

AMERICAN GRAFFITI

THE AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM AT NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY • WEINBERG COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES

VOLUME 12, FALL 2011



A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

BY KATE BALDWIN

There is a lot to celebrate in American Studies at the end of the academic 2010-11 year. Not only has it been a year of enormous changes for our curriculum, but we've seen our students stretch themselves and excel, many of them awarded with prestigious prizes and fellowships to honor their accomplishments. We also were proud to host a series of popular speaker events, starting off in the fall with NYU scholar Moustafa Bayoumi, continuing with a symposium to mark the Mark Twain anniversary, and capping off with the co-sponsorship of an international conference titled, "Globalizing American Studies."

Bayoumi's talk, "How Does it Feel to be a Problem? Being and Young and Arab in the U.S." drew a diverse crowd from Chicago, Evanston, and the Northwestern community. The Mark Twain symposium, Twain in the 21st Century, featured senior scholars Jonathan Arac of Columbia and Susan Gillman of UCSC, and marked the occasion of the publication of Twain's autobiography. We also hosted two scholars from University of Indiana, Bloomington, Ned O'Gorman and Kevin Hamilton, who co-wrote and presented a talk titled, "We are All Operators Now: Gender at the Cold War Nuclear Console;" and in the winter our students were delighted to hear local media expert and Notre Dame professor Jim Collins's talk, "Coming Soon to a Screen Near You: Literary Experiences across Digital Cultures." "Globalizing American Studies," co-sponsored with the Center for Global Culture and Communication, took the campus by storm. There was standing room only to hear scholars from a range of countries including India, Ireland, Italy, and Egypt talk about the impact, imagination, and resistance

to Americanization around the globe. Later in the spring, we welcomed Assistant Professor John Low (Ph.D. University of Michigan), who spoke to us about local Potawatomi culture and history. We are very pleased that Professor Low will be joining us from the University of Illinois at Bloomington, where he has been on fellowship, and that he will be teaching American Indian Studies in the Program next year.

Throughout the year our students worked hard in and out of the classroom. As a Program we sponsored and served two sack lunches at the First Congregational Church of Evanston, part of Inter-faith Action's soup kitchen program in Evanston. Several of our students were engaged with the Living Wage Campaign; others led committees on the Dean's Student Advisory Board and the Center for Civic Engagement (SEED); and some continued their scholarship from abroad.

I will never cease to be amazed by the students' commitment to building a community of scholars; and by the various ways they are able to bring this sense of commitment and social alliance to the communities around them, including those at Northwestern and the cities surrounding us. It has been a pleasure to work with these students over the last three years, to witness their numerous accomplishments and to see their scholarly and leadership potentials build and flourish as majors. Every year, it is difficult to say goodbye to our crop of seniors, who spend the year devoted to writing their senior essays and in so doing build strong bonds of senior camaraderie within the major.

As always the sadness of saying goodbye also dovetails with the pleasure of welcoming our new majors, ten this year, a fantastic group of entering sophomores and juniors who will be the first to experience the guidelines of the new curriculum.

In March the Program Committee's proposal for new requirements for the major was approved, and we have a new curriculum that engages with other programs on campus connected to American Studies, including African American Studies, Latino/a Studies, and Asian American Studies. (For more details about these changes, please see the section "What's New in American Studies.") With a comparativist and globally-oriented curriculum, not only will American Studies continue to be a vital hub of intellectual activity for our students, it will be a leader in the interdisciplinary program building of Weinberg College. As we implement a new American Studies for a new decade and a new century, we are excited about remaining one of Weinberg's flagship programs. Please join me in congratulating all those who worked hard to make the new American Studies a reality, including Professors Carl Smith and Jay Grossman; Program Assistant Natasha Dennison; and our majors, whose many talents and ranges of expertise are detailed in the following articles.

Here's to a thriving future of Americanist scholarship at Northwestern!



L-R: Professor Carl Smith, Program Director Kate Baldwin, and Professor Jay Grossman.

WHY DO STUDENTS JOIN AMERICAN STUDIES?



JONATHAN CLOW, WCAS 2012

The American Studies program offers the chance to study and learn with some of the most driven, intellectual students and faculty on campus. This diverse community of scholars appealed to me. To participate in an academic culture focused on this concept of America, from multiple perspectives, with various methodologies, is an opportunity unlike any other on campus.



CHRIS BOHL, WCAS 2013

I found the American Studies program appealing because of the outstanding teaching and the ability to take seminars with the same group of students, allowing for scintillating academic conversations both inside and outside the classroom. American Studies has provided an opportunity to extend my love of history to a place where I can take a more active role in the classroom than in the lecture hall and truly exercise critical thinking skills. The program has also provided some of my closest friends on campus, as well as clarity of purpose in what I want to study during my years at Northwestern. My American Studies concentration is the "Economics of Education," and I have taken courses from a variety of departments for the major, including sociology, humanities, and statistics.

SAMANTHA OFFSAY, WCAS 2013

I am interested in the interdisciplinary approach of American Studies; I believe that every class has the ability to add to one's understanding of another subject and am grateful to have a major that affords me the opportunity to better understand all aspects of American culture.



HAYLEY ALTABEF, WCAS 2012

I am a Weinberg Junior, and I became an American Studies major because I wanted to take an integrated approach to my liberal arts education. The American Studies program has allowed me to investigate my interest in race and immigration through the lenses of English, History, and African American Studies.



HYUNGJOO HAN, WCAS 2013

I first found out about American Studies from a current major who recommended the program. As I began to find out more information about American Studies, I was very attracted to its small size, the seminar series for majors, and its emphasis on conducting independent research. I knew I would benefit greatly from the small class size because it would provide an opportunity for me to interact and get to know the other majors as well as the professors. My experience thus far has been very rewarding - intellectually stimulating and challenging at the same time - and it is exciting to work and learn with other program majors whose knowledge enrich class discussions.



