The course will examine the life, work, and influences of former UL Lafayette Writer-In-Residence Ernest J. Gaines. While we cannot look at the vast impact that Gaines has had on the literary world in a mere ten weeks, we will look at a selection of Gaines’ work and influences, both literary and in other areas. For example, Gaines influenced the visual art of Van Gogh and the music of Leadbelly and Mussorgsky. Through an examination of Gaines’ work and influence on other artists and writers, we will come to see that art, or anything for that matter, does not originate spontaneously but is influenced by other factors.

The course will take advantage of the Ernest J. Gaines Center’s archives, allowing students to research materials and to look at manuscripts. There may also be an opportunity to speak with Mr. Gaines himself. Students will complete a final project on some aspect of Gaines’ influence, such as a group blog post, video blog, wiki page, a syllabus that illustrates how they would teach Gaines and his work, or other creative telling of Gaines’ life and work.