UL holds first Brown Bag Lunch series, allows guests to connect to state history

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The University of Louisiana at Lafayette, along with the Center for Louisiana Studies, began the Brown Bag Lunch series Friday, Jan. 18 at Dupré Library, giving students a new perspective in Louisiana’s history.

The goal of the Brown Bag Lunch series, according to Jennifer Ritter Guidry, assistant director for programming and special projects at the Center of Louisiana Studies, is to engage the general public with research that is relevant to the community that may shed light to a subject that does not get a lot of attention.

“We also want to give a forum for graduate students to present their research to their fellow students, the public and faculty members,” Guidry said.

Doctoral student Jessica Dauterive was the first to present with her research on “Fais Do-Do Instant Mix: Mass Culture and Cajun Identity in Louisiana, 1930-1970.”

Completing her master’s degree at the University of New Orleans and now pursuing her doctoral degree in History at George Mason University, Dauterive began her work on Cajun history.

With Dauterive having roots in Lafayette, she had a deep connection to the history and culture from her upbringing.

“A lot of this has been exploring how Cajun identity gets formed in different ways, and because I’m from here, it’s a lot about self-discovery as well, which is what has kept the project going,” Dauterive said.

During the series, Dauterive said her inspiration came from a small recording

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company named Swallow Records located in Ville Platte, which is where she started studying how Cajun people use records, television, radio and tourism to create their culture.

"I am really working on 1955-1974 so I am starting with the Acadiana bicentennial celebration and I'm ending with the first tribute to Cajun music, which actually Festival Acadian becomes that," Dauterive said.

Students and faculty from UL Lafayette, as well as the public, were in attendance to hear Dauterive's dissertation and ask her questions about her research. “This way you can sit and listen to older students talk about their own research and hopefully help you with your own research," said Rachel Blonquist, a public history graduate student at UL Lafayette. “It certainly brings up questions of where things came from, and it brings a lot of the backstory of why we do things.”

Dauterive said she hopes her research will inspire UL Lafayette students to dig deeper into the Dupre Library's archives that are available to them and learn more about Lafayette and surrounding areas. These events are free and open to the public and the series is supported by the Jamie Guilbeau and Thelma Guilbeau UL Lafayette Collections Research Grant.

Some of the Brown Bag series' future topics will be focused on topics such as the relationship between Canada & the British Empire, the healing arts, Acadiana traditions, fashion history and much more.

The Brown Bag series will be held every third Friday of each month for the spring and fall semesters at 12:30 p.m. in Dupre Library 221 or H.L. Griffin Hall 315.