

Acadian Legacy

From "Evangeline" to Cajun Culture

Course #	21SAC
Format:	Seminar
Moderator(s):	Miriam and David Whitney
Date and Time:	Wednesday, 9:30-11:30 AM 7 weeks, starting February 24
Location:	ONLINE, via Zoom
Maximum number of participants:	12
Auditors accepted:	Yes, 1

Purpose: In this seminar, we explore the tragic English expulsion of French-speaking Acadians from Nova Scotia in 1755 and their resettlement 30 years later in the swamps and plains of Louisiana, where the new Cajuns carved out an enduring ethnic heritage

Description: We will continue this seminar in Spring 2021 by briefly reviewing Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's 1847 epic poem "Evangeline," which brought the Acadians' plight to the world's attention. We then will look more closely at the history, language, literature, and culture of the people who arrived in Louisiana, settling into a largely unforgiving land and firmly establishing a unique way of life rich in oral and folk traditions, family, music, and, of course, food. At our final session, we will learn about flavorful Cajun cuisine and, if possible, taste some of it.

Role of participants: Everyone, including new participants, will have read the epic poem and viewed the introductory DVD before the seminar starts. Then all participants will read and be prepared to discuss together the short novel, and 3 short stories.

During the course of the seminar, each participant will either lead a literature discussion or do a short (e.g., 20 minute) presentation on their previously arranged topic, or, for new participants, on an available scheduled topic.

All sessions will be on Zoom. Technical help can be arranged with prior notice.

Required reading:

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "Evangeline" (epic poem).

Ernest Gaines, *A Gathering of Old Men* (novel).

Kate Chopin, "A Very Fine Fiddle" and "A Gentleman from Bayou Teche" (short stories).

Tim Gautreaux, "Welding with Children" (short story).

Books available from the local library (few copies) and local and on-line booksellers; all short stories available on-line.

About the Moderators: Our interest in Cajun culture was piqued initially by fictional Dave Robicheaux, of James Lee Burke's Louisiana crime novel fame, and Robicheaux's hometown of New Iberia, Louisiana. We explored this Cajun country on several trips, developing an appreciation of its people's unique background, culture and environment, including music and food. We each have enjoyed a number of LIR seminars over the last 8 years, with Miriam co-moderating one.