

American Graffiti

Volume 22 ■ 2021-2022

PUBLIC SPACE

GENDER & SEXUALITY

CRIMINAL & RACIAL JUSTICE

EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITY

MEDICAL DISPARITIES

IMMIGRATION

Northwestern | American Studies

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.



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.



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.



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

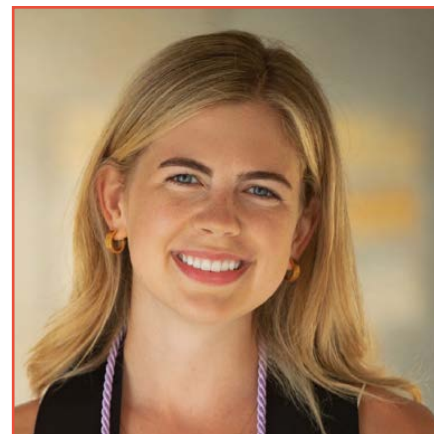
Advisor: Professor Chloe Thurston (Political Science)



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)



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)



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

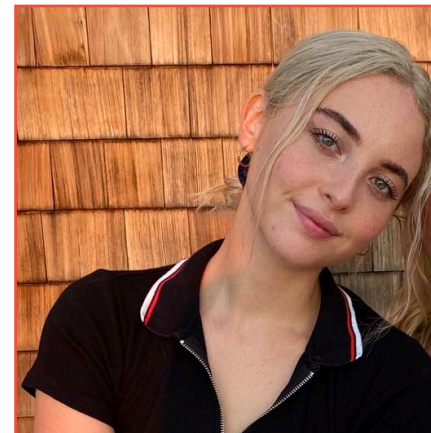
Advisor: Professor Henry Binford (History)



Danielle Kosover

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

Advisor: Professor Patty Loew (Medill)



Julia Tarnow

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

Advisor: Professor Keith Woodhouse (History)

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.



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.



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.



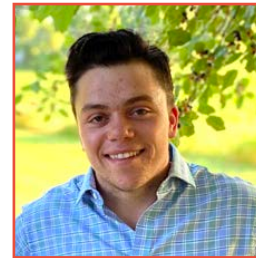
Kate Hader

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.



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.



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.



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.



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.



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.



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.



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.

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.



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.



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.



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.

■ Class of 2024



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.



■ 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 with

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 Amanda's American Studies training in life since college. Q&A to follow.

October 19, 2020
5:30-6:30 pm CST
Via Zoom

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




CHICAGO'S GREAT FIRE




Carl Smith is Franklin Bliss Snyder Professor of English and American Studies and Professor of History, Emeritus, at Northwestern. His most recent book is **CHICAGO'S GREAT FIRE: The Destruction and Resurrection of an Iconic American City.**

Northwestern
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Amanda Litman worked for Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign and later co-founded the organization Run for Something. In 2018, she was named to the Politico 50 list of politics influencers, and she was one of Fortune magazine's 2020 "40 Under 40" in government and politics. She wrote her senior project on advertisements for female political candidates.

An American Studies conversation

NGO, Nonprofit, and Policy Careers

An informal career discussion with alumni from American Studies

Sarah Logan '13
Senior Communications Officer
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Christina Powers '13
Global Director of Data & Impact
Generation

Parvathi "Parv" Santhosh-Kumar '10
Vice President of Equitable Results
StriveTogether

Each panelist will talk about their career working in the realms 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

RSVP to jill.mannor@northwestern.edu
Zoom link will be sent to AMST majors directly before the event.

Northwestern
American Studies

An American Studies conversation

Media + Journalism Careers

An informal career discussion with alumni from American Studies

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. Articles/podcasts from each alum will be pre-circulated.

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

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

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American Studies

American Studies in Action



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)

Northwestern American Studies

Winter 2021 American Studies Courses
Open to all undergrads, not just American Studies majors!