CHRISTINA POWERS, WCAS 2012

I was originally interested in American Studies for the flexibility of the program; the ability to take courses across a multitude of disciplines has been a formative element of my undergraduate education. It is only after having been in the seminar sequence this year that I've come to truly experience the interdisciplinary nature of American Studies through the seminar topics, my professors, and of course, my peers. The program, both in and outside of the classroom, is challenging, yet engaging - and probably one of the strongest sources of academic community at Northwestern.

WHAT'S NEW IN AMERICAN STUDIES?

BY KATE BALDWIN

Since its inception in 1974 the Northwestern American Studies Program has successfully drawn upon the expertise of Americanist faculty and the intellectual curiosity of its students to be one of the most successful interdisciplinary majors in Weinberg College. The small seminar setting, flexible curriculum designed by each student, close working relationship between students and faculty, strong focus on writing, and year-long senior research project are all elements of the Program that have contributed to its continued success.

Growing on this success, in 2011 the Program underwent a major curriculum revision in order to respond to the evolution of American Studies as a discipline over the last few decades. Our new curriculum offers a course of study that reflects the intellectual project of American Studies as not only interdisciplinary but also intercultural and comparativist at root. We encourage study of the development and expressions of national culture alongside borderland and diasporic American cultures, and how they have changed over time. American Studies continues to offer its students small seminars and a close research relationship with a faculty adviser in the senior year. At the same time American Studies now provides students with the advantages of investigating from several perspectives the diverse experiences of Americans locally, nationally, and globally.

Our move towards a more inclusive American Studies makes prominent and essential inter-ethnic, racial, and socio-economic concerns. Each student must declare an area of concentration that is comparative or global in focus. We also encourage students to

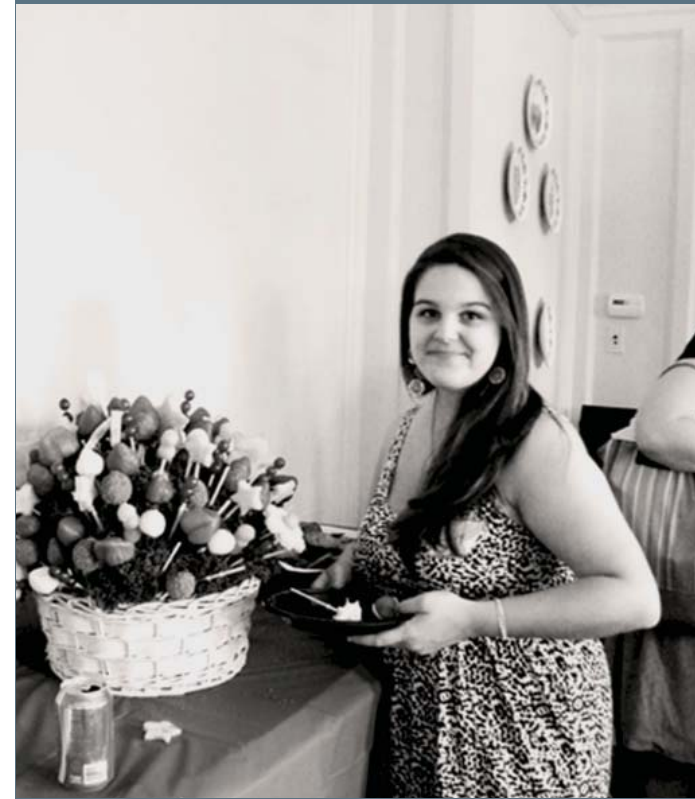
double major, especially if they are interested in ethnic American studies and would like to be involved in an honors curriculum to pursue their interests.

Likewise, these changes help to formalize collaboration with other Americanist programs and departments that are on campus (African American Studies, Asian American Studies, Gender Studies, Latina/o Studies) and centers (Center for Forced Migration Studies, the Buffet Center, Center for Global Culture and Communication). These programs and centers have emerged as a focus on interdisciplinary scholarship has become the rule rather than the exception; and they have emerged in an effort to address faculty and student interests in pursuing interdisciplinarity in depth.

Moreover, with the new formation of American Studies, we aim to diversify the student body of the Program, appealing to a wider range of students who might seek out American Studies as the place where they can do a project on Asian and Latino literature; or a project on inter-ethnic conflict in the transatlantic trade market.

Finally, we are interested in actively helping American Studies majors become productive members of an increasingly diverse and globalized U.S. Through exposure to various cultural literacies and ethnic formations, and emphases on both written and verbal analytical skills culminating in the successful completion of an independent research project in the senior year, we plan on continuing to see our majors thrive in the 21st century world.

New major Bridget Illing at the program's annual end-of-year picnic at the John Evans Alumni Center (June 1, 2011).



CONGRATULATIONS!

The Weinberg College Student Advisory Board (SAB) is the primary source of student advice to the Dean of the College and the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies. It plays a central role in the nomination of faculty and TAs for Weinberg College Outstanding Teaching awards, and it selects Weinberg College students to serve on several vital committees. The SAB recommends a speaker for Weinberg College Convocation to the Dean.

The board consists of a representative from each major in the college, selected by the chair of the department or director of the program; an alternate is also selected to serve when the representative is unavailable. Representatives and alternates hold their positions for one academic year. The SAB elects its own officers and welcomes your input.

