



AMERICAN STUDIES

Skidmore College

AMERICAN STUDIES —



Our Department A Word from Gregory M. Pfitzer, Chair

Dear American Studies Folks:

The academic year 2008-2009 has been a productive one for the Department of American Studies at Skidmore. Despite the slipping economy, we managed to host or co-host a number of important speakers and invited guests, including Elaine Showalter, Eve Pell, and Jill Lepore. Lepore, a Professor of American History at Harvard University and a frequent contributor to the *New Yorker*, was the third Tad Kuroda Seminar lecturer. She spoke on the "loving but long-distance relationship" of Benjamin Franklin and his sister Jane Mecom. Her talk was based on the hundreds of letters Franklin wrote to his sister — far more than he wrote to anyone else — including the last he composed before being sequestered for the Constitutional Convention and the first after the convention adjourned. "Between 1723, when Benjamin ran away from home at the age of seventeen, and 1790, when he died, he and his sister saw one another only seven times; each visit lasted only a matter of days," said Lepore. "Instead, they wrote letters, page upon page, filled with family news, word of politics, thoughts about books, debates about God." Four students from the departments of American Studies, History and Government (including Callison Stratton, Simone Perez, Alison Schultz, and Andrew Sidley) delivered papers the next day that were critiqued by Lepore and others and received nice reviews from the faculty and students present.

The Department made some noteworthy changes to its curriculum this year, eliminating AM 101 and 102 as the gateway courses to the major and replacing them AM 103: INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN STUDIES. These courses vary topically with instructor, and emphasize reading critically, thinking historically, practicing interdisciplinarity, and acknowledging diversity. Students analyze and synthesize multiple kinds of primary sources (such as fiction, film, music, art) and disciplinary perspectives (sociology, economics, media criticism) to appreciate better the complexity of American life and culture. Professor Nathan taught the first AM 103 in the fall on Basketball, followed in the spring by Nature and Culture (Hollenbeck) and Becoming Americans (Lynn). Next semester Professor Woodfork will teach an AM 103 on Adoption. Other new courses added to the curriculum this year included Gender and Sexuality, Childhood in America, Law and American Culture, and E. L. Doctorow's America.

Faculty in the department also took part in a retreat to discuss the place of writing in the discipline. We are anxious to make the role of writing more visible in our curriculum, and, to that end, professors in the department discussed the writing and related thinking skills we would like to see and document in our graduating American Studies majors and minors (* see "From the Front Page" - page 5, for details).



We say goodbye this year to our NYU Minority Dissertation Fellow, *andré carrington*, who expects to finish his dissertation late this spring. He has been with us for two years, team-teaching Methods and offering courses on Gender and Sexuality and Popular Culture. Bryn Hollenbeck, a graduate of our American Studies program and recent Ph.D. from the University of Delaware, has been pinch-hitting for Joshua Woodfork who has been on sabbatical leave this year. We wish her luck next year. Janet Casey has been on leave of absence as well, and we look forward to welcoming her back along with Professor Woodfork.

Members of the Department experienced some important milestones in their professional careers. Professor Lynn celebrated her 40th year at Skidmore and yours truly his 20th. We will also have a new chair next year—Dan Nathan. He assures us that he has already begun working on next year's "Letter from the Chair."

And, finally, the faculty beat the students in our annual bowling competition late this winter. We look forward to seeing what the seniors can do in our annual whiffleball competition; oh yes, the students beat the faculty in whiffleball last spring!

Good luck graduates!

Gregory M. Pfitzer
Chair, American Studies

Mary C. Lynn Receives the Ralph A. Ciancio Award for Excellence in Teaching



The Ralph A. Ciancio Award was established in 2000 in honor of this distinguished faculty member in the English Department of Skidmore College. This annual award recognizes the College's most inspiring instructor, the member of the faculty who has demonstrated excellence in teaching on the basis of "rigor, effectiveness, motivation,

knowledge of subject matter and overall dynamism." It is the highest teaching award bestowed on a member of Skidmore's faculty. Past recipients include John Anzalone, Professor of French (2001-02); Carolyn Anderson, Professor of Theater (2002-03); Gregory Pfitzer, Professor of American Studies (2003-04);

Tadahisa Kuroda, The David H. Porter Professor (2004-05); Ronald P. Seyb, Associate Professor of Government (2005-06); Penny Jolly, Professor of Art History (2006-07); Giuseppe Faustini, Professor of Foreign Language and Literature (2007-08).

Greg Pfitzer wrote in his nomination of Mary for the award, "It has been a pleasure to read Mary's evaluations through the years. They are always spectacular — filled with gratifying comments about the depth of her knowledge, the richness of her courses, and the rigor of her assignments. She develops innovative assignments, she is attentive to grading, and gives students incredible feedback, and she stays in touch with them long after they have graduated. She is the consummate teacher."

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Tejada Makes Clean Sweep at Awards Ceremony

Danny Tejada, senior American Studies major was honored (over and over) at a Student Affairs Awards ceremony on Thursday evening, April 30. Tejada, who co-formed the *Hip Hop Alliance Club* four years ago and has served as president of the club since its inception, was awarded "Club of the Year." Established in '99-'00, this award is presented to the chartered club or organization that has made the greatest contribution to the quality of campus life. The club who earns this award has demonstrated outstanding dedication to the Skidmore community through its delivery of excellent services, entertainment, or education programs. Tejada's creation of, and commitment to, the Alliance has been highly claimed and enthusiastically received. Tejada has worked hard getting this club off the ground and keeping it active. In the past the Alliance has hosted such events as "The N-Word Discussions," Hip Hop Culture Week keynote speaker, Chuck D, and the Mickey Factz concert. Tejada says he is most grateful and gives thanks to the executive board of the Hip Hop Alliance and supporters.

But that wasn't the only honor in order for Tejada. He also received a Senior Achievement Award which recognizes and thanks graduating senior leaders who have contributed consistently to Student Leadership Activities. These senior award recipients have unselfishly devoted countless hours of their time, as well as their energy, skills and talents, to building a richly diverse and vibrant campus life at Skidmore.

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What's in a Chair?

In most cases, there is stuffing in a chair. In some places, you'll find a cat in a chair. But in a college or university, the first thing that comes to mind is an administrative leader for a department or program.

Since 1998, Greg Pfitzer has been in "the" chair heading up the American Studies Department. And with amazing calm and inspiring management skills, he has led the department through many changes in curriculum, personnel, and structure. And he's done it all with great integrity and concern for his colleagues. But now Pfitzer is ready to give up the minutia of administrative details and get back to just the joys of teaching and writing!

