

Riley Elaine Hewes

California State University, Bakersfield
Graduate Student Center

Application for
The Graduate Student

The religious history of New Orleans has fascinated social scientists for decades. Shaped by the synthesis of African, French, and Spanish traditions, the city's religious history stands out amidst the predominance of Anglo-Protestant narratives in American history. While historians have examined religion in New Orleans through a variety of different lenses, this thesis will provide new insights into the formation of alternative spiritual beliefs and practices during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Moreover, it will reveal the creative ways in which New Orleanians of all ethnic backgrounds understood life, death, and the supernatural in a city where death was a constant and inherently visible threat. This study is also warranted by New Orleans' most recent experience with extreme disaster in 2005 with Hurricane Katrina. This thesis will provide historical significance for the city's modern challenges with death, disaster, and recovery.

This research project ultimately seeks to make a connection between two major historiographical topics concerning New Orleans. Historians such as Lawrence N. Powell, Jo Ann Carrigan, and Sophie White have explored the city's experience with disease and disaster by illustrating the realities of death in New Orleans under French, Spanish, and American regimes. They illustrate the history of a city prone to natural and manmade disaster, plagued by frequent yellow fever epidemics, and confronted with disturbing displays of death on a near daily basis. Regarding religion in New Orleans' history, historians such as Emily Clark, Marth Ward, and Ina J. Fandrich have examined the history of the Catholic Church in New Orleans, as well as the origins of voodoo

cower in the face of death. Instead, this thesis will show that, since death was likely coming sooner rather than later, they unabashedly celebrated and appreciated life's pleasures.

The draft of the first chapter is to be submitted shortly after my first visit to the archives in New Orleans which will take place March 1st–March 16th of 2018. Before the final submission and

