

Notes from Abroad continued

Kristin Buterbaugh, American Studies Program, Class of 2009

I came to Northwestern knowing that I would someday become a physician. At the start of university, I had a very conventional idea of how I would practice medicine. However, the interdisciplinary framework of American Studies broadened my view on the importance of historical and cultural competency in medicine and compelled me to reconceptualize what kind of doctor I would become. Thanks to my intellectual rearing in the American Studies program, I was accepted to the Mount Sinai School of Medicine during my sophomore year at Northwestern through the “Humanities and Medicine” Early Acceptance Program. I credit the American Studies

program and the program’s advisers during my time at NU (Professors Kate Baldwin and Jay Grossman) for instilling in me the interdisciplinary goal to bridge the “two cultures” of the sciences and the arts.

Since graduating from Northwestern in June 2009, I have moved to the University of Cambridge to pursue a Masters of Philosophy in the History and Philosophy of Science (HPS) on a Gates Cambridge Scholarship. My research interests in the history of medicine concentrate on gender, reproduction, and technology. My work throughout the year has focused on uncovering the voices of marginalized groups in the history of medicine, whether it be the historical construction of the medical student, the female voice, or discredited medical practices. Continuing in this vein,

my dissertation focuses on the consideration of disability and the male body in the history of medicine.

Outside of academics, this year has proved to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience! I have participated in storied traditions such as formal dinners in medieval buildings, “punting” on the River Cam, and singing soprano for the King’s College Choir in the famed King’s Chapel. I have also received a warm welcome into the Gates Cambridge Community. Through our many events, I have made lifelong friends and stretched my intellectual limits. In particular, I will recall discussions from the Gates Scholars’ academic symposium on “Theory and Practice” as I continue to bridge the humanities and medicine in my future professional career. ●

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A Message from the Director

By Kate Baldwin

It is with great excitement that I write my first Director’s message for the American Studies Newsletter. I am fortunate to be following in the footsteps of venerable predecessors. Much is owed to them: Carl Smith and Jay Grossman have given generously of their time and expertise to guide me around the stars and stripes of the Program. And, due in no small part to their tutelage, it has been a flagship period for American Studies. We have had two phenomenal years of research, writing, teaching, and extra-curriculars. All in all, it has been a period of tremendous growth. From hosting Open Houses and the new reading group titled Middle Mondays, to hearing Michael Chabon lecture to a standing room only crowd and attending the Presidential Inauguration in D.C., it has been a period that has engendered an enormous sense of community and togetherness in the Program.

In addition, we have had the pleasure of new faculty joining our ranks: Teaching the seminar over the past two years were Professor Martin Redish of the Law School, Professor Ivy Wilson of the English Department, Professor Joe Barton of History, Professor John Cutler of English and Latino/a Studies, Professor Jan Radway of Communication Studies, and Professor Jay Grossman of English. Professor Julia Stern continued to teach her over-subscribed seminar on Faulkner. Jim Wascher taught his ever-popular course on the Voting Rights Act, and Larry Stuelphagel continued to comment on the “Bad News” around us.

Since donning the hat of Director in September 2008, I have begun an internal review of the program. Conducted by a Program Committee of faculty from across



Kate Baldwin, director of American Studies, Jay Grossman, director of American Studies 2005-2008

the University, the review was prompted by an incentive to promote more collaboration between our program and other programs affiliated with American Studies, such as African American Studies, Asian American Studies, Performance Studies, and the newly ensconced Program in Latino/a Studies. The result of the review thus far has resulted in only a slight change. The structure of the program remains the same: all students take the seminar in their first year as majors; and all seniors take the senior seminar. All majors must amass their “major requirements” from ten related courses, and complete two quarters of the American History survey. The one change is that students who enter as sophomores are no longer required to take two years of the seminar. This arrangement opens up some space in our seminar for interested majors in the programs mentioned above;

and also provides the opportunity for us to benefit from the faculty resources of these programs. It is a win-win situation for the program, as our faculty pool expands and our students benefit from the insights and interests of students in these affiliated programs. In lieu of the seminar, second-year majors who are not seniors are responsible for running the Middle Mondays reading group. This group meets once a quarter, and last year we read pieces as wide-ranging as an article from the Atlantic, Edgar Allan Poe’s “Ulalume,” and Abraham

Lincoln’s second Inaugural address. In addition, I have revived the American Studies Reading group. This is a faculty and graduate student group that gathers each quarter to read a book, which is then discussed with one volunteer faculty leading the discussion. Our first book was Ussama Makdisi’s *Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East*. This book won the American Studies Association’s prize for best book of 2008.