In the fall we will, with great pleasure, continue "under new management," as Professor Daniel A. Nathan moves out of TLC 330 and into the Office of the Chair of American Studies. Nathan joined the American Studies Department in the fall of 2002 and just last year received tenure. He earned his MA and PhD in American studies from the University of Iowa where he was a Teaching Fellow in the General Education Literature Program and the American Studies Program. Dan has taught at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio and spent 2001-02 as the Fulbright Professor of North American Studies at the University of Tampere in Finland.

Nathan teaches courses on Intro to American Culture, American Past in Film, and AM Sports/AM Culture, just to name a few.

In 2003, Nathan's book *Saying It's So: A Cultural History of the Black Sox Scandal* was published by the University of Illinois Press.

Prof. Nathan has large shoes to fill as he enters into the Chair of the Department position. We are all rooting him on and know he is most capable of filling those Chair shoes, no matter the size.

American Studies Majors/Minors Abroad

Emily Bresnick '10

In the fall 2008 semester I studied in Paris, France through the Paris Fall Seminar Program. Our classes focused on North African Immigrants and Paris of the Surrealists. Through visits to several interesting museums, parks, and neighbor-



La Sainte-Chapelle

hoods, Professor Jaouad exposed to us a unique and important side of Paris and the lives of those who live there. These visits to incredible places within the city were complemented by meeting notable filmmakers, authors, and politicians, with whom we always ended up sharing cups of chocolat chaude

or café au lait at a nearby café. Outside of class, my time was spent discovering places such as La Sainte-Chapelle, Louis IX's private chapel with breathtaking stained glass walls, and shopping on the Rue de Rivoli. I loved my time in Paris, and enjoy supplementing my experiences with Professor Nathan's Global Perspectives of the U.S. class. Through learning how foreigners relate to America, I am able to contextualize my own experiences with how the world views our country, especially having been in France during the Nov '08 election. Being abroad in Paris has opened my eyes to many things, and was a great way to learn about things through first-hand experience. I can't wait to go back!

Krista Glencross '10

Greetings from Washington, DC!

I'm currently at the Washington Semester program at American University. Living and taking classes in the DC area has been amazing for an American Studies major, and I even withstood the cold weather and attended inauguration. I am in the Justice program and learned about tough issues in America today including the War on Drugs, incarceration system, gun con-

trol and the death penalty. My class has visited at the Department of Justice, DEA, ATF, FBI headquarters and the training facility in Quantico, Baltimore prisons including death row, the Federal Witness Security (Protection) Program, witnessed oral arguments at the Supreme

Guess where Krista is???



Court, U.S. Capital, and heard from non-profit organizations that are passionate about informing the public on their issues. I also participated in a course required police ride-along and responded to a shooting and child services call.

I have had a great opportunity to learn about the American justice system and the impact laws have on our country. Next week I'm

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American Studies Faculty Award 2009

SARAH MAGIDA is the recipient of the American Studies Faculty Award this year. Sarah has demonstrated both excellence and growth in the major, proving herself an extraordinarily versatile student in a wide array of American Studies courses on mass media, autobiography, religion, best sellers, and an honors course on New England.

Sarah's writing is impressive, as can be witnessed by her Senior Honors Thesis, *American Reform Judaism: Assimilation and Informal Education From 1869 to 2009*.

As well as being an Honors Forum minor, Sarah also double majors in Religion.



Sarah's academic, as well as extra-curricular, life at Skidmore is a clear demonstration of growth and excellence and a wonderful example of the Skidmore credo — Creative Thought Matters.

Congratulations, Sarah!

Honors Thesis Topics



Bianchini Prepares
Her Final Draft

Charlee Bianchini '09

A Sense of Place in Fishtown: Why Under standing Place Becomes Important to Progress, Using the Specific Example of Gloucester, Massachusetts

Great historical places around the world are facing an era of

urban renewal and gentrification. Much of their history and culture is getting lost as a result of development that is structured around quick money, rather than one of healthy growth. As a result, many old communities are being split up and relocated. Some of these contain families with a history that dates back centuries, and some contain people who can't afford to move elsewhere. This careless development is changing the face of American cities and notable places. In this paper, I argue that in order to continue the healthy growth of these areas, it is imperative for citizens to consciously understand a "sense of place." To define sense of place, I consider four fundamental elements: the geographical, the historical, the mythical and the symbolic. One can view place through any or all of these lenses as a way to understand what makes place unique. I then look at

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Our Seniors: The Class of 2009

Luna Malachowski Bajak
(Major)



When Luna graduates in May she will stay in Saratoga the month of June restructuring the curriculum for future IGR White Racial Identity dialogues here on campus. Luna plans to go to graduate school for Social Justice/Social Work; she envisions herself aiding populations in the United States that are plagued with hardships and unjust circumstances. The interdisciplinary approach of American Studies is what attracted her to the major as it “coincided with my interest in social justice, providing courses which continuously challenged me and fueled awareness.” A singer and painter who loves to travel, Luna advises non-senior majors and minors “to never doubt how vital the cultural study of the past through present of this country is.”

Charlee Bianchini (Major)



Charlee calls Gloucester, MA home (in fact, her Senior Thesis is about her home and a sense of place), loves to paint, write, dance (especially), travel and listen to music. She plans to hang out in Gloucester for the summer working on her painting and writing for the local newspaper. In the fall she will head out to China to teach with the Skidmore Teach in China Program. She hopes this will be a trend-setting lifestyle for her — teaching in foreign countries — for the next few years. At Skidmore, Charlee has held the vice-president position in International Affairs Club every year except her senior year, and last year was co-president. She would like underclassmates to “milk the experience — get all you can out of it and go

on a road trip!!” She says American Studies caught her interest as a major when she “realized that I had to understand my own country in order to understand the rest of the world.” She also notes that a couple of road trips across country really opened her eyes to what America is and she “wanted to take that further in school.”

Courtney-Anne DeStefano
(Minor)



Courtney came to Skidmore from Rehoboth, MA and is a History major. She plans to kick off summer in Galway, Ireland to present her History senior thesis at the American Conference for Irish Studies. After that she’ll be heading out to Prague for a week with the Skidmore Women’s Lacrosse team (of which she has been a four-year member). She’ll need to catch her breath before she begins graduate school at Boston College where she will work towards a Master’s in History with a concentration in Irish History — and then working on her Ph.D.

Courtney enjoys karate (she has a black belt in Shorin-Ryu), reading, swimming and going to the beach. She adds, “I also enjoy a nice iced coffee!” She took on the minor in American Studies because “I love the interdisciplinary nature of American Studies and because the topics we study are directly relevant to our lives.” She advises younger AM majors and minors “To remember that even if class work is tough and sometimes tedious, ultimately your time at Skidmore and in the AM department is a worthwhile and fun experience!”

