

## New Orleans stars in PBS documentary

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The politics, people and culture of New Orleans will take center stage on PBS Monday (July 14) when a new documentary, [“Getting Back to Abnormal,”](#) airs on the network's award-winning POV documentary series. While Tulane University doesn't appear in the film, one of the filmmakers says his passion for the city was born while he was teaching Southern politics in the Tulane Department of Political Science.



Paul Stekler, second from right, with the filmmaking team behind “Getting Back to Abnormal,” which will appear on PBS Monday (July 14).

Paul Stekler, chair of the Department of Radio, Television and Film at the University of Texas at Austin, was on faculty at Tulane from the fall of 1981 to the spring of 1987, and his time here transformed him from a scholar to a documentary filmmaker.

“I came to New Orleans as an academic and it ruined me as an academic,” says Stekler. “I had absolutely no interest in writing academic papers anymore. I wanted to get that rush of going out and talking to people and filming things and being able to show those films to a larger audience.”

The film presents the city through the prism of the 2010 reelection campaign of city council member Stacy Head. Stekler says he wanted to make a film that offered an honest representation of New Orleans, something he says thinks the filmmaking team accomplished.

“It's real,” Stekler says. “One of the sorts of things as a filmmaker that I treasure is going out and filming real stuff, and this is real. Doing interviews with people in New Orleans is a blessing because they'll actually tell you what's on their mind.”

Stekler says he's proud of the film and, for him, it was important to come back to the city and do “good work.” With his tongue firmly in cheek, he tips his proverbial hat to Tulane for where his career ended up after the time he spent teaching here.

“Tulane helped me out a lot. They brought me down South, they brought me to New Orleans and they canned me as a political scientist, which led to me being a filmmaker. In a sense I owe everything to Tulane.”