

American Graffiti

Volume 21 ■ 2019-2020



Northwestern | American Studies

Greetings from the American Studies Program

I write this at the end of a fall quarter unlike any other. I hope this finds you well during these difficult times.

The pandemic has meant that we are connecting with each other over Zoom instead of in person. While we've had to put live events on hold, community is still the heart of the Program, so I'm happy that our majors are finding ways to engage with each other despite physical distance. It is a real pleasure to work with such exceptional undergraduate students, and to help them delve into topics and questions meaningful to them by bringing interdisciplinary approaches into conversation. We hosted a stimulating virtual discussion just before the 2020 election with former Program director **Carl Smith** and alumna **Amanda Litman '12** who co-founded the organization *Run for Something* after working for Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign. And we are lucky to have three wonderful faculty collaborating for this year's introductory seminar series, *Peoples, Nations, and Worlds*: **Mérida Rua** (Latina and Latino Studies) in fall quarter, **Michael Allen** (History) in winter, and **Ivy Wilson** (English) in spring.

We are thrilled to welcome **Nicolette Bruner** as an Assistant Professor of Instruction jointly appointed with Legal Studies. Bruner received her Ph.D. in English and her J.D. from the University of Michigan. Her book project, *Thing People: Living with Corporations and Other Nonhumans*, applies her training in corporate law, jurisprudence, and legal history to the literary and cultural study of the nonhuman. She has extensive teaching experience, and her classes will be a wonderful addition to the Program.

The Program's staffing has undergone some restructuring. Program Assistant Imani McPhaden has left to pursue other opportunities, but we are fortunate for a wonderful support team—Tom Burke, Janet Hundrieser, Jill Mannor, and Megan Skord—in a new constellation with Kaplan Humanities Institute and Science in Human Culture.

My hope for this year is that we join together and support each other as we work to better understand the forces, processes, and histories that are shaping our current moment. We are living through great turmoil in the nation and the world as we confront three intersecting crises—COVID, the scourge of racism, and the climate emergency. All are linked by inequalities that put certain communities in greater danger than others. Such connections make clearer than ever the importance of an interdisciplinary program like American Studies that fundamentally considers diverse groups in relation to each other and to society at large. American Studies students are in a unique position to apply their comparative and transnational training—along with the creative thinking and flexibility developed from navigating between disciplines—to help better understand the role of the U.S. and its peoples, historically and today, in all three crises.

We look forward to this academic year and many to follow! We hope you'll stay in touch.



Shana Bernstein
Program Director

On the Cover:
The Majors seminar, Comparative Race and Ethnicity, met online as classes went remote for spring quarter 2020.

Class of 2020

■ This past year the projects produced by the senior seminar's stellar students made clear, as they always do, the value of our deep commitment to a liberal arts education within a research university.



Gabrielle Grossman

Eat Your Veggies and Other Ways to Save the World: On the Cooperative Social Activism of the Jewish Vegetarians of North America

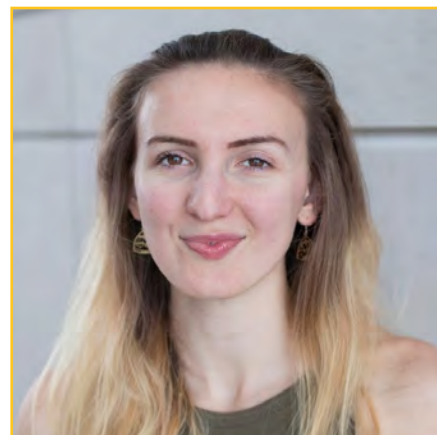
Advisor: Keith Woodhouse (History)



Hannah Lachow

Double Edged Disclosure: A Qualitative Analysis of How Female Friendship Influences Body Image

Advisor: Allysa Levy Chung (Psychology)



Zoe Johnson

"Germinate:" A Theatrical Interrogation of 21st Century Vaccine Hesitancy

Advisor: Cristina L.H. Traina (Religious Studies)