Rose Finn (Major)



From Warwick, NY, Rose says unless she is already working in a museum, she plans on going home and continuing the search for a career. She plans to eventually to go on to graduate school for Museum Studies. She says “I am open to all kinds of new experiences, but for now my long term goal is to be a curator at a great museum. I think that would be fun!”

This past year Rose has been a Peer Advocate for the Center for Sex and Gender Relations. She loves to play guitar and have a good time hanging out with her friends. She says “My time at Skidmore has been the most incredible four years of my life. I’ve had some amazing times and met some great people. Majoring in American Studies has been a great experience.” She advises underclassmates to “just study hard, have fun, and overall, just enjoy what experiences you have left at Skidmore.” Rose became an AM major “because I love history and American Studies is so much more than that. It is interdisciplinary. It is taking that history and looking at it through multiple lenses. From the moment I took my first American Studies class, AM 102, with Professor Nathan, I knew this was the major for me. Looking back at my Skidmore experience, I couldn’t see myself fitting so well anywhere else.”

Bettina Guevara (Minor)



Hailing from Short Hills, NJ, Bettina is a business major who hopes to have her own company someday. For the immediate future she has no plans, but says she is fine with that. She has been a member of the Newman Club, the Wombats, and Snow Sports for all four years at Skidmore; president of Snow Sports over the 07-09 academic years. If you ask Bettina what got her interested in American Studies, she’ll tell you “Professor Woodfork’s *Diversity in the US* class sparked my interest.” She advises other American Studies majors and minors to “take a class (or two, or three) with Dan Nathan.” In her spare time, Bettina loves snowboarding, skiing, ultimate Frisbee, crocheting, and eating!

Shannon Hassett (Minor)



Shannon, from Scotch Plains, NY, is a very recent addition to the American Studies department, whose major is English, with a second minor in Women’s Studies. Shannon plans on staying in Saratoga over the summer and running the college radio station, WSPN. In August that she will head out for New York City. At Skidmore, Shannon has been a member of the Speaker’s Bureau and has been busy with WSPN. She enjoys reading, writing, and cynicism!

Shannon chose an AM minor because “the classes always sounded interesting in the course catalog and ended up living up to their descriptions.” She advises continuing AM majors and minors to “Take the 1960s course!”

LaChrisha LaSane (Major)



LaChrisha comes from Charleston, SC, and minors in Dance. Over the summer she will be working as an RA in the Skidmore Pre-College Program and after that she wants to get her Cosmetology license and then join the Peace Corps (preferably in Latin America). At Skidmore she was a member of Christian Fellowship, RAC (Random Acts of Craft) and also served as Vice President of UJIMA in her junior year. She enjoys dancing, eating, reading and writing poetry, exercise, crochet, and hairstyling.

LaChrisha became an AM major because “American Studies is so interesting . . . it is more than history, sociology, anthropology, etc. AM studies gives a view of American past and present from nearly a 360° view. It helps with plans and expectations of the future by giving a thorough depiction of the past.” She advises those AM majors and minors coming up to

AM Faculty

andré carrington

**andré carrington, NYU Minority Dissertation Fellow**

After two years at Skidmore and a healthy stint in Saratoga Springs, I'll be heading back to New York City. Thanks for the opportunity to teach some challenging new classes, to change up the format in *Methods and Approaches*, to keep a science fiction collection in use, to go bowling, to contribute to the role of writing in the American Studies major, to share my research with thoughtful audiences in two public lectures, to find peers in the Black Faculty and Staff Group and Black and Latino Male Initiative, to enjoy a collegial environment, and to count myself among those Brooklynites who have a coveted upstate getaway. This Spring, in addition to piloting *Gender and Sexuality in the Americas*—doing transnational American Studies focused on race, class, sex, gender, desire, and politics in the cultures that cross the American continents—I conducted interviews with playwright Aurin Squire and comics artist Afua Richardson for the Studio Museum in Harlem's magazine, wrote the penultimate chapter of my dissertation, and became an amateur economist in the process of enduring the rigors of the academic job market. This

summer, I'll be signing on for a new job at a college in the city (negotiations are underway, so mum's the word) and finishing (!) my dissertation at a writing workshop sponsored by the Social Science Research Council at Ohio State University. I had zero dissertations when I got here last Fall, so I would say the Minority Dissertation Fellowship is a success. If you're reading this, I'll bet you'll miss it as much as I will.

Winston Grady-Willis

I have been pretty busy administratively this academic year, chairing the Committee on Intercultural and Global Understanding, conducting an ongoing study of Cultural Diversity courses in the curriculum, and helping to start a conversation about a possible intercultural studies minor at Skidmore. As always, however, the most rewarding work has been in the classroom, teaching *Diversity in the US*, *Civil Rights in the 20th Century US*, and *African American Experience*. (I look forward to teaching *Black Feminist Thoughts* in the fall and a revived course on the U.S. South in the spring.) This summer I look forward to returning to research for a Bronx cultural history project.

Bryn Varley Hollenbeck

Bryn had a great year teaching here in the American Studies Department. As a former major herself (Class of 2000), it was an honor and pleasure to rejoin the department, this time around as faculty. In the fall, Bryn taught American Identities Pre-Civil War as well as Popular Culture, and she greatly enjoyed the mental exercise of moving back and forth between the Puritans and the Marx Brothers. In the spring, Bryn taught American Material Culture and two new courses, Nature and American Culture (her version of Introduction to American Studies) and Childhood in America. These five courses allowed Bryn to explore different teaching formats and, most importantly, to get to know 87 wonderful students, including 16 majors. Working closely with these students, in and out of the classroom, made every day exciting and rewarding.

Bryn is moving on to a year of focusing exclusively on her research specialty – the material culture of childhood. She plans to add an additional chapter on suburbia to her dissertation, *Making Space for Children*, and to send the

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"Any genuine teaching will result, if successful, in someone's knowing how to bring about a better condition of things than existed earlier."

—John Dewey

Mary C. Lynn



Winston Grady-Willis



Bryn Hollenbeck



Gregory M. Pfitzer



Daniel A. Nathan



Our Student Assistants

The American Studies Department is sad to say goodbye to two amazing senior student assistants, **Charlee Bianchini**,

and **Danny Tejada**.

You can read all about them in the Senior section of the News-

letter, but in the meantime, check out the two who will return to us in the fall.