2010-2011: **Kristin Coveney (board co-president) and Andrew Levin**

2011-2012: **Andrew Levin and Sarah Logan**

Please join the Office of the Provost and the Undergraduate Research Grants Committee in congratulating the following American Studies majors who have each been awarded a \$3,000 URG for the summer of 2011:

Lauren Buxbaum, “War of the Women’s Worlds: Social Tension between the Public and Private Spheres in 19th Century America” (Faculty Advisor: Henry Binford, History)

Jonathan Green, “John Quincy Adams, Friedrich von Gentz, and the Nature of the American Revolution” (Faculty Advisor: Mark Alznauer, Philosophy)

Please join us in congratulating **Josh Levin, Jonathan Green, Jordan Fein, and Kristin Coveney** on their achievement in being elected to Phi Beta Kappa. All have remarkable and distinguished academic records. Josh, Jonathan, and Jordan were elected as *juniors* which is a special honor for them and for the Program. We are extremely proud of all these students.

Victoria Scheerer and Adam Yalowitz were co-recipients of the 2011 Jay A. Rosen Scholarship Fund for American Studies. **Nora Gannon** was the Gilder Lehrman History Scholar Finalist and won a \$1,500 fellowship for their one-week summer scholar program. **Jordan Fein** was the 2011 recipient of the Kenneth Janda Prize for Best Undergraduate Honors Thesis in Political Science.



Students and faculty relaxing on the stairs of the John Evans Alumni Center at the Program’s annual end of year picnic on Wednesday, June 1, 2011.

DEPARTMENTAL HONORS FOR AMERICAN STUDIES 2010-11:

Kristin Lisa Coveney • Jordan Fein • Kristen Frances Sun
Michael Gilbert Lobel • Michael Robert Waxman • Victoria Lea Scheerer

THE LIVING WAGE CAMPAIGN

BY JORDAN FEIN, WCAS 2011

The Northwestern Living Wage Campaign is a group of students, staff, faculty and workers seeking to institute a living wage policy that would pay workers wages enabling them to provide basic necessities to their families. We believe in the value of community at Northwestern, and that all members of this community must be treated fairly. To this end, we advocate the implementation of a living wage for all our campus workers. The Living Wage Campaign began at Northwestern in the fall of 2009 as an effort of the Northwestern Community

Development Corps, the umbrella organization for community engagement on campus. After hearing about several Northwestern workers who were living out of their cars and in homeless shelters, a few NCDC members decided to investigate how low wages impacted workers on campus. The committee came to understand that the current wages paid to Northwestern workers did not allow them to meet a reasonable standard of living in Chicago. The Living Wage Campaign aims to create a more inclusive Northwestern community by fighting for economic and social justice on campus.

After a year, the Living Wage Campaign has made great progress, but much work remains. We believe

that Northwestern should provide for every member of its community, and that raising workers' poverty wages to a standard allowing them to meet basic needs would make Northwestern a better place to work, study and live.

GOALS OF THE LIVING WAGE CAMPAIGN

- 1) That Northwestern University implements a living wage policy mandating that all workers, whether directly employed by the university or subcontracted through other companies, earn a wage enabling them to meet their basic needs without laying off workers.
- 2) That a Committee comprised of administrators, faculty, staff and students be established to ensure



that wages mandated by the living wage policy reflect changes to the cost of living in Cook County.

3) That workers be treated as members of the Northwestern University community and accordingly receive the benefits and recognition to which they are entitled.

WHAT IS A LIVING WAGE?

A living wage reflects the actual costs of living in a particular area, and thereby overcomes the deficiencies in minimum wage rates that consign many to a life of poverty. Living wage policies aim to set a wage floor high enough so that a full-time worker can support a family of three or four at a

living standard above the poverty line. The Heartland Alliance's "Self-Sufficiency Standard," one example of a living wage, employs real costs for housing, food, transportation, health care, household and personal care items, and taxes to provide a "no-frills budget" for working families.

CAN A LIVING WAGE WORK AT NORTHWESTERN?

A living wage policy at Northwestern would enable workers to provide basic necessities to their families. Georgetown University workers are paid a living wage of \$14 per hour, an amount indexed for inflation and cost of living every year. This policy has been implemented without laying off workers.

Northwestern can afford to finance a living wage policy using its \$6.3 billion endowment and \$1.5 billion annual budget. Just ten miles down Sheridan Road, the DePaul Living Wage Campaign recently succeeded in raising worker wages from \$9.25 to a minimum of between \$11.80 and \$14.30 per hour. They accomplished this despite having an endowment less than four percent as large as Northwestern's. If DePaul can find the money to finance a living wage, so can Northwestern.

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Photos courtesy of the NU Living Wage Campaign.

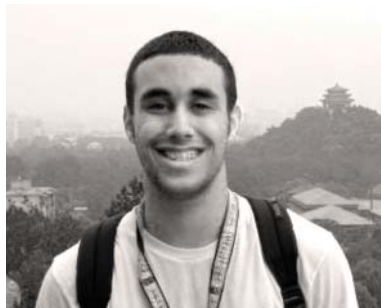


BUILDING COMMUNITY: HERE & ABROAD

STUDY ABROAD

BY NATHAN ENFIELD, WCAS 2012

I knew exactly three people when I landed at Heathrow for my year abroad. All were Northwestern alumni pursuing graduate degrees in England, and two were former American Studies majors. To be honest, I did not expect any of them to figure prominently in my transition to English culture and academic life, but being able to tap into this network proved one of the greatest luxuries of my time here. The intellectual atmosphere at my English university differed quite a bit from Northwestern's, and I called upon each of these individuals more than once with questions about how to adjust. For example, instead of the small, discussion-based class typical of an American Studies seminar, I found myself in an even smaller, one-on-one tutorial with a professor twice weekly. Usually, my paper in response to the week's question would be due before tutorial and my tutor would then prepare questions and discussion points for our session. People told me ahead of time that class would feel more like going to court, where my thesis



would be on trial and I would be in charge of defending it. But despite the warnings, I sank quite a bit before I learned how to swim in this

system. Thankfully, I could talk to my friends from NU about how to improve. Their advice was invaluable and they helped me get the most out of my studies.

