A Message from the Director

We were thrilled to be back in person for first quarter! We have missed being together, and connecting face-to-face. It was a joy to gather for events such as a trip to see the Goodman Theater’s production of *Fannie* in conjunction with the first-year majors’ American Studies 301 seminar, a Chicago Architecture Center tour of Graceland Cemetery organized by senior *Jack Jordan*, and a reading week lunch to celebrate everyone’s hard work during the fall and introduce our new Program Assistant, *Julie Lavin*.

This year, I am excited to welcome an especially diverse crop of new majors who bring a range of interests and disciplinary perspectives, as well as backgrounds, with them. Among this new cohort are students whose homes are not only in Weinberg but also Medill, the School of Communication, and SESP, and whose areas of concentration include criminal justice, public space, educational inequality, gender and sexuality, and medical disparities. It is a pleasure to work with such exceptional undergraduates, and to help them delve into topics and questions meaningful to them by bringing interdisciplinary approaches into conversation.

These students (and others outside the major) will be able to experience a fascinating array of courses outlined in this newsletter. I’m grateful as always to the professors teaching our core classes, who this year include *Nicolette Bruner* (Legal Studies and American Studies) guiding the senior seminar, and Professors *Robert Orsi* (Religious Studies) and *Ivy Wilson* (English and American Studies) who are joining me to teach the introductory 301 year-long seminar series.

Seniors last year once again dedicated themselves to producing thoughtful, rigorously researched and beautifully written original research projects that showcase the value of our deep commitment to a liberal arts education within a research university. They should be commended for their success in extremely challenging circumstances that often meant they couldn’t reach archives or had to recalibrate field work plans. They persisted without the benefit of the vibrant, supportive peer community that usually meets in person throughout the year. Many of these students’ work, which you can see showcased below, was worthy of awards. The American Studies students continue to be recognized for their deep scholarly and community engagement in other ways, too, including through the nomination of four of last year’s juniors to Phi Beta Kappa, an honor that only twenty-two WCAS juniors out of a class of nearly 1,000 received.

Last year one of my greatest pleasures was connecting virtually with American Studies alumni who helped us turn pandemic lemons into lemonade by joining us for virtual conversations. To say I was impressed by these former majors as they spoke to current students about their post-Northwestern career paths is an understatement. We look forward this year to even more conversations about how the major nurtures curiosity and skills that students carry with them after graduation.

I wish you all the best in every way, and look forward to being in touch.

Warm wishes,

Shana
2021-22 Faculty and Staff

Shana Bernstein  
(Ph.D., Stanford University) specializes in 20th Century U.S. History, particularly comparative race and ethnicity. Before joining Northwestern’s faculty, where she teaches in the Legal Studies, American Studies, and Asian American Studies Programs as well as the History Department, she was Associate Professor of History at Southwestern University in Texas. She is a Distinguished Lecturer for the Organization of American Historians and a former Public Voices Fellow with Northwestern’s OpEd Project. She has won fellowships from the Mellon Foundation and the Huntington Library, among other institutions. Her first book, *Bridges of Reform: Interracial Civil Rights Activism in Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* (Oxford University Press, 2011), reinterprets U.S. civil rights activism by revealing its roots in the interracial efforts of Mexican, Jewish, African, and Japanese Americans in mid-century Los Angeles, and by showing how the early Cold War facilitated, rather than derailed, some forms of activism. Bernstein is currently working on a project examining the history of strawberries from an environmental, consumer, and worker perspective.