Emily Bresnick '10

Emily joined us this spring, replacing our abroad student assistant, Krista Glencross (who will return in the fall). Emily is a junior American Studies major who comes from Merrick, NY. She has a fond interest in photography and would like to find a place in the world where she can make a difference. Last fall, Emily enjoyed an abroad experience in Paris, France (please see the write up on page 2). Emily enjoys

being challenged and would rather become involved in a community than just be a part of it. She has definitely been an effective part of this office and has made a huge difference in the life of all of us who work here. Thanks, Emily!

Elise Fariello '11

Elise, who comes from Saint James, NY, has just completed her second semester in the American Studies office. Elise values liberal education and hopes, through it, she will find out more about the things she loves as well as finding she enjoys things she did not realize. She likes the Grateful Dead, Jack

Kerouac, Woody Guthrie, moves, books, and dancing. She also enjoys taking part in other peoples interests, sometimes only to find out they are her new interests. Elise has unbounded energy and keeps all of us motivated in the office. She's definitely going to inspire people in her life.

Thanks to all our great SA's!!!

(TEJADA Continued from page 1)

And finally, Tejada also walked away with a Katherine Scranton Rozendaal Citizenship Award. This award is given in recognition of outstanding citizenship in the Skidmore community to those who have lived and learned respectably by the Skidmore Honor Code.

A bright and shining American Studies major—congratulations Danny!

Majors/Minors Abroad

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looking forward to a class tour of the Pentagon.

Hope all is well in Saratoga!

LaChrisha LaSane '09

Fall semester of 2008 I studied abroad in Melbourne Australia at the University of Melbourne. As an American Studies major I was lucky that they had a several



Abseiling and Repelling

American Studies/Subject classes and I was able to meet a lot of my requirements here at Skidmore. The University, or "Uni" as they call it, was very laid back and it wasn't uncommon for students to have a drink or coffee with their professors. My favor-



ite things about Melbourne were the zoo, the aquarium, and the different ethnic areas. It was as if they were separate little worlds. There was an Italian area, Greek, Chinese, African, Middle Eastern, etc. It was the most diversity I had ever seen in my life and I loved it. All of these areas had magnificent restaurants with authentic food. Aussie's are also big on dessert and there were elaborate bakeries everywhere! Public transportation was very frequent, easy and reliable, and most things

were no more than a 10-15 minute tram ride away. Although the beaches were a little further away than that they were accessible by tram too! I was able to participate in abseiling, repelling, hiking, surfing and there was no shortage of bars and clubs. Long story short . . . I had the time of my life. :)

Elena Milius '10

I pass through security, fumble along the streets, walk through *Piazza di Santo Qualcuno*, and finally, after all that and twenty-four hours of flying, I climb six flights of stairs with my fifty-pound suitcase. I'm out of breath and overheated by the time I reach the top of the stairs but, I realize, I'm here. I made it. But my hair is enormous. It's in my face and making me feel like I



Elena in Italy

have a coonskin cap on my head.

All of those bits of advice are running through my head. The ones you write down on the back of your napkin or your plane ticket, because the only other papers you have are your passport and fifty euro. It's a grocery list of dos and don'ts but mostly dos: smile, announce your words, "be yourself," use the formal, *sta attenzione!*, and whatever you do, don't forget to say *buon' appetito*. My eyes wander around the room and are drawn to the photos which are old and I wonder who these people

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From the Front Page

As Pfitzer noted in his opening letter (front page) faculty in the department took part in a retreat to discuss the place of writing in the discipline. He said professors in the department are anxious to make more visible the role of writing in our curriculum, and, to that end, discussed the writing and related thinking skills they would like to see and document in graduating American Studies majors and minors.

Pfitzer says, "Here's what we would like to see from you. We want you to be able to think in an interdisciplinary manner and to do research that cuts across traditional disciplinary lines. We would like you to be comfortable and competent with using both primary and secondary sources. We would like you to have assurance that you can design and execute research projects by knowing how to pose relevant historical questions, to develop a research design strategy, to use a variety of sources as explanatory tools, to convey a clear understanding of chronological relationships among historical periods, to construct an argument with appropriate categories of proof, and to narrate well. We would also like you to write clear English prose free of usage errors. We want you to be able to use textual evidence effectively. Ideally, we would also like you to feel comfortable with writing about certain philosophical questions related to the study of the past, especially the epistemological implications of determining how we know what we know and the ontological concerns related to reconstructed memory and reality. And we want you to "make connections" between what you write about and the larger world by introducing a civic responsibility component to student learning. If you can accomplish all that before you graduate, we'd be delighted. See what you can do!"

Honors Theses

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Gloucester, Massachusetts as a case study on which to apply this theory. The city of Gloucester is faced with the need to develop its waterfront. Some proposals are more productive than others. I argue that in order for Gloucester to be prosperous, the city must understand its sense of place, and cultivate those very aspects that make the city unique. Having a "sense of place" is a crucial part of defining personal and community identity, and in turn, being able to grow a healthy, prosperous society.

Sarah Magida '09



American Reform Judaism: Assimilation and Informal Education From 1869 to 2009

The paper explores the changes in the Reform Movement in American Judaism from 1869-2009 beginning with the assimilation ideology of the late 1800s and early 1900s and moving through the shift back toward traditionalism in the mid to late 1900s up through the continuity movement of the 1990s through today. The second half of the paper explores theories of informal education and nascent ritual as they exemplify the current trend of the movement. I have used scholarly research, participant observation, and interviews to complete my research.

American Studies Club, 2008-2009 by Danny Tejada, President

This year, the American Studies Club held three events. The first one was the start of a mini-lecture series featuring the wonderful professors here in the department. Prof. Pfitzer became the flagship speaker sharing with us his latest research project on children's literature throughout American history. The second event was also apart of the mini-lecture series. Prof. Carrington led the way in this event with his talk on women and science fiction. After that, we hosted the annual bowling event for major/minors and faculty. Unfortunately, the students lost to the faculty. Next year, we hope to win the bowling event and continue the mini-lecture series. I would like to personally thank Elise Fariello for becoming Treasurer and making things easier. I wish the best to the next Executive Board. Elise will assume the presidency next year, with Emily Bresnick as treasurer.

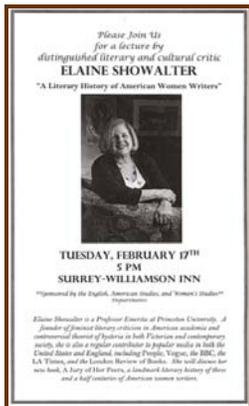
Greg Pfitzer, professor of American Studies and chair of the department, was appointed to the **Douglas Family Chair in American Culture, History, and Literary and Interdisciplinary Studies**. Widely acknowledged as one of the finest teachers at the College, Pfitzer was honored with the Ciancio Prize in 2003-2004. A scholar of the history of historical writing, Pfitzer joined the Skidmore faculty in 1989, and in the 20 years since has proved himself an accomplished and original cultural historian, taught with distinction across all levels, engaged in collaborative research, published three books, chaired his department for a decade, and in Vice President for Academic Affairs, Susan Kress's words, "been an exemplary citizen of the College."



