Making a Louisiana history class boring takes a seriously dull history teacher. Unfortunately, the richness of the state's political history comes from a laundry list of questionable sources.

While eighth graders statewide give thanks for public officials of the past and their often bizarre antics, the state as a whole is feeling the effects of a corrupt past, present and — unless something changes — future. In Louisiana, it's less "politics as usual," but more like "politics as UNusual."

In an effort to make a positive difference for the future, economic development gurus work to lure new, innovative businesses into the state, and public universities gather technologically advanced equipment and resources from around the world. Yet, local and state government seems to be trapped in the past. Some, though, are demanding something different, and the state as a whole seems ready for change.
The Times of Acadiana 

A HISTORICAL ACCOUNT

Leander Perez's reign begins

After becoming a district court judge in 1919, Leander Perez Petre Jr. was able to establish and operate a political machine in Plaquemines and St. Bernard parishes until his death in 1969. An ally of Huey Long, Petre used his position of power to amass wealth and influence through electoral fraud and intimidation. Through a network of cronies and associates, Petre was able to manipulate elections to his advantage, often using violence and threats to suppress opposition.

Huey Long, the most beloved of the Louisiana governors, emerged as a powerful political force in the early 20th century. Long's populist policies and his ability to connect with the working class made him a popular figure among the state's voters. He used his political influence to create a new era of reform, known as the "Long Era," which sought to address the state's economic and social problems.

In 1935, Huey P. Long's politicalmachine was brought to a halt by the Depression and the rising popularity of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Long's death in 1935 marked the end of an era in Louisiana politics, and the state began to change with the advent of the New Deal and the rise of a new generation of politicians.
For Abdella, Jindal is something new to Louisiana politics. "I think a lot of it is the same vicious cycle we’ve been in, but Jindal has less baggage," Abdella says. "He gives the appearance of a positive attitude, not the appearance of always being wrong over in doubt."

While Crane certainly seems optimistic about the priority ethics reform has taken in Louisiana’s political discourse, he warns that similar reforms have been a difficult process in other states.

"They say,‘Let’s do this. Let’s do that.’ And then they realize the futility, the futility of these reform laws. They realize that they are not going to bring about the results that were promised," he says. "They realize the futility of these reform laws.

While Crane is aware of the difficulties in implementing reforms, he remains hopeful. "There is hope," he says. "There is hope that we can make a difference."

Jindal’s Jindal's “Ending Corruption”

Jindal has promoted himself as a reform-minded candidate and offers five pillars of ethics reform and a corresponding list of specifics his administration will follow to provide a "fresh start for Louisiana." Jindal uses the following pillars to outline his most basic ethical beliefs.

**Pillar One:** You cannot be a lobbyist and a legislator. This will extend to other business relationships that may be seen as gray areas. This must be black and white. You cannot accept money from a lobbying outfit and do business with the government at the same time. You cannot serve in the government and own a company that provides a legitimate service to the government. You cannot serve in the government and be a lobbyist.

**Pillar Two:** Legislator will have to give full financial disclosure. Full disclosure will include income, assets and debts. There will be no exceptions and no loopholes. Some will complain and say they will not serve under these rules. They can’t live within the overly strict environment created by the reforms.

**Pillar Three:** You cannot serve in the government and do business with the government at the same time. You cannot serve in the government, or you can make money from the government, but you cannot do both. This will apply to businesses owned or partially owned by legislators and their family members. There are many instances where lawmakers may own companies that provide a legitimate service to the government, but there have also been too many instances otherwise as well.

**Pillar Four:** You cannot do the crime if you cannot do the time. You cannot serve in the government and also continue to do business with the government. Just as there are exceptions to the law, you cannot serve in the government and do business with the government. Just as there are exceptions to the law, you cannot serve in the government and do business with the government. Just as there are exceptions to the law, you cannot serve in the government and do business with the government. Just as there are exceptions to the law, you cannot serve in the government and do business with the government. Just as there are exceptions to the law, you cannot serve in the government and do business with the government.