I grew more adjusted as the year progressed and felt as though I had hit my stride by the half way mark of first term. I started attending some fantastic lectures and reading groups that ultimately helped sharpen my interests for a senior project next year. I came to England with a desire to learn more about colonial America, especially from a British perspective. My tutors and friends helped me take what I had previously studied about this subject and fit it within a broader, more transnational frame of reference. I developed a newfound appreciation for the multiplicity of cultures, backgrounds, and world views that intersected in Britain's North American colonies. My coursework helped reinforce this point because most of it approached colonial America with a strong emphasis on politics within the first British Empire. I think I came to England with somewhat of limited view of America before the Revolution, but now I am leaving with one that is more informed of the larger global affairs of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

In addition to my history coursework, I was able to get a pretty thorough introduction to different facets of modern British culture. No matter the location, I think university-life can sometimes feel like it exists within a cultural bubble, but thankfully I was able to get out and explore the country.

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SUSTAINABILITY AT NU: GOING GREEN ON CAMPUS

Northwestern University is committed to promoting sustainability on campus and beyond. Visit www.northwestern.edu/studentaffairs/sustainability so you can learn about NU's Green Initiatives, upcoming events, and ways to get involved in the sustainability movement. Northwestern students are dedicated to making NU a haven for environmental advocacy, bringing in prominent speakers and organizing legislative initiatives. You can learn more about students' sustainable achievements by reading the profiles of student environmental initiatives.

Pictured below is one of our majors participating in **Prairie Project**, a weekly service project led by the Students for Ecological and Environmental Development (SEED). The program gives students



the opportunity to visit local prairie preserves and help remove invasive species. §

Elisa Redish, American Studies Class of 2011, volunteering at a local prairie preserve and clearing away buckthorn.

LIVING WAGE CAMPAIGN TIMELINE

2009

September: The NCDC education committee begins to organize about the living wage issue.

November: Campaign organizers gather over 500 petition signatures in only two weeks.

2010

February: Living Wage Rally gathered over 400 students, faculty, workers, and community members gathered outside of the President's office.

April: NU administration agrees to community benefits for workers, including transportation and education benefits.

June: General Faculty Committee issues statement supporting instituting a living wage policy at Northwestern.

July and August: Campaign organizes with janitors who were not receiving overtime pay.

October: Over 100 students, workers and faculty supported living wages at the Homecoming Parade.

November: Campaign co-sponsors activist Cleve Jones to speak to the NU community.

2011

January: Planning begins for Living Wage Conference and continued community and interfaith outreach

February: Over 1500 students and 120 faculty sign the living wage petition.

May: the Northwestern Faculty Senate passes a Living Wage Resolution, stating it is NU's duty to ensure a living wage for all workers and asking the administration to create a committee to implement a plan.

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AMERICAN STUDIES + THE LWC

ADAM YALOWITZ, WCAS 2011

Several American Studies majors helped to initiate and continue to lead the Northwestern Living Wage Campaign, a student-led coalition of workers, students, faculty and staff aimed at enacting a university-wide policy to guarantee a living wage for all university staff and subcontracted campus employees. In the 2009-2010 school year, current American Studies seniors Jordan Fein, Michael Waxman and Adam Yalowitz, American Studies alumnus Matthew Fischler, and two other current majors -- sophomore Will Bloom and junior Hayley Altabef, launched the campaign with other students after learning about unfair labor conditions for many food service and janitorial workers on campus. Working with students from the Northwestern Community Development Corps (NCDC), Alianza - the Hispanic/Latino Student Alliance, For Members Only (FMO) - the Black Student Alliance, and the Northwestern chapter of the Roosevelt Institute, the Living Wage Campaign launched a petition in late fall of 2009 that quickly garnered over 1,500 student signatures and the support of the student government. In February, 2010 over 400 Northwestern community members rallied outside Northwestern President Morton Schapiro's office in favor of a living wage policy that would ensure that all campus workers make a wage that enables them to provide basic necessities for themselves and their families, including housing, healthcare, food, and transportation. That spring, the university administration agreed to extend community benefits to subcontracted workers, including transportation, library and education privileges already available to

other staff. Over the summer, student organizers worked with campus janitors facing wage theft -- not being paid for their work -- and helped them recover pay to which they were entitled.

This school year, American Studies majors have continued to lead the Living Wage Campaign in raising awareness about the living wage issues and of working conditions on campus. In the fall, the campaign hosted renowned LGBT and human rights activist Cleve Jones. Students also began organizing a leadership committee of dining hall workers in preparation for upcoming contract negotiations between Sodexo and UNITE-HERE Local 1, which begin this upcoming summer. In the spring, students planned a conference with support from the American Studies Program, which over 600 students and 80 workers attended. The Living Wage Conference featured leading national scholars on poverty, inequality and social movements, with a keynote address by Barbara Ehrenreich, author of the New York Times bestselling book *Nickel and Dime*. Shortly after the conference, the Northwestern faculty senate voted overwhelmingly in favor of a university living wage policy and called on the university administration to establish a committee to implement a policy.

The campaign continues to pressure the university to pay all workers a living wage and is working to support workers in negotiations with Northwestern and Sodexo this summer and next fall.

Majors who have been involved in the Living Wage Campaign: *Matthew Fischler, 2010; Jordan Fein, 2011; Michael Lobel, 2011; Vicky Scheerer, 2011; Michael Waxman, 2011; Adam Yalowitz, 2011; Hayley Altabef, 2012; Emerson Gordon-Marvin, 2012; Will Bloom, 2013.*

THE SMITH FIELD TRIP

BY ANDREW LEVIN, WCAS 2012

Early last spring, our seminar professor Carl Smith did something a little unorthodox. Professor Smith - a famous Chicago Fire historian - wanted to share his rich knowledge of the Great Chicago Fire of 1871; he hoped to “ignite” our passion for the event. He didn’t go about it through pages of text or PowerPoint presentations, but by doing something I have never experienced in my college: a field trip! On April 6, 2011, our class took place on a nice old school bus. We drove around downtown Chicago, taking in a variety of sites related to the Great Fire.