The Douglas Family Chair recognizes excellence in the area of American culture, whether in history, literature, or interdisciplinary studies.

(Taken from *Scope Weekly*, 2/12/09)

EVENTS SPONSORED BY AMERICAN STUDIES



On February 17, 2009, Elaine Showalter, Professor Emerita at Princeton University, and a founder of feminist literary criticism in American academia and controversial theorist of hysteria in both Victorian and contemporary society, as well as a regular contributor to popular media, lectured on "A Literary History of American Women Writers."

to popular media, lectured on "A Literary History of American Women Writers."



Jill Lepore, David Woods Kemper '41 Prof. of American History at Harvard University and Chair of Harvard's History and Literature Program was the third Kuroda Symposium Keynote Speaker. On April 17th, 2009, Lepore spoke on "Poor Richard's Poor Jane: Benjamin Franklin and His Ill-Starred Sister."



On April 23, 2009, Eve Pell, in a lecture titled "Beyond the Silver Spoon: A Woman's Adventure," read from her book *We Used to Own the Bronx: Memoirs of a Former Debutante*. Born to follow in her mother and grandmother's footsteps of privilege, she ventured instead to San Francisco taking up with leftist revolutionaries including the Soledad Brothers and came to see – and embrace – a startlingly different world. She has reflected upon the importance of feminism on her self-discovery in a delightful, candid memoir.

Two Professor's Careers Add Up to a Lifetime of Teaching Excellence

Contributing a lifetime — sixty years — to the American Studies Department are Professors Mary C. Lynn and Gregory M. Pfitzer. This spring marks milestones for both as Lynn completes 40 years of teaching and Pfitzer chalks up twenty. Both Pfitzer and Lynn have been recognized for teaching excellence with the Ralph A. Ciancio Award: Pfitzer in 2003-04 and Lynn for 2008-09.

Mary (who swears she was 12 years old when she came to Skidmore) completed her graduate work at the University of Rochester where she wrote her dissertation on *The Changing Roles of Women in the 1920s*. She came to Skidmore in the fall of 1969 and "discovered the delights of American Studies and interdisciplinary work, fell in love with the college and the town" and has been here since. Early on Lynn taught courses such as American Documents and the team-taught AM 101-102 sequence, as well as courses on American Identity, Women in American Culture. She continues to teach American Identity and Women in American Culture as well as courses on New England, Relig-

ion, the 1920s and 1950s, and *Born in America*. She enjoys camping, gardening, cross country skiing, and is an avid birdwatcher. Mary says "I've been here forever because teaching is one of the most rewarding things I have ever done!"

Pfitzer's graduate work culminated at Harvard where he was also a TA in the Literature and Arts program. He earned a MA in History and a PhD in History of American Civilization. After brief teaching stints at Colby and Knox College, Pfitzer came to Skidmore in the fall of 1989 and has taught the AM Intro course, as well as courses on the Hudson River, Machine in the Garden, Psychohistory, Methods and Approaches, the 1960s, Senior Seminar, and Senior Honors Thesis. Pfitzer is a sports enthusiast and can often be found in the gym where he swims, plays basketball, and "works in preparation for the Roy Hobbs baseball season." Pfitzer says "I was drawn to Skidmore in 1989 by the quality of the students, the collegiality of my colleagues, and the rigor of the liberal arts curriculum, and these things continue to sustain me."

ACADEMIC FESTIVAL—30 April 2009

Students at Skidmore strive for excellence. While in class and during much of their free time, they write thoughtful papers, perform music, conduct scientific experiments and mathematical research, and create provocative works of art. The quality of independent thinking that characterizes the Academic Festival lies at the very heart of the definition of academic excellence.

One of the great joys of life at Skidmore is the diversity and range of academic and co-curricular activities. Frequently, though, students have too little time to enjoy the successes of one project before moving on to another or to find time for sharing their work with others. Academic Festival is a time for that sharing and for the entire Skidmore community to reflect upon our students' achievement.

—Taken from the Academic Festival Brochure

Below are pictures from the American Studies portion of Academic Festival. Students presenting (Charlee Bianchini '09, Sarah Magida '09 and Claire Solomon '10) commented on the challenges of doing historical research and preserving cultural memory in the context of honors thesis work. Presenting in three widely different areas of historical investigation, Charlee (*A Sense of Place in Fishtown: Why Under standing Place Becomes Important to Progress, Using the Specific Example of Gloucester, Massachusetts*), Sarah (*American Reform Judaism: Assimilation and Informal Education From 1869 to 2009*), and Claire (*Will Herberg: The American Way of Life?*) discussed the common methodological challenges they faced in researching the past and analyzed the consistent patterns of interpretation they employed in investigating the place of historical memory in the American consciousness.



Majors & Minors

MAJORS

- 2010: Elizabeth Arzt
Emily Bresnick
Rachel Cohen
Krista Glencross
Andrew LaSane
Elena Milius
Kathleen Mullins
Emma Newcombe
Katherine Reid
Claire Solomon
Gemma Striker
- 2011: Leslie Andrews
Manpreet Aujla
Brian Connor
Elise Fariello
Rainey Ferdinand
Suzanne Finkel
Elizabeth Franke
Kelsey Hastings
Eve Lewis
Kate Neri
Eliza Perkins
Andrew Schrijver
Courtney Spiller
Alex Stavrou
Alex Steinberg
Eliza Straim
Mary Weiss
Brooke Williams

MINORS

- 2010: Daniel Jacobson
Jordan Klein
Emilie Shea
Leah Werner-Evans
- 2011: Ismatu Alison-Konteh
Lavere Foster
Karen Granados
Emily St. Denis

Class of 2008 continued*(Continued from page 3)*

"start thinking of your senior seminar thesis ASAP!"

Samantha Levine (Major)

From Chappaqua, NY, Samantha minors in Studio Art with a concentration in metals. Her summer will be spent working on an internship at a law firm and working as a dog groomer. She is hopeful that in the fall she will be attending law school. At Skidmore she has been a member of Benefaction and Random Acts of Craft. She enjoys working in the studio on metal projects and playing with her four dogs at home. Samantha became an AM majors "because I loved my Scribner Seminar (American Taste)." She advises underclass AM majors and minors to "get all the required courses done early so you can take a wide variety of electives."