BAD NEWS
AMER_ST 310-0-20 and POLI_SCI 390-0-26
• Th 12:30 – 1:50p
• Larry Stuelpnagel (Media)

PASSING
AMER_ST 310-0-20 and AF_AM_ST 380-0-20
• W 11:00a – 12:20p
• Nicolette Bruner (Legal Studies and American Studies)

TRANSNATIONAL ASIAN AMERICAN ACTIVISM
AMER_ST 310-0-30 and ASIAN_AM 320-0-1
• MW 2:00 – 3:20p
• Ida Yazdani (Asian American Studies)

Visit American Studies at amstp.northwestern.edu

Spring 2021 American Studies Northwestern American Studies

CYBORG ENVIRONMENTALISM Technology and the Natural World
AMER_ST 310-0-20 and ENVR_POL 390-0-30
TTh 12:30 – 1:50p (remote/synchronous)
Joseph Whitson (Kaplan Humanities Institute)

When was the last time you talked without a smartphone? What can playing video games teach us about interacting with nature? If you didn't just a picture of a tree in the forest, did you really see it? In this course, digital humanities theory and practice are taught through the lens of environmental studies and political ecology, using cyborg theory to explore how the relationship between humans and the natural world is increasingly shaped by and mediated through digital technologies. This course explores theoretical concepts like cyborgian ecology, the relationship to social media and mobile photography, and digital colonialism, grounding them in tangible examples of digital humanities projects. This course will primarily use lecture-style discussion with some lecture and workshops.

American Studies courses
Open to all undergrads, not just American Studies majors!
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Spring 2021 American Studies Northwestern American Studies

US Media Representations of the Middle East
AMER_ST 310-0-22, ASIAN_AM 303-0-2, and MENA 390-3-22
TTh 2:00 – 3:20p (remote/synchronous)
Ida Yazdani (Asian American Studies)

In this course, we will explore the mediating ways in which the Middle East is visually represented in the United States from the mid-twentieth century to the present, post-9/11 era. Through discussing film, television, and photographic journalism alongside critical works of cultural analysis, we will work through how cultural objects come to function as salient social and political texts that persuade U.S. publics and how they display issues of race, gender, and sexuality. We will begin with foundational theoretical texts that will shape our readings of representations of Southeast Asia/South Africa throughout the course. The majority of the time will then involve around cultural objects and critical texts that shape coverage of Southeast Asia/ North Africa in the United States. We will then end with a look at ways in which Southeast Asian/ North African in the Diaspora use visual culture to contest these insular representations.

American Studies courses
Open to all undergrads, not just American Studies majors!
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Winter 2021 American Studies Northwestern American Studies

PASSING
AMER_ST 310-0-20 and AF_AM_ST 380-0-20
Wed 11:00a – 12:20p (remote/synchronous)
Nicolette Bruner (Legal Studies & American Studies)

In this course, we explore how people move within and between categories of race and gender in the United States, with particular attention to the role of law in the formation and policing of these boundaries. In addition to conventional legal texts, we will draw upon literature, social theory, and cultural ephemera. Readings will include work by Nella Larsen, Charles Chesnut, Alyson Hobbs, Kimberli Crewther, Angela Davis, W.D. Williams, Toni Morrison, Barbara Herrnstein Smith, and others.

American Studies courses
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Spring 2021 American Studies Northwestern American Studies

NATURAL DISASTERS
AMER_ST 310-0-20 and ENVR_POL 390-0-29
MW 11:00a – 12:20p (remote/synchronous)
Nicolette Bruner (Legal Studies & American Studies)

From earthquakes to hurricanes, fires to floods, we tend to think of natural disasters as spontaneous occurrences. The word disaster originates in the idea of being born under an inauspicious constellation or struck down by an unerring fate. When homes are flooded or crops are destroyed, we see the natural world oversteering on lives and livelihoods in seemingly unpredictable and entirely unmitigated ways. But are these disasters truly a product of nature? In this class, we will engage with the complex history of natural disasters: how people experience and rationalize these events, how communities respond to them, and how the causes of disaster are explained by various stakeholders, from victims to insurance companies. By the end of the quarter, students will have developed historical, cultural, and theoretical tools for understanding the nature of the natural disaster.

American Studies courses
Open to all undergrads, not just American Studies majors!
amstp.northwestern.edu