William Paik

The Alt-Right in Berkeley: How the Alt-Right Engage the Public Through Celebrity

Advisor: Ji-Yeon Yuh (History)



Ruby Phillips

The Loving Project: A Creative Analysis of Interracial Love

Advisor: Cheryl Justice
(School of Education and Social Policy)



Meilyn Shi

Physicians on the Picket Line: A Case Study of the 1975 HSA Strike at Cook County Hospital

Advisor: Mark Sheldon (Philosophy)



Amos Pomp

Institutional Logics of Inclusion in Outdoor Adventure Programming: A Case Study of Organizational Conflict

Advisor: Simone Ispa-Landa
(School of Education and Social Policy)



Jon Wolf

The Great Fact Was the Land Itself: Poems And Stories

Advisor: Averill Curdy (English)

2020 Awards

Jay Rosen American Studies Scholarship

Mara Kelly

Phi Beta Kappa

Keerti Gopal
Gabrielle Grossman
Mara Kelly
Hannah Lachow
William Paik
Amos Pomp
Meilynn Shi

Carl Smith Prize for Outstanding Student Essay in American Studies

Hannah Lachow

Double-Edged Disclosure: A Qualitative Analysis of How Female Friendship Influences Body Image

Amos Pomp

Institutional Logics of Inclusion in Outdoor Adventure Programming: A Case Study of Organizational Conflict



In conjunction with Professor Amy Partridge's winter 2020 course, **Reproductive Health/Politics/Justice**, American Studies hosted an outing to see a production of **Roe** at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago. A pre-event discussion of topics relevant to the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* case was held at a nearby restaurant with American Studies majors and students in the Gender and Sexuality Studies Program who attended the play.

Current Majors

■ Class of 2021



Claire Corridon

Claire, a double major in Political Science, is writing her senior thesis on intergenerational contemporary feminist art, race, and futurity.



Mara Kelly

Mara double majors in Religious Studies with a concentration in Religion, Law, and Politics. Her senior thesis looks at the 2010 “Ground Zero Mosque” controversy as a case study of how right-wing ideas are amplified in mainstream media.



Sam Gardner

Sam’s concentration is on Economics and History. He is writing his senior thesis on the use of alternative data in the U.S. consumer credit market.



Danielle Kosover

Dani’s concentration is on African American and Latinx Studies, with a particular focus on race-making within the U.S. and Latin America. They are minoring in Spanish.



Keerti Gopal

Keerti’s concentration is on social movements and societal change, with a particular focus on climate justice and youth activism. She is minoring in Creative Writing.



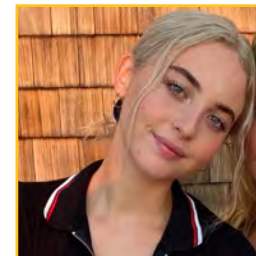
Matthew Marth

Matt, a Legal Studies double major, is interested in urban history, housing policy, and what people do together when they aren’t working. He is writing his senior thesis on the history of community facilities in public housing in Chicago.



Vivien Hough

Vivien is minoring in Business Institutions. She is writing her senior thesis on the role of the media in constructing notions of Black criminality in the 1980s.



Julia Tarnow

Julia is pursuing a minor in Environmental Policy and Culture and a certificate from the Institute for Sustainability at Northwestern (ISEN). She is currently writing her thesis on questioning the true sustainability of sustainable fashion.

■ Class of 2022



Margot Bartol

Margot is an Economics double major with a minor in Chinese. She is interested in Sino-American relations and development economics.



Daisy Conant

Daisy's interests lie at the intersection of identity, political representation, and law in America, as well as the evolution and coalitional politics of social movements.



Caleigh Bell-Rosof

Caleigh is minoring in Legal Studies, and plans to center 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 double majors in Social Policy with a minor in Gender and Sexuality Studies. Her concentration focuses on representations of femininity and girlhood in pop culture.