Sarah Magida (Major)

Sarah, a double minor in Honors Forum and Religion, came to Skidmore from Weston, CT. During the summer she will be the Unit Head at Eisner Camp in Great Barrington, MA (which she has done for 11 of the past 12 summers). She will be looking for a job as a youth director at a Reform Synagogue. Sarah has been a member of Hillel all four years at Skidmore and has led the religious services with Claire Solomon '10. She is also very involved at Temple Sinai downtown and is their youth group advisor as well as teaching a program for their Confirmation class once a month. In

her spare time, she enjoys board games.

Sarah says she became a major after she took AM 101 and loved it. She offers this to AM major/minor underclass-people: "Make the most of the interdisciplinary aspects of the major and study abroad!"

Jennifer Piepenbrink (Major)

Wenham, MA is home for Jennifer who double majors in Exercise Science. Jennifer says she will be moving to California after graduation and will be attending UC Berkeley in the fall.

She has been a member of the Skidmore Swim Team all four years at Skidmore and loves photography and sailing.

Jen became a major in AM "after taking AM 101 with Professor Pfitzer. I loved the class so I decided to major in it!" For continuing AM majors/minors she would suggest taking "at least one class with each professor in the department so they can experience all of the wonderful faculty."

Amy Proulx (Major)

Amy, from Natick, MA, double majors in English. Her tentative summer plans are to either stay in Saratoga or work in east Boston. She is not sure, at this point, about where she will be beyond the summer, but she has been offered and accepted a position to teach at Sun Yat Sen University through the Skidmore Teach in China Program. She is waiting to hear from both Teach for American (and has recently participated in a final interview) and also from a Scholarship (study and training) Program in Lombardy, Italy.

Amy has been a member of Skidmore's chapter of Habitat for Humanity (05-09) and has been their president from 06-08 as well as training a new president 08-09. She has also been in Skidmore Field Hockey 07-08. She was "inspired and encouraged by Professor Zangrando (now retired) to become an AM major. Amy advises continuing AM majors and minors to "take advantage of activities, lectures, and course offerings at Skidmore."

Danny Tejada (Major)

Danny comes from Brooklyn, NY and has been an very active member of the Skidmore Community as can be witnessed on page 1 of this Newsletter. Danny hopes to spend his summer training for a teaching program, blogging, freelance writing, editing and submitting parts of his senior seminar thesis to journals, and writing a memoir/autobiography. By the fall, he hopes to be settled into the teaching program and continuing his summer plans.

Danny was co-founder in his freshman year of the Hip Hop Alliance Club and has acted as president for all four years, as well as being a member of the American Studies club for the past two years and overseeing the club as its president this past year. He loves listening to music and blogging at <http://hiphoponmymind.blogspot.com>.

Danny became an AM major because "I wanted to learn more about myself, American culture and American History." His parting thoughts to continuing AM majors and minors is to "choose your classes wisely and make sure you take at least one class with Professor Grady-Willis.

Mike Thomas (Minor)

Mike comes from the Bronx, NY and is a Sociology major. He says his summer will be spent practicing for his future retirement. But he is hoping to attend graduate school in a year or two.

While at Skidmore, Mike was co-founder of the Hip Hop Alliance Club, and has been involved with Project Unity since 2006. he was also involved in Students Organ-



ized Against Racism and acted as treasurer of this organization this past year. He enjoys reading, writing and "starting trouble."

Mike became a minor because he "thought another concentration could help me become a more well-rounded individual, and could help me in the work field." He suggests underclass AM majors and minors "speak your mind at all times. We're all here to learn from each other, but speak your mind and listen to your peers."

Alison Wiggins (Minor)

Alison is a New York City girl and majors in Education. She is planning a road trip across the country with some friends for part of the summer and then will return home to find a job. She is hoping to "eventually move to another city (like Chicago or San Francisco) and look for a teaching job."

She has been a member of Accents (all female a cappella group) all four years at Skidmore and this past year served as president. She loves to sing, travel, read, and exercise.

She hopes future AM majors and minors will "Enjoy it! Challenge yourself and take classes that are of personal interest to you."

**Graduation is not the end;
it's the beginning.**

Our Faculty

(Continued from page 4)

entire book manuscript off to a very patient publisher. Bryn will also be giving papers at various conferences and conducting extensive field research into the current state of children's material culture and baby care manuals.

It's no easier to leave Skidmore a second time, but Bryn plans to keep in touch and keep apprised of the goings on in the department and on campus. She will be back on campus for her 10th reunion during the summer of '10 – with a Skidmore Class of 2031 perspective student in tow.

Mary C. Lynn

Professor Mary C. Lynn developed a new 100 level American Studies course this year, part of the department's effort to find new ways of introducing students to the field of American Studies, as well as a way to expand our commitment to teaching writing, using writing to think about important issues, and encouraging students to write within their majors.

The class, *Am103W: Becoming Americans*, focused on the 18th century experiences of native peoples and settlers from Europe and Africa who were British colonists in part of North America and ended the century as residents and citizens of a new nation, the United States of America. Beginning with the so-called French and Indian Wars (King William's War, 1689-1697, Queen Anne's War, 1702-1713, King George's War, 1744-1748 and the Seven Years War, 1754-1763), the colonists and British forces struggled for control of North America against the French and their Indian allies. At the same time, the African slave trade grew exponentially, creating the plantation system (and the fortunes of the slave traders), while enslaved Africans came to comprise nearly one-fifth of the population of the thirteen colonies.

The Great Awakening transformed the religious life of the colonies while establishing patterns of evangelism still important today; eventually, controversies over taxation to fund the British governance of the colonies led to the American Revolution and ultimately to constitutional government. We considered these events from a variety of disciplinary perspectives and primary sources including those from cultural

and political history, religion, literature, and music as well exploring the various ways in which this developing American culture has been portrayed in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Students in the class attended Harvard scholar Jill Lepore's lecture as part of the Kuroda seminar, and ended the course by writing reviews of Lepore's talk. (They loved it!) Another interesting guest was Park Ranger Joe Craig, of the Saratoga National Historical Park, who visited the class in the guise of a New Hampshire militiaman in the American Revolution complete with (disabled) musket, making social history come alive for the class.