Starting in Lincoln Park, we saw a couple of the houses that are still standing from the pre-Fire period of Chicago. We then visited the Chicago History Museum, ventured down to the place where the Fire supposedly began, and finally headed towards the Loop to check out the famous survivor of the

Fire: the Water Tower. All along the way Carl Smith imparted his incredible knowledge of the event onto an attentive crowd of students. As a New Yorker, I’m usually very anti-Chicago, but the way that Professor Smith described the history of the Fire - and Chicago itself – made me love this city. Professor Smith, who has written extensively on Chicago’s cultural history, not only made the Chicago Fire real for us, but he made it fun. He even treated the class to donuts, joking with us and keeping us entertained with tidbits about Chicago’s scandalous past.

This field trip was just one example of how the class deviated from a traditional Northwestern course. With no assigned readings, the seminar was meant to inspire students to write long research papers (approx. 20-25 pp.) by allowing them to pursue their own topics. Professor Smith was there to start us off on our own paths, and he helped us hone in on our interests through one-on-one questioning and guidance. After then, though, we had to light

our own way to a final product. We conducted extensive research to determine our weekly readings, and we had to meet with Professor Smith each week to discuss our progress, develop topics, outlines, and ultimately, drafts. In each meeting, Professor Smith would respond to our developing ideas with healthy criticism and new worlds of information for our papers. Just as he had done on the field trip, he looked to make this

moment in history alive for us and pushed us to explain it in our own words.

Professor Smith and the American Studies 310-3 class was an incredible academic experience for myself and my peers. We learned firsthand about Chicago’s history from an incredible resource and, more importantly, we constructed our own long research papers without any help from assigned class readings. Some of us had to do research at libraries and colleges that were hours away while others had to labor over the microfilm machine for days at a time. Regardless of the work, we all experienced academic research and writing unlike we had before.

Now that the papers are finished and submitted, I have enjoyed reflecting on our field trip as it is one of the most unique experiences I have had in college. The field trip helped connect me with the people and places of 1871, and I appreciate all of Professor Smith’s time and effort in pushing us to recreate the moment through our own lenses.

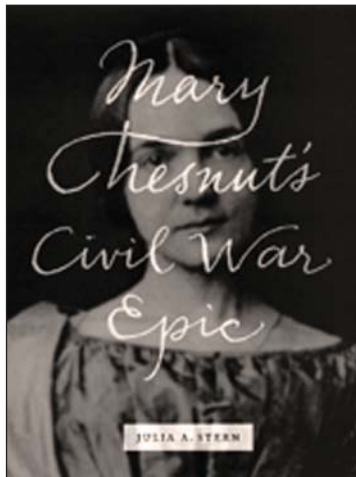
>> “STUDY ABROAD” CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Playing on the university basketball team really turned out to be a boon in this regard. The team needed a point guard and I was fortunate enough to get picked for the job. I had given up on my dream of playing college basketball when I failed to break six-foot barrier in high school, but this opportunity allowed for the dual possibility of playing on a team again and getting to see the country. We traveled throughout England for away games and would even spend a few extra days at some destinations. I not only learned a thing or two about international basketball, but the different individual pockets of English society each left me with a new impression of life in this country. Hopefully, I can go back soon and learn even more. §



Professor Smith (left) with his students in front of the Chicago History Museum.

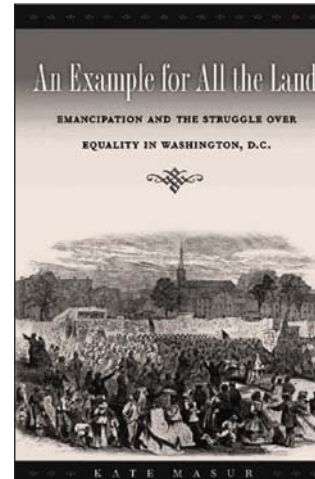
faculty recognition ::



MARY CHESTNUT'S CIVIL WAR EPIC
(University of Chicago, 2010)

JULIA A. STERN, Department of English and American Studies

In the spring of 2008, Professor Stern was named Charles Deering McCormick Professor of Teaching Excellence (2008-2011) and was named to the ASG faculty honor roll in 2011.



**AN EXAMPLE FOR ALL THE LAND:
EMANCIPATION AND THE STRUGGLE OVER EQUALITY
IN WASHINGTON, DC** (UNC Press, 2010)

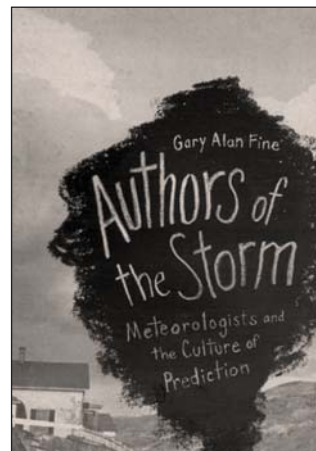
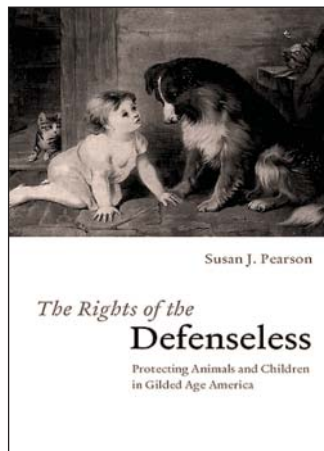
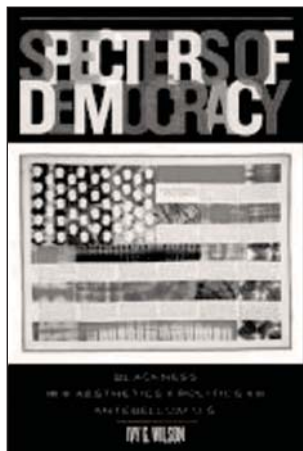
KATE MASUR, Department of History

