



American Studies Newsletter

SKIDMORE COLLEGE

Spring 2017

Dear AM students, alums, colleagues, and friends,

Once again, I am pleased to report that the Department of American Studies had a productive, interesting, fulfilling year. There were many developments, as always, yet one was superlative. So I will cut right to the chase: in December, Beck Krefting was recommended for tenure and, in the spring, the Board of Trustees formally approved her tenure and promotion. Due to her sterling record, this news was not a surprise, but it is a major accomplishment, many years and much hard work in the making. Like Beck, we are thrilled that she earned tenure. Beck is a pillar of the department and the college: a great teacher, mentor, scholar, colleague, citizen (of the college and the world), and friend. Needless to say, we celebrated this accomplishment. Several times. With gusto.

Earlier in the fall, the department hosted architectural historian and editor Jennifer Reut of *Landscape Architecture Magazine*, who gave a lecture titled “Mapping the *Green Book* and the Spaces in Between.” Reut’s lecture was about the locations of the businesses represented in the *Green Book*, a guide that helped African-American travelers identify friendly hotels, restaurants, and mechanics when they were on the road. As is our tradition, Reut also came to the American Studies Senior Seminar—as ever, led by master teacher Greg Pfitzer—and shared her thoughts with our students about their work and about how to complete a major project. Keeping with some of the themes that Reut examined, Amber Wiley (back from a leave of absence in the fall) organized a screening of the documentary *Crossroads: The History of Rapp Road* (for more on it, see <http://www.wmht.org/crossroads/>), which was followed by a lively discussion with Beverly Bardequez, Dina Ranellucci, Todd Allen Ferguson, and Stephanie Woodward, all members of the Rapp Road Historical Association and descendants of the original community of African-American settlers from Mississippi. Both events were well attended and enriching.

Throughout the year, American Studies supported a variety of on-campus events. We co-sponsored events organized by the Music Department commemorating the 150th anniversary of the birth of Harry T. Burleigh, a trailblazing African-American singer, composer, and onetime Saratogian; the film screening of Poppy Liu’s *Destigmatizing Abortion: Storytelling As Medicine*; the National College Comedy festival; the UJIMA Fashion Show; and Moustafa Bayoumi’s lecture “This Muslim American Life in the Age of Donald Trump.” We also supported the lecture “Bringing the Past into the Future,” given by Rachel Fidler of the

Department Chairs letter cont'd.

Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust, which was sponsored by MDOCS and the Office of the Dean of Special Programs. Additionally, we supported this year's Kuroda Symposium, which honors the late Tad Kuroda, a longtime and beloved American history professor remembered for his teaching, scholarship, and service. Double History and American Studies major Meaghan McDonald '18 participated in the symposium.

McDonald was just one of our students who accomplished great things this year. Dustin Foote, Gabi Pérez, and Andrew Uebelein graduated with departmental honors after completing their Honors Theses and presenting their work at Academic Festival. Andrew also won the American Studies Faculty Award, which is for excellence and growth in the major. Dustin was awarded Joanna Schneider Zangrando Student Opportunity Funds for his Senior Seminar paper and his Honors Thesis. Liv Fidler '19 won a SEE-Beyond Award to support her summer internship at the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust. Brian Hall '18 competed at a national Taekwondo tournament and Lucas Pickering '18 was named to his second straight All-Liberty League singles team in tennis. Additionally, Laila Morgan '18 became a certified dula and in May joined Ian Berry, the Tang Museum's Dayton Director, for an art symposium at the University of Texas at Austin. Alessandra Canario '18 was featured on the Skidmore website for her fiber work and expertise in vintage clothes. Charlotte Simon '19 won a coveted internship at BuzzFeed.

We were also pleased to hear from many of our alumni. Saratoga County historian Lauren Roberts '04 appeared on an episode of the TV show *Who Do You Think You Are?* The episode featured Aerosmith lead singer Steven Tyler and his daughter, actress Liv Tyler. Josh Lauren '07 is working in Maine and getting married this summer. Also engaged, Sam McHale '07 is transitioning from teaching American history to becoming a law student at the University of Pennsylvania. Kathryn Lazell '12 earned a Master's Degree in public history from the University of York in England. Allison Dell Otto '12 is getting her Masters in English (and studying with Lauren Berlant) at University of Chicago. Becky Stern '14 is working at a public relations and strategy firm in New York City. Becca Baruc '15 is teaching mosaics at The Chicago Mosaic School and working on her own art. Hannah Doban '16 is working for a TV production company called Lucky 8 TV. Her classmate Sophia Inkeles '16 is a paralegal at the Manhattan District Attorney's Office. There are more alumni updates on the department's alumni page (see http://www.skidmore.edu/american_studies/alumni/index.php); if you're an alum, please add to it. We'd love to hear from you and learn more about your post-Skidmore life. By the way, we were also thrilled to learn that former American Studies Visiting Assistant Professor Jacque Micieli-Voutsinas has been hired to teach at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Finally, as I say every year in this space, there is a bittersweet quality to the end of the academic year. It is of course a time of celebration and excitement for our six graduating seniors (and everyone else at Commencement who heard Oprah Winfrey speak). Yet we are also sad to see them fly the American Studies nest. We wish them, and all of you, the best.