Student research papers included Kyle Bawot's fascinating exploration of the relationship between Puritan minister Cotton Mather and his slave, Onesimus, who in the midst of a smallpox epidemic in 18th century Boston, taught Mather and a local doctor how to produce immunity to smallpox through inoculation. Isabel Cain's thoughtful paper analyzed the experience of New England children who were captured by the Iroquois and carried to Canada, where some decided to stay instead of returning to their families in New England, while a second insightful Iroquois-focused paper, this one by Rachel Mosner, studied Sir William Johnson and the Iroquois empire in the mid-18th century. First year student Callison Stratton's interesting paper on white slavery and the Barbary pirates was chosen as part of the Kuroda seminar where it proved remarkably apropos as five days earlier Captain Richard Phillips had been rescued from Somali pirates by U.S. Navy Seals on board the guided missile destroyer, U.S.S. Bainbridge, named after Commodore William Bainbridge who was imprisoned by the Barbary pirates of North Africa during the U.S. campaign against the pirates. (Remember the reference to "the shores of Tripoli" in the Marines' Hymn?) Seems like American Studies is everywhere!

Daniel A. Nathan

Still on a roll, Dan Nathan had another great year. In addition to serving as the Chair of the Committee on Educational Policies and Planning, he taught a new course, Introduction to American Studies

(AM 103), which used basketball to examine and critique American cultural values and to introduce students to interdisciplinary work and an American Studies sensibility. Also in the fall, he gave a lecture at Indiana University on cultural history. This spring, Nathan taught another new class, this one on E.L. Doctorow's America. In April, he gave a lecture at Penn State University titled, "What the hell's the matter with a society that offers a *football coach* a million dollars?": American Sports Fandom, Civic Identity, and the Politics of Belonging." One of the highlights of his semester was an Independent Study on ethnography he did with Claire Solomon (AM '10). Later this spring, Nathan is giving a paper at the North American Society for Sport History conference in Asheville, North Carolina, and in late June he is giving a keynote lecture at the Sporting Traditions XVII conference of the Australian Society for Sport History in Wellington, New Zealand. When he gets back from New Zealand, his summer plans include reading, writing, and relaxing with his family.

Gregory M. Pfitzer

I have had a busy few semesters this 2008-2009 academic year. I taught Senior Seminar in the fall and helped this year's graduates work through their substantial 35-40 page projects on topics as diverse as Jimi Hendrix, No Child Left Behind, Quisqueya Heights, and the censorship of Hip-Hop culture. I also taught a revised version of Professor Nathan's Scribner Seminar on American Memories that focused on the ways that personal and public consciousness are mediated through memory. We asked questions such as: How does memory work? What is the relationship between the past and memory, between memory and history? How do individual and collective memories influence, complement, and contradict one another? How are memories reconstructed, interpreted, transmitted, and transformed? This Spring I co-taught Methods and Approaches with Professor Carrington which introduced another rising group of sophomores and juniors to the rich history of the discipline and the methodological issues associated with various schools of American Studies thought over the last century. I also offered my seminar on the Sixties, a course which gets more interesting to teach with each iteration as we move further and further away from the events of that decade.

In September I presented my latest research work to a group of American Studies majors and minors in the American Studies club who had an interest in the scholarship of their professors. My latest book project is tentatively titled, *History Repeating Itself: Continuity and Consensus in Popular Historical Literature for Children, 1840-1960*. Over the last two decades I've collected dozens of children's histories—not school histories, by the way, but works written for the popular market—with the intention of someday writing about them as samples of popular history. My original plan was to read some of the collection and to write about these works as representative texts, commenting along the way on how they reveal the special dispositions of their authors and the times in which they were published. As I studied them in more detail, however, I discovered two things about them that have affected the direction of my research: 1) they are extraordinarily similar in subject matter, narrative voice, historical tone, and pictorial effect—so much so, in fact, that one can trace the specific borrowings made from one juvenile series to the next with an eye toward charting and interpreting significant continuity within the genre; and 2) they have been republished in great numbers since the mid-1990s by promoters of homeschool curricula who value them as "pure" texts, uncorrupted by the revisionism of twentieth-century scholarship. The interchangeability of these volumes in the 19th and 20th centuries as well as their recycling in the 21st suggests something important about continuity and consensus as elements of historical thinking in the United States. I will spend the next few years tracing the positive and negative traits of these volumes by analyzing them textually and contextually; I intend to raise serious questions about their use as history texts for homeschooled children in the twenty-first century.

Finally, since this was my last term as chair, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has made the job manageable and sometimes even enjoyable! Most of all I'd like to thank Nancy Otrembiak for handling the administrative work of the office so expertly. Those of you who have seen my desk at this time of year can accurately gauge what a mess I would have made of things had Nancy not been on hand to keep things in order.

Enjoy the summer everyone.

FACULTY—STUDENT WHIFFLEBALL CHALLENGE (Spring 2008)

I do believe the students took the cup for this tournament!



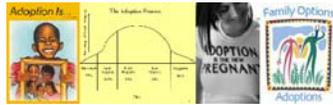
FACULTY—STUDENT BOWLING CHALLENGE (Fall 2008)

And then the faculty cleaned up....



Pictures by Danny Tejada '09

Fall, 2009, Course Offering Preview



AM 103W, Intro: Adoption

J. Woodfork, TuTh, 12:40-2

To study American culture, this semester's version of the *Introduction to American Studies* class explores adoption. Beginning with U.S. adoption's modern historical roots, adoption serves as the extended case study. Considering notions of family, students probe the law, history, public policy, ethics, gender, race, class, and parenting, while examining transracial, gay, domestic, international, and private versus public adoption.



AM 201L, Amer ID w/Workshop

G. Pfitzer, WF, 8:40-10

Classic texts and documents in American culture from 1620 to 1877 are examined in depth. The workshop includes additional reading, journal writing, oral presentations, a field trip, and assignments in the American Studies-History Lab.



AM 234, Am Sports/Am Culture

D. Nathan, WF, 10:10-11:30

A historical examination of three hundred years of sport in America as an important and revealing site of popular expression, conflict and cultural meaning. Special attention is devoted to the ways in which contemporary sports provide a window into politics, economics, racial and ethnic relations, class formation and gender identity. Students analyze the ways in which Americans have played,

watched and understood sports and will focus on some of the recurrent cultural values, trends, and symbolism associated with American athletes and public life.



AM 250A, Reg. Cult.: Hudson River

G. Pfitzer, MWF, 10:10-11:05

An introduction to the history, literature, and art of the Hudson River Valley. The Hudson River is considered as an environmental entity, an economic and political concern, and especially as a cultural symbol. The course considers four centuries of American experience on the Hudson, but focuses on the nineteenth century, when the Hudson had its greatest influence on regional and national culture.



AM 260J, Diversity in the US

J. Woodfork, TuTh, 3:40-5

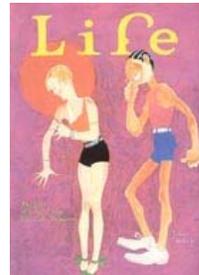
An examination of the ways in which people in the United States try to reconcile the realities of cultural difference with preconceived notions of a unified America and American identity. Students will learn about the United States as a complex, heterogeneous society that has been profoundly shaped by both the connections and conflict implicit in its multi-cultural heritage. Students will also address interrelationships and tensions that characterize a culturally diverse democracy by examining how accepted cultural traditions intersect with contested themes such as race the family, adoption, gender, sexuality, and education.