**Pillar Five:** Shine the light of day on lobbying. Lobby disclosure will be more detailed and more rigorous.
Shady Politics in Louisiana
A HISTORY

1998
Edwin Edwards indicted
After serving his final term in elected office after
defeating former Hu Han Hahn Grand Wizard David
Duke in the 1991 gubernatorial election, Edwards
was indicted on an array of charges. Edwards served as
governor from 1972-1980, 1994-1998 and, most
recently, 1992-1996.
Earlier, in his congressional career, Edwards was
implicated in the famous "Stamps scandal" of the 1970s,
in which he admitted that his wife Elaine had received an
envelope containing $10,000 from South Korean
lobbyist Tongqu Park (Park Dong-sean).
In 1998, U.S. Attorney Eddie Jordan brought
charges of racketeering and extortion, among others,
against Edwards. After the prosecution established
Edwards' role in gambling corruption and abuse of his
position of power, he was sentenced to 30 years in
prison. As of press time, unless someone convinced
President Bush to issue an unlikely pardon or commu-
nication, he enjoyed his 80th birthday behind prison
walls in Oakdale on Aug. 7.

August 2005
Jefferson freezes $90,000 — not in a
bank account but aluminum foil
William Jefferson, the second most senior member
of the Louisiana congressional delegation, was first
elected in 1990 to represent Louisiana's 2nd district
in the U.S. House of Representatives. As cochairman
of the Africa Trade and Investment Caucus, Jefferson
had a strong knowledge of business on the African
continent. This knowledge apparently played to his
advantage when Jefferson was approached with (or
found for himself) an opportunity to play a role in a
Nigerian business venture.
After helping a United States company secure licens-
ing and distribution rights to a communications technol-
yogy in Nigeria, Jefferson received a kick-back and wrote
himself and his family into the legal documents finaliz-
ing the agreement. On Aug. 3, 2005, Jefferson was
sent a request by the Louisiana State Board of Ethics
asking for permission to sell his property to Daigle. Daigle
planned "to settle up" on the additional costs incurred for
the costs of the road when the deal goes

"All governments suffer from corruption to some degree.
Although things were a bit different in the past, today I don't
think Louisiana has any special propensity to elect corrupt politi-
cians," Cross says. "Louisiana doesn't have a cover on corrup-
tion or ethics. We are neither first nor last. Our rankings vary
from 3rd (governor financial disclosure) to 46th (whistleblower
protection)." We're grappling with a number of the same issues
[as] other states are. [We] are ahead in some areas and behind in
others. Of course, the perception nationwide is that Louisiana is
a bit more challenged than most other states in this area, so
image-wise we've got a problem that other states may not have."

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provided, the ethics commission gave Durel permission to sell his property to Daigle. Daigle
stands firm that he doesn't forfeit his right to
provide for his family just because he's an elect-
oficial. He says the real estate deal is still in
negotiation and plans to reimburse Daigle for
the costs of the road when the deal goes

"This is a dream we've had since River Ranch was
conceived," Durel says. "In my mind, I'll do
what I think is right. If the appearance of impro-
priety upsets people, such is life. I can't help
impersonation."

That may be a dangerous attitude for a pub-
lic official to take when it comes to governmen-
tal ethics, according to Edwards.
"People sometimes say that appearance is an
important as reality. In the kind of case
[described], it may be more important,"
Edwards says. "I doubt what the [city-parish
president] did was illegal...[but] the action pro-
vided plenty of reason for citizens to believe
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THE TIMES

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Durel attributes his view to his businessman nature. "I swear I'll never become a politician. I'll never stop being a businessman," Durel says. "I lived in the real world for 50 years before being elected to office."

"People sometimes say that appearance is as important as reality. In the kind of case [described], it may be more important. I doubt what the city-parish president did was illegal ... but the action provided plenty of reasons for citizens to believe that [Durel] was taking advantage of his position, for his benefit and to the detriment of the citizenry."

— William and Mary professor emeritus Jack Edwards

Shady Politics in Louisiana

A HISTORY

July 2007

Vitter scandal goes public

While his actions were probably not any different than those of most elected men in D.C., Vitter portrayed himself as a family-values candidate, campaigning fiercely against same-sex unions in the name of the "sacredness of marriage." On July 9, after the release of the D.C. Madame's call log, Vitter announced publicly that he had committed a "closed act." For a week after the admission, the United States senator stayed home with his family and, on July 17, appeared publicly with his wife to declare his return to the D.C. Madame's call log, the state's Madam's call log, ed himself as a family-values candidate, campaigning to stay home with his family and, on July 17, appeared publicly with his wife to declare his return to the public sector of leadership.

"We have to admit that the rule affects some people much more than others. I was a college professor when I was in office, and had neither the assets nor the aspirations to become a player in real estate or business transactions," Edwards explains. "The rule did not hurt me much, if any. In contrast, a well-liked local business person or lawyer may find that his ability to persuade others for his own profit has been taken from him."