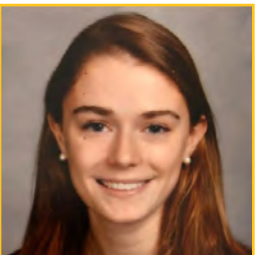
Thomas Bentsen

Tom is a Theatre double major and Dance minor. He is interested in the intersection of history, sexuality studies, and media/aesthetic analysis.



Jack Jordan

Jack is interested in local-level responses to issues of climate change and environmental justice in American cities, suburbs, and tribal lands through his double major in Environmental Science.



Margaret Cheever

Maggie is minoring in Environmental Policy and Culture. She plans to center her work in American Studies on the theme of displacement, examining intersections between climate change and refugee law and policy.



Thea Showalter

Thea is interested in issues surrounding immigration, racial justice, and international law. She also minors in sociology.

■ Class of 2023



Danielle Spitz

Danielle double majors in History, with a special interest in 20th Century U.S. legal history. She assists with research in Gender and Sexuality Studies on the Chicago women's health movement of the 1970s-80s.



Maddie Brown

Maddie is studying social justice movements, legal and political strategy, and the ways these forces interact with gender.



Caleb Young

Caleb is a Political Science double major. He is interested in studying issues of sovereignty and citizenship.



Dori-Taylor Carter

Dori-Taylor's research focuses on the U.S. Census. Her interests include ethnic studies, gender and sexuality studies, and feminist theory.



Sunnie Eraso

Sunnie double majors in Theatre and is pursuing the Music Theatre Certificate. She is interested in how artistic creation and representation can affirm the mixed race identity and experience in America.



Eva Herscowitz

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

■ Student Advisory Board (SAB) Representatives for 2020-2021

Maggie Cheever & Keerti Gopal

Two Conversations

Senior Program Administrator **Tom Burke** talks with recent grad **Amos Pomp** and current senior **Keerti Gopal** about the impact of their American Studies major.



Tom: *Congratulations on graduating last spring. How are things? What are you up to?*

Amos: I stayed in Evanston post-grad. I had a part-time position with an outdoor adventure therapy nonprofit that transitioned to fulltime in July. I lead experiential activities with teens, and we did have some programs this summer/fall. But since many of our partners were unable to run this year, we've spent time on staff training—canoeing, sailing, therapeutic techniques—and equipment maintenance, along with administrative tasks.

Tell us a little bit about your senior project.

It was about the diversity and inclusion movement in the U.S. outdoor industry. I dug into the history of “wilderness,” outdoor recreation and adventure, and social norms and ideas surrounding who the outdoors “belongs to” and who “belongs” in the outdoors. I found that people are retelling erased histories of the relationships of Black, indigenous, queer, trans, and disabled people to the outdoors, and many people and organizations have created outdoor affinity groups and inclusive outdoor programming to practically and actively “diversify” the outdoors. I also conducted ethnographic interviews and observations at an outdoor adventure programming nonprofit with a mission of inclusion and analyzed the relationships of administrators to the inclusive mission versus the lived experience of ground-level staff members and with clients.

How has the work you did on that project translated into your current or future life?

I think my thesis was a big factor in getting hired for my current position. I wanted an outdoor programming job with a focus on equity and inclusion, and my thesis experience helped me land a position in exactly that field. It also prepared me with plenty of language and references to use in discussions this past summer about how to make our organization even more focused on racial justice and inclusive programming. In a more nebulous sense, my project has provided me with a network (for rec letters, friendships, potential job opportunities, potential roommates in new cities) and skills that I might use one day if I go to grad school. Re-reading my thesis every now and then also gives me a bit of a confidence boost, like, “Hey, I did that!”



Amos Pomp '20
Alumnus

Tom: Tell me about your senior project, and also a bit of your approach to choosing your coursework. Do you feel you were a good fit for the way American Studies majors select the courses that will fulfill their major?