AM 342, Black Feminist Thoughts

W. Grady-Willis, MW, 6:30-7:30

This course provides perspectives on the development and materialization of Black American feminist thoughts within historical, social, political, and cultural contexts. Interdisciplinary in focus, it surveys feminist politics and theories through films, popular culture, manifestoes, literary texts, theoretical, and historical essays. In addition, the course will address how concepts of black feminism and black womanhood overlap and diverge in accordance with the modes of representation used to articulate them.



AM 360A, The 1920s

M. Lynn, TuTh, 11:10-12:30

An intensive examination of the "roaring twenties," with special attention to the impact of class, race, and gender on the development of American culture in the period. The course focuses on a series of controversies illuminating some of the conflicting forces at work in American society. It will examine some of the major intellectual, social, and cultural issues of the era.

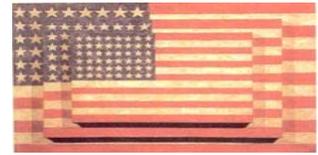


AM 362, American Autobiography

D. Nathan, TuTh, 9:40-11

An examination of American culture through the lives of specific people as recorded in their autobiographies. The course explores autobiography both as an act of self-creation and as a reflection of culture. Various autobiographies are examined for their revelations about choices, crises, values and experiences of representative peo-

ple in particular periods of American past.



AM 374 Senior Seminar

G. Pfitzer, MW, 4-5:30

An intensive examination of the "roaring twenties," with special attention to the impact of class, race, and gender on the development of American culture in the period. The course focuses on a series of controversies illuminating some of the conflicting forces at work in American society, including debates over immigration, Prohibition, evolution, sexuality, and the role of women in society. It will examine some of the major intellectual, social, and cultural issues of the era.



AM 376R, Magazines and Modernity

J. Casey, MW, 2:30-3:50

An intensive examination of the "roaring twenties," with special attention to the impact of class, race, and gender on the development of American culture in the period. The course focuses on a series of controversies illuminating some of the conflicting forces at work in American society, including debates over immigration, Prohibition, evolution, sexuality, and the role of women in society. It will examine some of the major intellectual, social, and cultural issues of the era.

"What sculpture is to a block of marble, education is to the soul."
--John Addison

Notes  News  Notes  News  Notes

Majors/Minors Abroad



Stewart and Whitney '08 (Savage '03) Tosh welcomed first

child Owen Robert on June 10, 2008. Owen gave his Mom quite a birthday present since her birthday is also June 10!

Margaret Farrell '08 is working for a production company on Madison

Avenue in NYC. She and Sarah Mitchell '07, share an apartment in Brooklyn.



Nancy Osberg-Otrembiak, Editor

Emma Newcombe '10

I am studying abroad in Bath, England during the Spring 2009 semester, and am having an amazing experience! Through the Advanced Studies in England program, I have been interning at the American Museum in Britain, a museum that focuses on American material culture and folk art. I've loved having the opportunity to see how another population views American culture and history. Through the internship, I've gotten to teach young children about the American West, preserve beautiful 18th-century tex-

Kacey Schneider '08 has spent this past year working as property manager for the Playa Grande Surf Camp in Guanacaste, Costa Rica, where she also teaches English.



Prof. Greg Pfitzer was first speaker in a mini-lecture series sponsored by the American Studies Club. Pfitzer spoke of his work on "Children's Historical Literature in the Nineteenth Century."

Krista Senator '99 and husband Ben Chadwick (IT Services) are expecting their first child in June.

Bryn Varley Hollenbeck '01 and spouse Corey, are expecting their first child in September. Bryn has been teaching in the American Studies department this semester while Joshua Woodfork has been on sabbatical. Not only are we going to miss her, but we're sad she won't be here when the new arrival makes an appearance. She has promised to keep us informed.



Carrie von Glahn '08 has been teaching English to

students Sun Yatsen University in Zhuhai, China for the past year.

NYU Minority Dissertation Fellow in American Studies, André Carrington, gave a talk today last October 21 on "Utopian Strategies and the Myth of the Superwoman: A Presentation on Black Womanhood in 1960s and 1970s Pop Culture--From Starlets to the Stars."



Emma (and friends) in Glastonbury

tiles and even give tours of various period rooms. Working at the Museum has reminded me of the significant international nature of American Studies.



Punting

Along with my internship and other classes, I've gotten to do a lot of traveling. I've visited a number of towns and cities in England (London, Glastonbury, Wells, Salisbury) and the rest of Europe (Edinburgh, Dublin, Amsterdam, Paris, Madrid). I've loved having the opportunity to continue focusing on American Studies while being able to travel to a number of countries, experience various cultures, and have an overall amazing time!

Majors/Minors Abroad

(continued from pg. 5)

are. They are Italians. Their families built this country, watched it rise and at times, fall. But they are still here, even if only on the walls. Here I am staring at them as if I could know them. Will I meet them someday or just hear stories about them? I realize I have finally made it when Italian words are dancing in my "Elena...Elena..." I hear a voice from the other room. It's Maria, my host *mamma* or *nonna* or maybe she's both or just plain Maria. She has me sit down to drink *aranciata rossa* and stands about three inches away from me. As I stare into the bottom of my cup, I remember the space issue. Space doesn't exist here.

Maria's asking me something. Actually, she doesn't have to say anything because her hand gestures are enough. She's pointing at my head and placing her hands on either side of hers, as if to say my hair is four feet wide. *Si, ho capelli grandi*. Now she's asking if I get my enormous hair from — my *babbo* or my *mamma*. Well, it runs in the family. How do I say this? Now she wants to know where I'm from. She doesn't want hear that I'm from Boston. She means where am I from—you know, from what corner of the world did I float and when did I wash up on the shores *degli Stati Uniti, los Estados Unidos*, The United States. *Soy boricua* but that's Spanish. I try this instead,

"*Sono di Puerto Rico ed El Salvador.*" A mix of South of the Border and *L'isola*. *Si*, I say, "*Ho capelli latine*," affectionately known as: Latina hair. I'm sure I just said I have Latin hair because she's looking at me like I just claimed to be a descendent of the Medici. Another attempt "*Latina di Centrale America*" and that works. She's smiling at me and with language barriers that means one of two things. One: You don't understand anything the person just said. Two: You understand enough and are happy with that. Luckily, in this case, I believe it's the latter.