

Sal of "Mad Men" drops in on class

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Students in the Tulane University English course "Mad Men": The TV Series had an experience in class this week they are unlikely to forget: the show's fired art director Sal Romano walked into the classroom and sat down and talked to them.



Actor Bryan Batt tells an English class how he had to pull back his natural style of gesturing to portray the repressed character Sal Romano on the TV series "Mad Men." Batt, a native New Orleanian and Tulane graduate, was guest speaker in the class in Newcomb Hall on Tuesday (July 30). (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Well, not the actual Sal from the AMC dramatic series. The guest speaker in the class Tuesday (July 30) was actor Bryan Batt, who played Sal, a closeted homosexual, for two seasons.

Batt was in the ensemble cast of "Mad Men" before Sal, for the sake of the story line, is summarily dismissed. Six seasons of "Mad Men" have now aired, and the show has become a phenomenal success chronicling the New York Madison Avenue advertising world during the 1960s era of major social change in America.

Being part of "Mad Men" "was a wonderful, charmed experience," Batt, a 1985 Tulane College of Arts and Sciences graduate, told the class. "It was crazy fun being in something that everyone respects and likes."

Batt, who has performed in musicals on Broadway, said that he had to tone down his own effervescent personality to portray the repressed Sal.

Batt was hired as Sal after only one audition with “Mad Men” creator Matthew Weiner. “I just kind of walked in and was Sal.”

Weiner can read people “frighteningly well,” said Batt. Weiner once told Batt, “You’re loud but you’re shy.”

Travis Smith, [School of Continuing Studies](#) instructor, said that he chose “Mad Men” as the focus for the course because of the show’s outstanding writing and its “attempts to document the difficulty of modern life in America.” Using the tools of literary criticism, the students are learning to analyze the show as nontraditional literary text.

After class, Smith said that Batt’s presentation was “fantastic.” “To be a facilitator of a nice educational moment like that means a lot to me.”