

CALL FOR PROPOSALS
Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life
Tenth Annual National Conference

Culture, Crisis, and Recovery

New Orleans, Louisiana
October 1-3, 2009

Conference Theme

Imagining America invites faculty, students, and community partners to participate in our conference, October 1-3, 2009, in New Orleans, hosted by Tulane and Xavier Universities. The theme for this year's conference, *Culture, Crisis, and Recovery*, invokes the current economic crisis, the city of New Orleans' ongoing experiences after Hurricane Katrina, and the part that engaged scholarship and practice through the arts, humanities, and design take in recovery efforts of all kinds across the US.

Speaking of the economic collapse before a Joint Session of Congress, President Obama said, "We will rebuild, we will recover, and the United States of America will emerge stronger than before." Recovery – and advancement – were also the goals of the thousands of faculty, students, and cultural workers from across the nation who came to help rebuild the Gulf Coast after Hurricanes Rita and Katrina. Their vigorous response is a seminal case study of public scholarship in action. The experiences of these scholars and artists at work in the Gulf Coast offer us important lessons and models – for better and sometimes, for worse – for how the cultural disciplines, broadly defined, can respond to daunting challenges in our own communities and further afield. New Orleans, however, is much more than a city of crisis. Its unique history produced a diverse and broad American culture that predates the United States, making it a rewarding site for engaged research and practice. Join us for discussions and explorations of the scholarly and artistic models it inspires.

While we welcome all proposals that relate to this year's theme and that expand our understanding of public scholarship, we are particularly interested in proposals that speak to one of the three sub-themes described below. We further encourage considerations of reciprocity, an idea at the heart of engaged scholarship. After the many experiences in post-Katrina New Orleans, there has been a resounding call to revisit this core concept: what reciprocity means in practice, the role it plays in sustaining our efforts, and how we reward and evaluate it.

Public Scholarship and the Economic Crisis

During this period of economic crisis, public scholars and artists must effectively make the case that their work is a core function of higher education. How can we expand the place for public scholarship within institutions already scaling back? How does the economic crisis shape the relevance of public scholarship to the public and its universities, and how does it affect its components and desired outcomes? How might the current economy be seen as an opportunity to

rethink the traditionally vertical structure of higher education, and to create more reciprocal, horizontal relationships with its communities?

Culture and Partnership in Post-Katrina New Orleans

Hurricane Katrina brought thousands of students and faculty to work in partnership with local communities, assisting with complex challenges of recovery and rebuilding. Particularly within the first two years after the storm, many models of community partnerships arose in response to specific situations, some more successful than others. We welcome an open dialogue on our experiences, collective and individual, in this context. What have we learned? What dynamics particular to the Gulf Coast have mattered to the role of culture in response to this crisis? What knowledge did we take home with us?

Responding to Crisis in Our Own Backyards

Increasingly, higher education works in partnership with local communities towards revitalization. Universities and colleges often rise and fall with the fortunes of their hometowns. In rust-belt cities working to create a post-industrial economy, in rural areas strategizing to keep their new college graduates at work at home, and in the areas in between, how do faculty and students use the arts, humanities, and design to help revive their localities? What approaches have met with success, towards economic revitalization or towards meeting different challenges? What has not worked, and what lessons can we take away?

Session Formats: Seminars, Roundtables, Workshops, and Panels

All conference sessions are one and a half hours in length. Imagining America looks favorably upon proposals that encourage dialogue and/or participation, and that are aligned with some version of one of the following formats:

Seminars: Participants submit an unpublished work or works such as a brief "position paper" (5-7 pages) or an excerpt from a performance. The works will be posted one month prior to the conference on the IA website, and hard copies of papers or synopses of performances will be made available at the conference itself. During the seminar, the leader moderates a discussion about the piece. These seminars are intended to generate immediate exchange of ideas and conversation, assist these works towards publication, and produce networks of scholars who continue to work together beyond the conference. While a single public scholar may submit, we encourage submissions from collaborative and cross-institutional groups. We request that attendees familiarize themselves with the work under discussion before the seminar meets.

Seminar proposals include a title for the seminar; contact information of the seminar leader; the work(s) or paper(s) to be discussed; and a four-to-five sentence description of the issues and questions that will be raised in discussion.

Roundtables: A group of participants gather around a shared concern in order to generate discussion among themselves and with the audience. To this end, instead of delivering standard conference-length presentations, participants typically deliver short position statements (5-10 minutes) in response to questions distributed in advance by the organizer, or they take turns

responding to prompts from the moderator. The bulk of the session is devoted to discussion. Roundtables are limited to no more than five participants, including the organizer. We encourage roundtables involving participants from different institutions, centers, and organizations.

Proposals for roundtables include a title for the roundtable; the organizer's name, title, and contact information; the names and titles of the proposed roundtable participants; and a 3-4 sentence description of the position statements, questions, or debates that will be under discussion.

Workshops: A facilitator sets the agenda, poses opening questions, and organizes participant activities. The facilitator is responsible for gathering responses and results from participants and/or small groups, and helping everyone digest them. Proposals to conduct workshops include not only the facilitator and topic, but also the activities that will be conducted.

For example, in a workshop on "Public History of the Suburbs," the facilitator would describe the topic and give some opening remarks (5 minutes). She might then break the audience into groups and ask each group to brainstorm a list of five key principles for organizing a community partnership in this setting. After 15 minutes, a reporter from each group would then give the results, typically written by the facilitator on a chalk board or easel. Then it's time for critique and second stage, for example, moving on to typical obstacles, resource challenges, and so forth. We intend that this process produce substantive and useful conclusions to all participants.

Workshop proposals include a title for the workshop; the organizer's name, title, and contact information; and a 4-5 sentence description of the topic or issue that will be under discussion.

Panels: A team or individuals present their work and experiences, leaving at least half the session for questions and inclusive discussion.

Panel proposals include panel title; the organizer's name, title, and contact information; the names, titles, and affiliations of all panelists; and a 4-5 sentence description of the panel's topic.

Poster Presentations

Often, our conference attendees are part of wonderful partnerships or are conducting research projects that don't fit well with the annual theme or the issues driving the conference sessions. We offer the opportunity to present these projects in a poster or table-top format. Such a display usually mixes a brief narrative description with photographs, organizational or historical charts, maps, and other presentation formats. Brochures or hand-outs may be available, or the presenter might display a presentation or DVD on her laptop. Poster presentations ideally articulate a project and its significance without its author being present. We will, however, designate a time in the conference program for presenters to attend their display and meet interested people, answer questions, and talk about their work. A project may be at any stage of development.

Presentation space is limited: if you do not require an entire table, we would appreciate you requesting only half. We will take the liberty of consolidating smaller displays if need be. As

always, there will be table space available for participants who simply want to distribute information or display publications.

Poster presentation proposals include the presenter's name and a brief description of the project and how it will be displayed.

Audio-Visual Equipment

In general, **audio-visual equipment will be extremely limited. Please indicate if your session absolutely requires it.** Presenters will be informed by the end of June on which day their session will take place, and if audio-visual equipment will be available. Please note: we are not able to provide A/V equipment or electrical outlets for poster presentations.

Deadline and Destination for Conference Proposals

Send all proposals in electronic format only to Kevin Bott at kbott@syr.edu by **Friday, April 24, 2009**. The Program Committee will send out responses by May 15th for all proposal formats except poster presentations. Notification regarding poster sessions will be made by June 30, 2009.