

[Author Sarah Vowell pursues diverse career path](#)

April 17, 2014 1:45 AM Hannah Dean

newwave@tulane.edu

Author, historian and radio commentator Sarah Vowell utilized her comedic wit and vast historical knowledge to deliver an engaging, humorous lecture on Wednesday (April 16) at the Freeman Auditorium on the Tulane University uptown campus. She began with a riff on New Orleans, joking that it is “an incredibly self-absorbed city” and that she would therefore be reading excerpts from her own writings on other cities across the U.S.



Audience members line up for the book signing with author Sarah Vowell, who spoke for the Kylene and Brad Beers Lecture, sponsored by the Newcomb-Tulane College Office of Cocurricular Programs. (Photo by Guillermo Cabrera-Rojo)

[Vowell](#) read seven different excerpts from her works, touching on topics ranging from the Bush-Cheney inauguration in Washington, D.C., to the tight-knit community in her hometown of Bozeman, Mont.

One interesting selection came from her new book, *Unfamiliar Fishes*, on the history of Hawaii. She noted the similarities between the “Americanization” of Hawaii and the development of America itself, in the context of its image as a “spiritual wilderness” and variety in culture and traditions.

In response to a question on her evolution as a writer, Vowell provided another fascinating story. She wanted to become a trumpet player, then decided to go into

art history ? writing did not enter her plans until she began contributing to her campus newspaper.

She wrote for art magazines after college, moved on to newspapers and then wrote her first book. Next, National Public Radio commentator Ira Glass asked her to work on his radio show “This American Life,” which profoundly affected her career.

She later filmed a documentary in which she and her sister drove the [Trail of Tears](#) (she is of Cherokee heritage), which convinced her to start writing about history.

Vowell admitted that “there is no real way to plan a liberal arts future,” and that concerned undergraduates “should pay attention, work hard and make the most of their talents in order to find their true career path.”

She spoke for the Kylene and Brad Beers Lecture, sponsored by [Newcomb-Tulane College](#).

Hannah Dean is a first-year Newcomb-Tulane College student.