Nicolette Bruner  
(Ph.D., University of Michigan; J.D., University of Michigan Law School) is Assistant Professor of Instruction at the Center for Legal Studies and the Program in American Studies. Prior to joining Northwestern’s faculty, she was a postdoctoral fellow with the Stevanovich Institute on the Formation of Knowledge at the University of Chicago and taught in the Department of English at Western Kentucky University. Bruner’s research explores how the law shapes the way humans understand and interact with the nonhuman entities and systems around them. Her current book project, *Thing People: Living with Corporations and Other Nonhumans*, examines how the legal doctrine of corporate personhood offers a framework for articulating the rights and responsibilities of other nonhuman entities, including animals, plants, rivers, and robots. She also teaches and works in American literature, corporate law and policy, jurisprudence, and the environmental humanities.
Robert Orsi
(Ph.D., Yale University) is Professor of Religious Studies and the first holder of the Grace Craddock Nagle Chair in Catholic Studies. Orsi studies American religious history and contemporary practice and American Catholicism in both historical and ethnographic perspective, and he is widely recognized for his work on theory and method for the study of religion. In 2002-2003, he was president of the American Academy of Religion. Orsi has held fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Fulbright Foundation, and he is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. In 2010 Orsi received the E. Leroy Hall Award for Teaching Excellence, the highest recognition for teaching offered by Northwestern’s Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences, and in 2012, the Charles Deering McCormick Teaching Professorship, Northwestern’s highest teaching award. Professor Orsi’s books have won numerous prizes. In 2020-2021, he is a visiting fellow at the Notre Dame Institute for Advanced Studies and the Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism at Notre Dame University. Please see Professor Orsi’s website for information about his current research, selected publications, and teaching.

Ivy Wilson
(Ph.D., Yale University) teaches courses on the comparative literatures of the black diaspora and U.S. literary studies with a particular emphasis on African American culture. His book, Specters of Democracy: Blackness and the Aesthetics of Nationalism (Oxford University Press, 2011), interrogates how the figurations and tropes of blackness were used to produce the social equations that regulated the cultural meanings of U.S. citizenship and traces how African American intellectuals manipulated the field of aesthetics as a means to enter into political discourse about the forms of subjectivity and national belonging. Along with recent articles in ESQ, Arizona Quarterly, and PMLA, his other work in U.S. literary studies includes two forthcoming edited books on the nineteenth-century poets James Monroe Whitfield and Albery Allson Whitman. His current research interests focus on the solubility of nationalism in relationship to theories of the diaspora, global economies of culture, and circuits of the super-national and sub-national.

Julie Lavin
Program Assistant. Julie received a B.A. from University of Kansas in Journalism and has worked in a variety of nonprofits in the Chicagoland area including the Evanston Community Foundation and The Chicago Botanic Garden.

Tom Burke
Senior Program Administrator. Tom received a B.A. from Union College and an MFA in creative writing from UMass Amherst. In the past, he has worked for the Chinua Achebe Center at Bard College, the Summer Literary Seminars in Russia and Kenya, and Words without Borders, which advocates for literature in translation. Tom also teaches creative writing at Northwestern, and his novel, Eastbound into the Cosmos, was published in April 2019 from MadHat Press. www.tsburke.com
Class of 2021

Claire Corridon
Manipulating Time, Countering Progress: Examining Resistance to Normative Temporality Through an Alternative Historiography of Feminist Art History
Advisor: Professor Rebecca Zorach (Art History)

Keerti Gopal
The Green Dream: Framing and Youth Participation in the Sunrise Movement
Advisor: Professor Chloe Thurston (Political Science)

Sam Gardner
American Predeterminism: A Historical Examination into the Effects of Alternative Data Credit Lending
Advisor: Professor Bruce Carruthers (Sociology)

Vivien Anderson Hough
Conservatism, Control, and Clinton: The Mass Media’s Construction of Black Criminality
Advisor: Professor Michael Allen (History)
**Danielle Kosover**

*Repair through Rematriation: Redressing the Indigenous Ohlone and White Jewish American Settler Relationship*

**Advisor:** Professor Patty Loew (Medill)

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**Mara Rolande Kelly**

*Extreme Until Proven Moderate: How Media Prioritization of False-Balance and Intrenched American Islamophobia Culminated in One of the Most Influential News Events of 2010*

**Advisor:** Professor Elizabeth Shakman Hurd (Political Science and Religious Studies) and Professor Brannon Ingram (Religious Studies)

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**Matthew Marth**

*Projects of Community: Community Programs, the Chicago Housing Authority, and the Social and Civic Landscape of the Ida B. Wells Homes, 1941-1950*

**Advisor:** Professor Henry Binford (History)

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**Julia Tarnow**

*Consumed: Generation Z and their Plight to Sustainability through the Lens of Sustainable Fashion*

**Advisor:** Professor Keith Woodhouse (History)

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Current Majors

Class of 2022

Margot Bartol
Margot is an American Studies and Economics double major with a minor in Chinese. She is interested in Sino-American relations and is writing her thesis on American policy toward China in the realm of technology. She is also interested in development economics.

