



# YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

2011 Volume IV: The Big Easy: Literary New Orleans and Intangible Heritage

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## **New Orleans: Human Gifts, Human Lessons**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 11.04.10, published September 2011

by Stephanie Schaudel

How "natural" are "natural disasters"? I'll explore numerous questions with New Orleans and Katrina as the case study for the ninth-grade interdisciplinary science and humanities Natural Disaster Project, but this one is the central one. Students will get to know New Orleans in terms of its unique and rich culture, economy and geography. They will *complexify* the meaning of "natural disasters" as they learn just how much the suffering of a significant population of New Orleans was rooted in the decisions of federal, state and local power holders before and after Hurricane Katrina. Students will deepen their knowledge and understanding of U.S. history, of colonization, resistance and reemergence by getting to know New Orleans: some of the past inspiration it has provided people and the current sources of resilience and questions which NOLA pushes us to wrestle with today. Examining points of New Orleans' "intangible heritage," I hope will lead all of us to explore the intangible heritage that exists and thrives in the places my students call home, and indeed, within the students themselves. This unit could be adapted for an eleventh-grade Social Studies class, as well as English or Science.

(Developed for Humanities, grade 10; recommended for Humanities and English, grades 9-12; U. S. History; and Earth Science, grade 9)

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