

Spring 2018 Franke Lectures: New Orleans in the American Imaginary

The Whitney Humanities Center is pleased to announce the Spring 2018 Franke Lectures in the Humanities, “New Orleans in the American Imaginary.” This semester’s series has been organized in conjunction with the Yale College seminar taught by Joseph Fischel and Crystal Feimster. Natasha Trethewey will deliver the opening lecture, “*Bellocq’s Ophelia*: New Orleans in the American Imaginary,” on Wednesday, February 28, at 5 pm.

Trethewey served two terms as Poet Laureate of the United States (2012–2014). She is the author of four collections of poetry: *Thrall* (2012); *Native Guard* (2006), for which she was awarded the Pulitzer Prize; *Bellocq’s Ophelia* (2002); and *Domestic Work* (2000), which won the inaugural Cave Canem Poetry Prize for best first book by an African American poet, the Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters Book Prize, and the Lillian Smith Award for Poetry. Her book of nonfiction, *Beyond Katrina: A Meditation on the Mississippi Gulf Coast*, appeared in 2010. She has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Guggenheim Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Beinecke Library at Yale, and the Bunting Fellowship Program of the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard. She is a Board of Trustees Professor of English in the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences at Northwestern University. In 2012 Trethewey was named Poet Laureate of the State of Mississippi and in 2013 she was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Other guest speakers and lectures in the series include

Tom Piazza, “Improvising Identity: New Orleans and the American Dream” Wednesday, April 4, 5 pm

Tom Piazza is a celebrated writer on American music. His twelve books include the novels *A Free State* and *City of Refuge*, the post-Katrina manifesto *Why New Orleans Matters*, and *Devil Sent the Rain*, a collection of his essays and journalism. He was a principal writer for the innovative HBO drama series *Treme*, and winner of a Grammy Award for his album notes to *Martin Scorsese Presents the Blues: A Musical Journey*. In 2015 he received the prestigious Louisiana Writer Award, given by the State Library of Louisiana and the Louisiana Center for the Book. His work has appeared in the *New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, *Bookforum*, *The Oxford American*, *Columbia Journalism Review*, and many other periodicals. He lives in New Orleans.

Mitch Landrieu, “NOLA 2018: New Orleans Tricentennial” Wednesday, April 11, 5 pm

Mitch Landrieu has been mayor of New Orleans since 2010. His mandate upon election was to get New Orleans back on track and bring the city together as “one team, one fight” to usher in a new era of peace and prosperity. Prior to becoming mayor, he served

as Louisiana's lieutenant governor, leading the post-Katrina effort to rebuild the tourism industry and the tens of thousands of jobs it creates. Before then, he represented the Broadmoor neighborhood in the Louisiana House of Representatives for sixteen years, where he established a record as a reformer. Landrieu also had a successful law practice for fifteen years and became an expert mediator, focusing on alternative dispute resolution.

Lynnell Thomas, "New Orleans at 300: Tourism, Historical Memory, and Post-Katrina Reality"

Wednesday, April 18, 5 pm

Lynnell Thomas is an associate professor of American Studies at the University of Massachusetts Boston. Her book *Desire and Disaster in New Orleans: Tourism, Race, and Historical Memory* (2014) examines the relationship of tourism, cultural production, and racial politics in pre- and post-Katrina New Orleans. Thomas's scholarship has appeared in several journals, including *American Quarterly*, *The Black Scholar*, *Journal of Urban History*, *Performance Research*, and *Television and New Media*. She has published book chapters in HBO's *Treme* and *Post-Katrina Catharsis: The Mediated Rebirth of a City*; *In the Wake of Hurricane Katrina: New Paradigms and Social Visions*; and *Seeking Higher Ground: The Race, Public Policy, and Hurricane Katrina Reader*.

All events will be held in the WHC auditorium and are free and open to the public.

The lectures are made possible by the generosity of Richard and Barbara Franke, and are intended to present important topics in the Humanities to a wide and general audience.

For more information contact the Whitney Humanities Center at 203-432-0670 or email whitneyhumanitiescenter@yale.edu