

Folklorist Spitzer En Route to Campus

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Renowned folklorist Nick Spitzer, producer of the public radio program "American Routes," has joined the faculty at Tulane University. Beginning in fall 2008, Spitzer will serve as a professor of communication and American studies at Tulane. He also will serve as adjunct professor for research in anthropology and urban studies at the University of New Orleans.

Nick Spitzer

Teaching a communication course in American Vernacular Culture this fall, Nick Spitzer joins the Tulane University faculty as professor of communication and American studies.

"Tulane has been a bellwether in the recovery of the city and region," Spitzer said. "The university is especially well positioned to conjoin its work in Latin America and the Caribbean with the historical and cultural processes of the Gulf South. I also look forward to contributing perspectives on creative work in vernacular culture and the media. It's all very exciting."

Spitzer is widely recognized for his work in American music, cultures of the Gulf South, cultural creolization theory and public cultural policy, as well as for documentaries on radio and sound recordings.

In addition to ethnographic work in south Louisiana's Afro-Creole communities, Spitzer served as Louisiana's first state folklorist in 1978-85. His film *Zydeco* was seen on PBS and the Discovery Channel and in Francophone countries worldwide.

Spitzer served as senior folklife specialist at the Smithsonian Institution (1985-1990) and became artistic director of the Folk Masters series of concerts initiated at

Carnegie Hall and broadcast nationally on public radio in 1990â€“97. He also contributed reports and reviews on American music and cultures to the PBS program “All Things Considered” and created a series of Independence Day concerts on the National Mall, broadcast live on NPR in 1992â€“2000.

As a way of developing a theory of practice, Nick Spitzer co-edited the book *Public Folklore*. Now in its third printing, the work is widely used in graduate teaching. In 2002 he helped create the exhibit and catalog “‘Raised to the Trade’: Creole Building Arts of New Orleans” at the New Orleans Museum of Art. In 2005, Spitzer annotated and helped produce the recording *Our New Orleans: A Benefit Album* for Nonesuch Records and Habitat for Humanity.

His syndicated weekly radio program “[American Routes](#),” now in its 10th year, reaches nearly a million listeners. As Spitzer joins the Tulane faculty, Tulane will become a co-producer of “American Routes,” along with its distributor, American Public Media.

Spitzer first taught at Tulane in 2004 as the Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the Humanities. In 2006 he was named Louisiana Humanist of the Year for his role in cultural recovery post-Katrina, and made a fellow of the American Folklore Society. In 2007 Spitzer received a Guggenheim Fellowship for his research into traditions of creativity in Creole communities.

“Nick Spitzer brings to Tulane a remarkable array of talents,” said Michael Bernstein, the university's senior vice president for academic affairs and provost. “He is a great scholar and public intellectual who is in large measure responsible for the wider attention now being paid to south Louisiana and New Orleans cultures, communities and artists. Having his skills available to our students, and participating in the support of his marvelous weekly public radio broadcast, is a truly wonderful opportunity for Tulane.”