Caleigh Bell-Rosof
Caleigh is an American Studies major with a minor in Legal Studies, and is centering their thesis project on the intersection of gender and sexuality studies and legal studies, examining how the legal system functions in America to police bodies and queerness.

Thomas Bentsen
Tom is an American Studies and Theatre double-major, with the Music Theatre Certificate and Dance minor. He is focusing on the intersection of history, sexuality studies, and media/aesthetic analysis.

Maggie Cheever
Maggie is an American Studies major with a minor in Environmental Policy and Culture. She is passionate about immigration and refugee justice. She is centering her work in American Studies on the theme of displacement, examining intersections between climate change and refugee law and policy.

Daisy Conant
Daisy is studying the intersections of identity, political representation and law in America through a historical and journalistic lens, as well as the evolutions and coalitional politics of social movements.

Kate Hader
Kate is an American Studies and Social Policy double major with a minor in Gender and Sexuality Studies. Her concentration focuses on representations of femininity and girlhood in pop culture.

Jack Jordan
Jack is focused on local-level responses to issues of climate change and environmental justice in American cities, suburbs, and tribal lands through his double major in American Studies and Environmental Science. Jack is an Evans Scholar and the Lead Fellow for Chicago with Advanced Energy Group.

Thea Showalter
Thea is focused on issues surrounding immigration, racial justice, and international law. She also minors in Sociology and is interested in pursuing nonprofit or social service work after leaving Northwestern.
Caleb Young
Caleb is an American Studies and Political Science double major. His primary interest is in issues of sovereignty and citizenship. He is a research fellow at the Deportation Research Clinic and president of the Undergraduate Prison Education Partnership.

Danielle Spitz
Danielle double majors in American Studies and History, with a special interest in 20th Century U.S. legal history. Danielle volunteers with Peer Health Exchange to teach a high school health class in Chicago Public Schools and assists with research in the Gender & Sexualities Studies department.

Class of 2023

Maddie Brown
Maddie is an American Studies major with a minor in Legal Studies. She is studying social justice movements, legal and political strategy, and the ways these forces interact with gender.

Dori-Taylor Carter
Dori-Taylor is an American Studies major with a research focus in the U.S. Census. Her interests include ethnic studies, gender and sexuality studies, and feminist theory. She is a Posse Foundation Scholar.

Alex Chun
Alex is an American Studies and Journalism double major. He’s interested in how queer and racial identities have informed one another and been shaped through American history. His multimedia journalism has covered topics such as the history of queer liberation on campus and current student advocacy.

Sunnie Eraso
Sunnie is an American Studies and Theatre double major also pursuing the Music Theatre Certificate. She is currently interested in studying how artistic creation and representation can affirm the mixed-race identity and experience in America.

Eva Herscowitz
Eva is an American Studies and Journalism double major with a minor in English. Her interests include media studies, gender and sexuality studies, and religious studies.

Noah Seth
Noah is an American Studies major and Legal Studies minor. He is studying the relationship between American Federalism and the creation and protection of civil rights in the United States. He is pursuing a commission as an officer in the United States Marine Corps.
Armaan Ajani
Armaan is a SESP double majoring in Social Policy and American Studies and minoring in Economics. Armaan hopes to study educational inequality within the U.S., the role of race in creating these disparities, and the long-term effects of such disparities on standard of living and the economy.

Olivia Alexander
Olivia is an American Studies and Journalism double major. Her research interests are in educational equity in the United States and the ways political action is influenced by media agenda setting.

Jane Clarke
Jane is an American Studies and Political Science double major and History minor. Her wide range of academic interests include socio-legal studies, feminist theory, and border studies.

Jordan Muhammad
Jordan Muhammad is an American Studies and Theatre double major. They are currently interested in studying how systems of oppression can be dismantled and replaced in America by looking at domestic and foreign case studies.

Isabel Podolsky
Isabel is an American Studies major with minors in Economics and Environmental Policy and Culture. Her concentration explores the relationships, interactions, and processes between people and places; her academic interests include housing, community, and economic development, political ecology, and placemaking.