Durel seems to fit well into the mold of the "well-liked local business person." While any malicious intent on the part of the city-parish president is doubtful, Edwards says his conniving is nonetheless a cause for concern and described it as "certainly inappropriate, a violation of public trust."

This scenario, however, was not inseparable, according to Edwards, whose advice to Durel would have been to be more open about both the land deal and the upgrade of the alley to a private road. Despite viewing the ordeal as either a private matter or someone else's business, Durel should have sought the advice of others before engaging in anything that could have the appearance of favoritism or privilege.

Durel acknowledges the importance of perception when it comes to the big picture of ethics in Louisiana. The perception of widespread corruption on every level of Louisiana politics. Durel says, dooms those in office to guilt by association.

"It's a major conversation my family had — my going to being seen as a dirty politician from being seen as a good businessman," says Durel.

Langlinais resigns

Iberia Parish President Will Langlinais resigned two weeks ago today, after pleading guilty to a count of malfeasance in office. His conviction and resignation came after a year of investigation by a state legislative auditor, who found that Langlinais received payments for meals to which he was not entitled, provided parish resources to residents to improve private property and used parish funds for inappropriate expenses.

"The strain on my physical health and on my family's finances have been factors in my coming to this decision. I have made some errors of judgment; however, I have always attempted to act in the best interests of the citizens of Iberia Parish and their government," Langlinais said in a statement. "It is time for this controversy to end and for Iberia Parish to move forward."

Langlinais could have received up to five years in prison and a $50,000 fine, but Judge John Conery chose to issue the lesser sentence of two years supervised probation, six months home incarceration and 480 hours community service. He is part of the original agreement, Langlinais will pay $50,000 to the parish government.

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Blue Dog’s chef always looking for innovative ideas

By Mishelle Shepard
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With his lively sense of humor and unique North meets South charm, Blue Dog Café’s Executive Chef Bill Schwanz’s outgoing personality fits fine with the restaurant’s bold and colorful surroundings.

In true Acadiana style, Blue Dog Café is at once sophisticated and laid back with the largest collection of artwork by world famous artist George Rodrigue to satisfy the eye as their award-winning dishes please the palate — and the weekend’s live music entertains the ear.

Schwanz has a degree in Restaurant Administration from UL and has been in the food service industry more than 25 years, coming to Blue Dog as executive chef less than two years ago. He was happy to take a primarily day job at Blue Dog, even though the hours are still long — at least now he has the luxury of spending evenings with his wife.

The restaurant’s reputation continues to grow and was recently included in United Airline’s in-flight magazine Hemispheres’ feature “3 Perfect Days.”

Schwanz offers Times readers the recipe for Blue Dog’s popular Crawfish and Tasso Alfredo and answers a few questions.

Q: Did you always know you wanted to be a chef? If not, what was your first dream career as a child?

Schwanz: I remember distinctly at age 9 telling my mom I either wanted to be a chef or a priest. I don’t know two more diverging professions; I think I made the right choice.

Q: What is your greatest challenge as a chef?

Schwanz: Managing the dynamics of 30 employees is a new challenge for me — all the different personalities. It was a real eye-opener. I’ve really had to grow into the position.

Q: What has been your best and worst cooking experience?

Schwanz: That’s tough. I can’t think of a single best and worst. But I will say the whole process of fusion is one I like very much. Coming to this part of the country, where so many different cultures played a significant role in creating our unique cuisine, it’s the ultimate fusion. Now Asian is becoming more popular than ever here, creating Cajun; so you see fusion can be either evolutionary or revolutionary.

Q: What two ingredients work surprisingly well together from your perspective?

Schwanz: I think you can pair just about anything if you tweak it just right. I once paired lamb with pear and another time made an Oban (single malt scotch) sauce for salmon. I got a positive response on both dishes. The more you play the more you develop and create your own style.

Q: What is a food you remember from your childhood — something that really stands out and made an impression?

Schwanz: My father took me to a cheese factory in Wisconsin, where I’m from. I remember eating the fresh curd right off the conveyor — the salty taste, the warmth, the aroma — that really made an impression. I also remember as a kid eating smelt — you just pluck off the head and vein and then eat the whole fried fish, bones and all. I thought that was the coolest thing.

Q: What’s your favorite tool in the kitchen and why?

Schwanz: Heat. Without it, our menus would really be limited — carpaccio, ceviche, crudité.

Q: Do you prefer cooking by recipe or freestyle?

Schwanz: When you are creating new recipes, there’s only freestyle. But for the sake of consistency in the dishes, it requires recipes.