* Honorable Mention, 2011 Lincoln Prize, Lincoln and Soldiers Institute, Gettysburg College

* Honorable Mention, 2011 Avery O. Craven Award, Organization of American Historians

SPECTERS OF DEMOCRACY: BLACKNESS AND THE AESTHETICS OF POLITICS IN THE ANTEBELLUM U.S. (Oxford UP, 2011) • **IVY WILSON**, Department of English

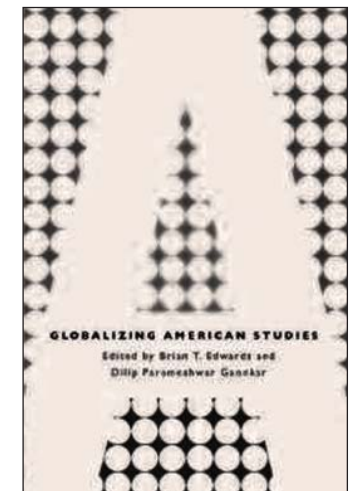
THE RIGHTS OF THE DEFENSELESS: PROTECTING ANIMALS AND CHILDREN IN GILDED AGE AMERICA (University of Chicago, 2011) • **SUSAN J. PEARSON**, Department of History



GLOBALIZING AMERICAN STUDIES
(University of Chicago Press, 2010)

BRIAN T. EDWARDS, Department of English, Comparative Literary Studies, and American Studies; co-edited with Dilip P. Gaonkar

Contributors include Kate Baldwin, Ali Behdad, Wai Chee Dimock, Brent Hayes Edwards, Brian Larkin, Claudio Lomnitz, Donald Pease, Naoki Sakai, Elizabeth Thompson, Juliet A. Williams, and Kariann Yokota.



AUTHORS OF THE STORM: METEOROLOGISTS AND THE CULTURE OF PREDICTION (University of Chicago Press, 2010)

GARY ALAN FINE, Department of Sociology

2011 SENIOR SYMPOSIUM



IN MID-MAY, WHEN ALL OF THE SENIOR THESES HAVE BEEN SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT FOR EVALUATION, THE AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM INVITES FRIENDS, FAMILY, SPONSORS, AND THE NORTHWESTERN COMMUNITY TO A PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECTS CONDUCTED OVER THE PREVIOUS YEAR. EACH MAJOR GIVES A BRIEF PRESENTATION ON HIS OR HER THESIS AND ATTENDEES HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS OR PROVIDE COMMENTS ON THEIR RESEARCH. THE SENIOR SYMPOSIUM IS ALSO AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PROGRAM AND ITS STUDENTS TO CELEBRATE THE INTELLECTUAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF ITS SENIORS, AND THE PRESENTATIONS ARE FOLLOWED BY A RECEPTION WHICH GIVES AUDIENCE MEMBERS A CHANCE TO CONGRATULATE THE PRESENTERS OR ASK THEM MORE IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS ABOUT THEIR RESEARCH.

KRISTIN COVENEY

Solidarity Detained: How the Civic Myth Has Influenced American Immigration Detention Mobilization Since the 1980s (Adviser: Galya Ruffer, International Studies)

In the 1980s and early 1990s, Congress curtailed immigrants' rights in reaction to overcrowded immigrant detention centers and a growing influx of immigrants. Few individuals protested. However, within less than ten years, legal activists brought suits against the government, published reports denouncing detention conditions, and demanded special protections for individuals with disabilities. Why did this shift in mobilization occur? I analyze activists' reports, legal filings, and political rhetoric to posit that changes in the civic myth, or predominant view of American identity, have opened spaces within which activists may generate support and enact change.

Kristin Coveney and Jordan Fein speaking at the Senior Symposium.



JORDAN FEIN

Searching for Health Care Reform: Studying Media Coverage and Framing Public Opinion of the 2009-10 Health Care Debate (Advisers: Jamie Druckman, Political Science; Leslie McCall, Sociology)

I wrote an honors senior thesis about the recent debate over health care reform. With funding from university research grants and assistance from my advisor, Northwestern Political Science Professor Jamie Druckman (a leader in public opinion research) I supervised a team of four coders who assisted with a media analysis of New York Times articles written during the recent health care debate. I studied whether 10 health care frames (ways of communicating about health care) identified through an extensive review of scholarly research were used in the recent debate. I found that two positive frames - the morality of health care reform and inequalities in health care - were largely ignored by reform supporters. For the thesis, I also studied the effect of framing health care on how people search for information and form opinions and found that allowing people to search for information renders them unlikely to seek out or accept alternative frames, and makes them more confident in their opinions. To do this, I organized laboratory experimental sessions for 500 experimental participants and used Stata to conduct data analysis, which included descriptive statistics, T-tests and ordered probit analyses.

