificities, cultural practices, politics, and the ways that these communities have reshaped, reimagined their cultural spaces via numerous forms of social media
- The ways the once close connections between French and Louisiana literature (early Louisiana writers tended to imitate French literary movements) were transformed by the influx of American English literary styles into the former colony, the profoundly mediating influence of the Atlantic Creole world, the oral traditions of francophone Louisiana, and the French-language realities experienced by Native Americans, creating an independent voice within the realm of Francophone literature
- The influence of French culture and language on the artistic development of English-speaking Louisiana authors
- The construction of a Louisiana French identity in the 19th, 20th, and 21st century through print culture (from travelers’ accounts to newspapers to modern tourism narratives), visual representations (film, television, paintings, photographs, etc.), digital culture (blogs and social media sites in standard French, Cajun French or Kouri-vini), and commemorations (including the 2003 celebrations of the bicentennial of the Louisiana Purchase, the 2018 celebrations of New Orleans’s tricentennial, and the selection of three “*Poètes lauréats de la Louisiane française*” since 2014)
- Francophone Louisiana today, including the economics and politics of Louisiana’s latest French “renaissance,” the negotiating of difference in French Louisiana music, publishing and self-publishing initiatives, the vitality of French immersion programs, etc.

Rather than reverting to earlier celebrations of “the French,” who figured prominently in the academic literature on Louisiana prior to the 1970s, this conference will aim at probing the singularity of the France-Louisiana relationship by offering comparative, connected perspectives on its past and present. Through keynote lectures, panels, roundtables, and concomitant exhibitions, the conference also intends to foster

transatlantic academic dialogue on the theoretical frameworks, ethnographic methods, and curatorial/documentary praxis related to the study of French Louisiana and Louisiana francophones cultures.

Proposals – including a 500-word abstract and a 150-word bio – should be sent to the following email address: colloquelouisiane2023@gmail.com by December 31, 2021. Authors will be notified of the program committee’s decision concerning their submission by February 1, 2022. Further information about the program, registration, travel, and accommodation will be announced after that date. The organizers are thinking of inviting conference delegates to prepare a chapter for an edited volume on the Franco-Louisianan relationship.

Keynote speakers:

Nathan Rabalais, Joseph P. Montiel Endowed Assistant Professor of Francophone Studies, University of Louisiana at Lafayette
Angel Adams Parham, Associate Professor of Sociology, University of Virginia

Conveners:

Nathalie Dessens, Professor of US History at Université Toulouse Jean Jaurès
Stéphanie Durrans, Professor of US literature at Université Bordeaux Montaigne
Aurélie Godet, Associate Professor of US History at Université de Nantes
Emma Harlet, PhD student, University of Louisiana at Lafayette and Université Bordeaux Montaigne
Sabine Tinchant-Benrahho, Associate Professor of Linguistics at Université Bordeaux Montaigne

Program committee:

Nathalie Dessens (Université Toulouse-Jean Jaurès)
Stéphanie Durrans (Université Bordeaux Montaigne)
Aurélie Godet (Université de Nantes)
Dana Kress (Centenary College)
Gilles-Antoine Langlois (École Nationale Supérieure d’Architecture Paris-Val de Seine)
Jean-Pierre Le Glaunec (Université de Sherbrooke)
Lawrence Powell (Tulane University)
Randy Sparks (Tulane University)

Selected references:

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