Keerti: I love the way American Studies majors get to choose courses from different departments and craft their own concentration—it's the biggest thing that drew me to the program in the first place! At first, I honestly just picked the courses that sounded the most exciting to me, but as I went on, I noticed some patterns, and, ultimately, honed my focus on social movements and social change, which brought me to my senior project. Two summers ago, through an Undergrad Research Grant, I got involved with the Sunrise Movement, which is a national youth-led climate justice network fighting for a Green New Deal. Sunrise has a really robust digital presence—they're super active on Instagram, TikTok, Twitter. So for my senior project I'm looking at how the online and social media tactics used by Sunrise Movement have influenced youth politicization and the public profile of the Green New Deal, to study the role that digital organizing can play in new social movements.

Switching gears, I'd like to ask you about this past fall, during Covid—can you give us an idea of how school has been for you? It's obviously a challenging time, so I want to encourage you to be candid here.

I was a part-time student this quarter, taking two classes so I could spend more time working with Sunrise Movement on the election and also continue an internship I'd started with Sara Gideon's Maine senate campaign over the summer. In a lot of ways I felt much more detached from school than usual, but for me this quarter was defined by the election and by the conversations and activism that have been happening on campus. It has been such a scary year in so many ways, but I've seen a lot of people make a serious effort to get involved, whether through phone banking to get out the vote or attending protests against racism and police brutality, and it's been really heartening to see people mobilize like that. I'm especially proud of my peers who've been leading the calls for abolition at Northwestern, pushing the administration to address racism and reimagine what safety on campus can and should look like. In terms of the pandemic, this year has been hard on everyone, but I've been really lucky to be safe and healthy and surrounded by great friends.

It's so encouraging to hear stories about getting involved. Now, here's a question that I sort of love and hate asking seniors: Do you have plans for post-graduation?

I currently have no plans for post-graduation! Ideally at some point I'd love to work at the intersection of climate justice and storytelling, and I'm really interested in advocacy/political narrative work, but post-graduation I'm just looking for a job that feels like it will make a positive impact and help me learn.



Keerti Gopal
Senior, Class of 2021

- Read the full interviews on the American Studies website: amstp.northwestern.edu
- > People
- > Students
- > Student Conversations

Curriculum 2019-20

Seminars for Majors

Fall *Resistance: Germany 1939 / America 1969*
Robert Orsi & Christine Helmer (Religious Studies & German)

Winter *Work, Labor, and Social Formation*
Ivy Wilson (English)

Spring *Comparative Race and Ethnicity*
Shana Bernstein (American Studies and Legal Studies)

Other Courses

Asian American Digital Cultures
Raymond San Diego (Asian American Studies)

Catholic 60s
Robert Orsi (Religious Studies)

Introduction to Pragmatism
Axel Mueller & Mauricio Maluff Masi (Philosophy)

Critical Race and Gender Theory
José Medina (Philosophy)

Sex and the American Empire: Journalism and Frames
Steven Thrasher (Journalism)

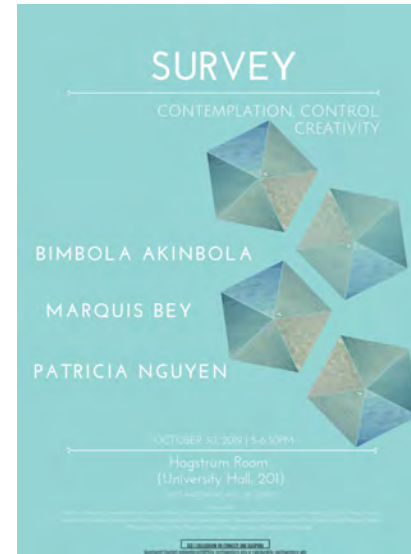
Bad News
Lawrence Stuelpnagel (Journalism)

Filipina/o/x American Cultural Studies
Raymond San Diego (Asian American Studies)

American Judaism
Claire Sufryn (Religious Studies)

Events

Co-sponsored by
American Studies



Northwestern Prison Education Program