MICHAEL LOBEL

History as a Loaded Gun: The Performance of American Exceptionalism in First-Person Shooters (Adviser: Mike Sherry, History)

I first played Medal of Honor (2001) when I was 12 years old. I stormed the beaches of Normandy with only the simulated hands of my character visible on the virtual battlefield; one of my first visual encounters with the World War II setting. In fact, for the past 10 years, I, along with millions of individuals, have "volunteered" to fight in historical and contemporary war settings through the medium of digital games, and in doing

so have become immersed in a form of virtual war. Long running digital game franchises such as Medal of Honor and Call of Duty have both shaped the modern gaming industry and maintained traditional cultural perceptions of World War II combat. Furthermore, through their unique

narrative structures, based on procedural rules and immersion, these games have created a new mechanism for individual participation in cultural mythology. More importantly than their historically based content, however, is the manner in which military based first-person shooters confine the experience of combat to a space of simulated entertainment. By doing so, they remove the physical tolls of mechanical combat, injury and death, and the paralyzing fear that can accompany both. The result is a diluted representation of warfare that is claimed as authentic. My purpose in writing this project was not to lay blame on the artifacts that I examined, but rather to deconstruct the genre's claim of authenticity and explore why the themes of glorified individual combat remain persistent in American cultural productions. In doing so, I came to appreciate the growing narrative potential of digital games, while at the same time becoming wary of their newfound role in our society.



American Studies majors Sun, Lobel, and Scheerer discuss their thesis topics at the senior symposium (top); Waxman, Yalowitz, and Morales are also pictured (bottom).

VERONICA MORALES

Mexican-American Theater as Political Mobilizing Tool: THE SHRUNKEN HEAD OF PANCHO VILLA by Luis Valdez (Adviser: Gerry Cordova, History)

“The Shrunken Head of Pancho Villa” written at the beginning of the United Farm Workers Movement and at the cusp of the Chicano Movement, the play inspired the creation of Teatro Campesino. Luis Valdez, through the foundation of Teatro Campesino revived the Chicano/Mexican-American storytelling tradition first exemplified in the southwest in 1848 and now in the 1960s. It was through this play that he was able to mobilize Mexican-Americans toward political consciousness and protest on behalf of their rights. My thesis analyzes the relationship between cultural markers,

“ I CAME TO APPRECIATE THE GROWING NARRATIVE POTENTIAL OF DIGITAL GAMES, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME BECOMING WARY OF THEIR NEWFOUND ROLE IN OUR SOCIETY. - LOBEL

storytelling and theater in not only inspiring Mexican-Americans in the 1960s to analyze identity, but the role that these characteristics play today in uniting and mobilizing Mexican-Americans.

ELISA REDISH

Furthering Transit Equity in Chicago: A Case for Extending the CTA Red Line (Adviser: Len Rubowitz, Law School)

My thesis argues that extending the Red Line further south from 95th Street to 130th Street would advance vertical compensatory transit equity by connecting historically disadvantaged, transit-dependent, low-income minority populations to employment opportunities and creating additional employment opportunities through transit-oriented development around the extended commuter rail line

VICTORIA SCHEERER

Just Say No to Violence: The Stop Violence Movement and Its Legacies, 1988-2011 (Adviser: Alex Weheliye, English and African American Studies)

This thesis explores the formation, implementation, and legacy of the Stop the Violence (STV) movement, consisting of a coalition of rappers and young people in the music and media industries dedicated to fighting rap music's violent reputation. The STV movement materialized in the aftermath of violence at a rap concert at the Nassau Coliseum in Long Island, NY;

a few months later the movement released an all-star single and accompanying music video. These cultural productions led to the orchestration of a public rally in the streets of Harlem--all in the name of raising public awareness and fighting black-on-black crime. Although the STV movement attempted to fulfill the demand for a progress-oriented social movement, it was forced to sacrifice the more revolutionary and discourse-challenging content of other contemporary hip-hop productions. In the end, the STV movement mobilized the hip-hop nation around an issue, built on the precedent for education alongside music in hip-hop, and captured the attention of many young minds to engage more fully with the society they inhabited.

KRISTEN SUN

Remembering the “Forgotten War” in Film: Transnationalism and Gender in *THE HEST* (Bong Joon-ho, 2006), *GRAN TORINO* (Clint Eastwood, 2008), and *ADDRESS UNKNOWN* (Kim Ki-duk, 2001) (Adviser: Jinah Kim, Asian American Studies)

The lack of filmic representations of the Korean War, labeled by scholars as the “Forgotten War,” is glaring given the popularity of war films in Hollywood, particularly of WWII and the Vietnam War. Through a study of Korean and American filmic representations, the main questions this project asks is: why is this war cast as forgotten, and profoundly, rendered unrepresentable? Drawing on an interdisciplinary body of scholarship, I argue that forgetting is not a passive act; rather it indicates an act of repression and perhaps, a will not to remember. How can we reconstruct and

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- SCHEERER

remember the Korean War in a manner that challenges and allows non-American-exceptionalist and non-patriarchal narratives to emerge? What do we gain by centering the silenced, in this case the female subject of war?

MICHAEL WAXMAN

“Heightening the Contradictions”: The Survival Programs of the Illinois Black Panther Party (Adviser: Martha Biondi, African American Studies)

For years, the mainstream press, popular culture, and historians have reduced the Black Panther Party to an urban militia, fear-mongering revolutionaries, or a symbol of the excesses of the Civil Rights Movement. My investigation of the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panthers from their establishment in 1968 until their demise in 1973 revealed a history that complicates and refutes these pejorative images and oversimplifications. Specifically, my research focused on the two major survival programs of the Illinois Panthers: the Breakfast for Children program, a series of before-school breakfast sites across Chicago, and the People’s Medical Care Center, a free, all-purpose health clinic that served Chicago’s minority communities. I relied on personal interviews with former Panthers and volunteers, private correspondence and documents, and various newspaper articles to gather information on the Illinois Chapter’s survival programs. I argue that the Illinois chapter’s Breakfast for Children program and People’s Medical Care Center served as successful models for the role of the Panthers believed the government should assume in providing food and health care to impoverished communities, raising the expectations these communities had for government. I also contend that the chapter’s survival programs: (1) represented unique grassroots organizing efforts that transcended race, class and gender barriers; (2) empowered African American women to become leaders and innovators; (3) influenced the spread of free breakfast programs in Chicago Public Schools; and (4) introduced an accessible, innovative way of delivering health care, and treating and publicizing an epidemic ignored by the medical establishment, sickle cell anemia.