End of year gathering for Majors on a chilly May afternoon

Student Advisory Board (SAB) Representatives for 2021-2022
Maggie Cheever & Jack Jordan
2021 Awards

American Studies Program Awards

- **Carl Smith Prize for Outstanding Student Essay in American Studies**
  - Keerti Gopal
  - *The Green Dream: Framing and Youth Participation in the Sunrise Movement*

- **Matthew Marth**
  - *Projects of Community: Community Programs, the Chicago Housing Authority, and the Social and Civic Landscape of the Ida B. Wells Homes, 1941-1950*

- **Jay Rosen American Studies Scholarship**
  - Dori-Taylor Carter

Other Noteworthy Awards, Grants, and Fellowships

- **Fulbright Scholarship**
  - Keerti Gopal
  - National Geographic Storytelling Fellow

- **Phi Beta Kappa**
  - Claire Corridon
  - Margot Bartol
  - Maggie Cheever
  - Thea Showalter
  - Caleb Young

- **Office of Undergraduate Research**
  - Isabel Podolsky
  - WCAS-American Studies & Economics ’24
Alumni Zoom Events

By sharing their post-Northwestern career paths, American Studies alumni offer current majors networking opportunities and conversations about how the major nurtures curiosity and skills that students carry with them after graduation. This past year, we heard from journalists working on issues related to criminal justice and water rights and access; an alum who’s engaging young people in politics—including by helping them run for office—and a panel on education and global development non-profit work.

An American Studies conversation

Amanda Litman

American Studies alumna
Amanda Litman ’12
Co-founder of Run for Something and
Carl Smith
Founding director of American Studies

In a talk about political activism, the upcoming election, and the role of American Studies training in life since college, Q&A to follow.

October 29, 2020
5:30–6:30 pm CST
Via Zoom

Zoom link will be sent to AMST majors right before the event.

An American Studies conversation

NGO, Nonprofit, and Policy Careers

An informal career discussion with alumni from American Studies
Sarah Lagen ’13
Senior Communications Officer
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Christine Powers ’13
Global Director of Data & Impact Generation

Parvathi “Parv” Santhosh-Kumar ’10
Vice President of Equitable Results

Each panelist will talk about their career working in the realm of policy, nonprofits, and NGOs, followed by Q&A and discussion with current American Studies majors.

April 8, 2021
7:00–8:30 pm CT
Via Zoom

Zoom link will be sent to AMST majors directly before the event.

Media + Journalism Careers

An American Studies conversation

Rhaina Cohen ’14
Producer & Editor of narrative podcasts, National Public Radio (NPR)

Carl Ganter ’87
Journalist, Reporter, Broadcaster & Co-Founder, Circle of Blue

Joe Neff ’82
Investigative Reporter, The Marshall Project

Each panelist will share their career trajectories, followed by Q&A and discussion with current American Studies majors.

January 5, 2021
7:00–8:30 pm CST
Via Zoom

Zoom link will be sent to AMST majors directly before the event.

Northwestern
American Studies
Whether on Zoom or in person, we gathered for many wonderful events over the past year, including an end-of-year lakefront party for all majors, a graduation party to celebrate our seniors, a trip to Graceland Cemetery, a Goodman Theatre outing, and a Reading Week lunch.
Curriculum 2021-22

Seminars for Majors

- **Fall**: Comparative Race and Ethnicity  
  Shana Bernstein (American Studies and Legal Studies)
- **Winter**: Remapping American Studies through Black Chicago  
  Ivy Wilson (English and American Studies)
- **Spring**: An Emerging Guidebook to Apocalyptic Living  
  Bob Orsi (Religion)
- **Fall/Winter**: Senior Seminar  
  Nicolette Bruner (Legal Studies and American Studies)

Other Courses Include:

- **US Gay and Lesbian History**: Professor Lane Fenrich (History)
- **Asian American Digital Cultures**: Professor Raymond San Diego (Asian American Studies)
- **The Chicago Way: Urban Spaces and American Values**: Professor Bill Savage (English)
- **Press and Presidential Elections**: Professor Larry Stuelpnagel (Journalism)
- **American Teenage Rites of Passage**: Professor Sarah Taylor (Religious Studies)
- **Parks and Pipeline: Indigenous Environmental Justice**: Professor Joseph Whitson (History)