Speaking of inaugurations: the American Studies Program witnessed the swearing-in of our nation’s first African American President. It was a momentous occasion and one in which we proudly participated. Although the weather was frigid (“Hot Hands” heaters were stuffed into many a boot), we toughed out dawn on the Mall, to sing, dance and weep with our fellow Americans. Staying near the site of

A Message from the Director continued

the Battle of Manassas, we were interested to learn alongside our Revolutionary History crib notes that the twentieth-century claim to fame for Manassas is its link to Lorena Bobbit.

Other highlights of the 2009 year included visits to MOCA and a performance of JARRED by Chicago's Teatro Luna; an event titled "Lincoln's Language," celebrating the Lincoln bicentennial at which esteemed Lincoln scholars Garry Wills, Doug Wilson, and NU's own Professor David Zarefsky presented accounts of the second inaugural address. This event was co-sponsored by a variety of departments, including Communication Studies, History and English.

In April 2009 we hosted the Pulitzer Prize winning author Michael Chabon, as part of our "Great Authors" lecture series, which continues to be generously supported by the office of the President. This series asks its speakers to comment on an American author of their choosing, and Mr. Chabon wrote a lecture on Poe for the event. A quick Google search revealed that the talk showed up on many blogs as the Chicago literary event of the spring!

Also in 2009 we welcomed Professor Carla Kaplan to campus where she read a section from her new book *Miss Anne of Harlem*, a study of the white female patrons of the Harlem Renaissance. And in October we helped to fund a symposium to mark the 50th anniversary of Lorraine Hansberry's "A Raisin in the Sun." In the winter of 2010 Hazel Carby read to us from her memoir of growing up as a black youth in London. As always, the Program seeks to collaborate with departments and programs across the campus to produce programming that keeps students stimulated and enthused.

Over the winter holidays we raised money and wrapped gifts for NUSAC's outreach programs: our winter party was a wrapping one! We also toured the American art of Chicago's Art Institute, and had dinner at the Eleven City Diner. The annual end of year picnic was at my house, a detour from the usual venue. Phenomenal weather provided a perfect venue for the first annual American Studies ping-pong tournament.

This year we welcome a new crop of ten seniors who will be writing their theses under the direction of Professor Jay Grossman. In addition, we welcome fifteen new students to the program—a year of record applications to the program made the decisions for the admissions committee particularly difficult. We

Michael Chabon, April 13, 2009 lecture: On Edgar Allan Poe



also have had the pleasure of welcoming Professor Janice Radway, former President of the American Studies Association, to our faculty. In addition to these events, we continue to enjoy a range of 301s, or elective courses, including a course on trauma and Vietnam, the American Century in Asia, the history of higher education in America, and America in the world.

2010 Seniors celebrate at the annual American Studies BBQ.



Notes from Abroad

Sam Kleiner, American Studies Program, Class of 2009

I didn't know what I should expect in undertaking two years at Oxford after graduating. I had only visited the UK once before, when I was twelve, and I approached my departure with a bit of apprehension. A year later, I can confidently say that all of my worrying was unnecessary.

Oxford's towers may be ancient and the winters may be freezing (with only a few hours of sunlight) but the university is filled with teachers and students who have unlimited interest in their subject, and yours as well. My college, St. Antony's College, prides itself on being the most cosmopolitan of the graduate colleges with students from over 50 countries studying different facets of international politics. Over a dinner in hall, I would find that our table would regularly have six or more countries represented at it. My peers in the M.Phil in International Relations

are researching everything from UN peacekeeping to international financial regulation but we all have been able to help each other move projects forward.

The year has taken me to places that I had never thought I would travel to. Going to a small fishing town in Cornwall has been equally as important to me as visiting London and the ease of travel within the UK has made travel throughout Europe an easy option for our eight-week long breaks from class. Whether it was being in Berlin for the 20th anniversary of the fall of the wall or going to Galway for St. Patrick's day with friends or traveling by bus across Turkey with a high-school friend, the year has brought new vistas into how I view the world.

Perhaps the most invigorating part of the year, though, has been to further define my own research interests. American Studies prepared me to confront questions in unorthodox ways and to think creatively with research. I knew

that I was interested in constitutional and international law and ended up being interested in America's entry into the Korean War (an action taken under UN authorization without Congressional authorization). Rather than write about what had already been written, I spent a week at the Truman Library in Independence,



Samuel Kleiner and Kristin Buterbaugh, Class of 2009 & Recipients of Marshall and Gates Cambridge Scholarships

Missouri doing archival research (a skill I had learned in my research for American Studies.) Over the next months, I will be writing up those discoveries for my thesis.

As I return to Oxford for my 2nd year I intend to make the most of my time there. If it is anything like this past year, I know it will be filled with many unforgettable moments.

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