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- WAXMAN

ADAM YALOWITZ

Cleaning Up Chicago: The 2002 Hotel Workers Contract Campaign and the Return of Industrial Movement Unionism (Adviser: Carl Smith, English)

The topic of my senior project is the 2002 contract negotiations between the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union (HERE), Locals 1 and 450 and the Chicago area hotel owners represented by the Hotel Employers Labor Relations Association. The 2002 Chicago hotel contract negotiations are important because the negotiations marked what historians and social scientists see as a remarkable exception to the long term decline in union influence and membership. HERE garnered approval among its members, service workers from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, to authorize a citywide hotel strike for the first time in Chicago. Local 1 secured the support of religious, community and political leaders, and caused Governor George Ryan to intervene. The 2002 contract negotiations represent a return to the industrial movement unionism pioneered by the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in the early 1900s. HERE Local 1 employed a mix of old and new tactics adapted to the American service sector in a global economy. §

alumni notes ::

EDUCATION IN ACTION

BY PARVATHI “PARV” SANTHOSH-KUMAR, AMERICAN STUDIES CLASS OF 2010

One year after leaving my second home of the American Studies Program, I am now halfway through a Master’s degree in public policy at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. The striking thing about being at the Kennedy School is how much the interconnectedness of policy problems and solutions becomes clear. My



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“ WE MUST CHALLENGE COMMUNITIES ACROSS AMERICA TO CONVENE AND COLLABORATE TO RECONFIGURE HOW ORGANIZATIONS FUNCTION TOGETHER AND CHALLENGE ALL AMERICANS TO ENGAGE IN SUSTAINED AND MEANINGFUL COMMUNITY SERVICE

appreciation for this kind of cross-fertilization really began with learning from my peers and professors in the American Studies Program. In American Studies, I specialized in urban education policy and school redesign, and I learned so much from the others in my cohort whose concentrations were maybe tangentially related to mine in one small way or another. One year later, I find myself seeking even greater intersections - the thrill of interdisciplinary studies, after all, is thinking creatively about how different pieces of the puzzle of American culture and society fit together.

Reforming schools is not enough. Indeed, a revolution in American education is brewing. School-centered solutions will no longer suffice: any game-changing efforts in this arena must integrate existing community assets and resources across sectors more effectively to connect young adults to education and career pathways. We must challenge communities across America to convene and collaborate to reconfigure how organizations function together and challenge all Americans to engage in sustained and meaningful community service to renew our nation’s

promise and revitalize our nation’s civic health.

This summer, I’m working for the White House Council for Community Solutions to find ways for civic leaders across the nation to build coalitions within communities across sectors to effectively engage disconnected youth who are out of school and out of work. Rather than focus on one silo of schools, I’m now using my training in American Studies to think critically beyond traditional borders and seek creative solutions in service of the public good. §



American Studies alum Meaghan Beadle reflects on her last month at the University of Cambridge, where she recently completed a master’s degree program.



A LETTER FROM CAMBRIDGE

BY MEAGHAN BEADLE, AMERICAN STUDIES CLASS OF 2010

This will be my last update from Cambridge as I am soon leaving to come back home. I cannot believe how fast the year has gone, especially these last 6 months! I had a wonderful time here, but I am also excited to return to the US. Over the last few months, I graduated from Cambridge, taught two history classes to high school students, secured a job in the US, and visited a few more countries. So, I have been pretty busy!

In early June, I turned in my dissertation in Modern European History. In it, I explored the lives of Irish female emigrants in the 1880s and their feelings about leaving Ireland to pursue a new life in America. I was pleased with how it turned out, and I feel very fortunate to have received superb supervision for a second straight year! Then, in late July, I graduated from Cambridge University in a very formal ceremony that was conducted in Latin. My parents were happy to have made it over to England to attend.

After turning in my dissertation, I spent a wonderful week in Tuscany with my family. I have always loved Italy, so I was excited to return. I also traveled to Spain in late June for a long weekend. It was my first time in Madrid, and I spent most of the weekend in art museums. El Prado was breathtaking!

After Spain, I taught two history classes in Cambridge at a summer program for high school students from around the world. It was exciting to be in a classroom as a teacher instead of a student. My students spent four weeks examining mysteries and controversies in modern History, and they loved being shrouded in the history of the University.

By the time you read about my latest adventures, I'll already be living down in Charleston, South Carolina, where I'll be an academic adviser for foreign exchange students at a private high school. I'm excited to work with students, helping them adjust to their new home and a new school system, as well as mentoring older students as they think about their college options. As I do this, I will also be completing applications for PhD programs in American History. This time next year, I might even be back at Northwestern, which would certainly be a blessing as my time there as an undergrad definitely prepared me for all of these great changes of the past year. I'm excited to see how this new chapter plays out. 'Til next time, friends!



Clockwise: Kate Baldwin (left) and Professor Redish (right) speaking with parents at the graduation breakfast in June 2011; students volunteering at Evanston's Sack Lunch program in January; majors at the December wrapping party; more majors at the December event, catching up in the lounge; Program Assistant Natasha Dennison and Professor Grossman.



The support of our donors allows us to offer our students the activities and academic opportunities which are at the core of the American Studies Program. We are grateful for the generous and continuing support that our donors provide our Program and would like to thank all of our donors from the 2010-2011 academic year.

From top: Seniors at the annual end of year picnic with Professor Jay Grossman; Kate Baldwin speaking with prospective majors at the annual open house; and Natasha with students at the Sack Lunch program.

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