Hope everyone has a great summer.

Sincerely,

DN

American Studies Majors

2017

Julia Anderson
Claire Cook
Dustin Foote
Ben Kim
Kristin Lamoreaux
Gabriela Pérez
Andrew Uebelein

2018

Ari Bogom-Shanon
Alessandra Canario
Nora Faber
Miller Young Fina
Magden Gipe
Brian Hall
Ian Iversen
Lisanny Manzueta
Meaghan McDonald
Shaun Menchel
Laila Morgan
Lucas Pickering
Zoe Resnick
Jack Spiegelman
Bailey Wilmit

2019

Olivia Fidler
Grace Florsheim
Grace Heath
Chris Isaacson
Zoe Islar
Sofia Jofre
Yelli Lewin
Carter Meyer
Sydney Rose Nathan
Aliza Sabin
Charlotte Simon

2020

Charlotte Sweeney

American Studies Minors

2017

Maya Cohn
Emily Fritzson
Steve Gilbert
Molly Goldman
Leigh Tooker

2018

Ari Fustini
Louise Sullivan
Allison Trunkey

2019

Lexi Parker



Beck Krefting

Very little stands between myself and the magnificent journey my wife and I have planned for the rest of the year. We leave in two weeks for a summer of travel in the Netherlands, Germany, and Austria and in August I will be one of two Skidmore faculty shepherding the London FYE. My course, titled *Comics, Jesters, Satirists, and Hacks: Locating British Humor*, will have students watching and analyzing British comedy, learning the history of English comedic cultural forms, and devising their own walking tour around sites for comedic production. It should be a great time for all.



One of the highlights of my year was being recommended for tenure and promotion. It was a time consuming process and I leaned hard on my American Studies colleagues, who offered unflinching support throughout. I also continued in the role of director of Media and Film Studies (MFS), but as of June 1, I'll be handing over the directorship to my incredibly competent colleague Professor Katie Hauser (Art History). Despite there being some rough patches (thanks, Curriculog), I have learned so much in the past two years and developed a whole new respect for administrators. The program would not be as strong without the fine work of our talented student administrative assistants including: Wilson Espinal '17, Alyssa Morales '18, and Charlotte Simon AM major '19. You'll be pleased to know that MFS was responsible for bringing ten PS4 consoles to campus and building a collection of games in the library. Indeed, in AM-265: *Post-Apocalyptic Film and Literature*, I had students engage with video games as another kind of visual text. They learned about key theories in Game Studies and conducted a formal analysis of *The Last of Us*, or an analysis of the formal elements of the text such as gameworld rules, audiovisual elements such as visual design, sound design, music, and examining a game for whether it is one of progression versus emergence. The results were impressive and the students reported enjoying turning a critical eye to an oft-overlooked cultural form. Thanks, American Studies!

In AM-342: *Black Feminist Thoughts*, I created a new assignment called *Wikipedians for Justice*. Students were tasked with researching, writing, and publishing pages for Wikipedia. This required them to become conversant with this platform and learn how to adapt research—drawing from primary and secondary sources—to create content befitting the platform and rendering visible the work, contributions, and lives of Black women. For instance, students created pages on Black queer films, Afro-Brazilian feminisms, and Black women serving in the roles of social activists, chefs, farmers, quilters, stand-up comics, make-up artists, dancers, and poets. All told, they generated or revised over fifty Wikipedia pages.

Whenever I get the chance, I'm doing my own writing (though not on Wikipedia) and over the last two years, I have written four chapters for edited collections, all on comedy. It's heartening to see a rise in interest on the topic among academics and students. I just finished copyedits on one such chapter on Margaret Cho, which will be published this fall in *Hysterical! Women in American Comedy*. Other forthcoming collections include: *Taking a Stand: American Stand-up Comedians as Public Intellectuals*, *Transgressive Humor of American Women Writers*, and *Political Comedy: Critical Encounters*. These have been enriching to research and write, but I'm now ready to focus on writing my second book. I should have more to say about that next year. In the meantime, you can check out this op-ed that I wrote last November: "Political Correctness Isn't Killing Comedy, It's Making It Better."

Folks continue to respond favorably to my book and this year I was invited to speak at symposia and special events at Concordia University (Montreal), Young Harris College, and UCLA. I also traveled to New York City where I stayed in NYU dorms for a week last summer while attending the Faculty Resource Network seminar: "More Connected, More Disconnected: Millennials and Social Media" with Dr. Kyra Gaunt. Our own Dan Nathan joined me and we had a marvelous time watching comedy, eating good food, and spotting celebrities from *The Wire*. We also got some good work done. Speaking of which, I have some packing to do. Let me conclude by wishing our recent graduates all the best in the coming year as they put their degrees to use in the real world. Please keep in touch and happy trails!



According to Greg Pfitzer, students in AM-250A: Hudson River Culture participated in a number of field trips this fall as part of their semester-long project to have as many points of contact with the river as possible.

In September we toured the Saratoga Battlefield where, according to the Battlefield website, “American forces met, defeated and forced a major British army to surrender,” a crucial American victory in the American Revolution that “renewed patriots’ hopes for independence, secured essential foreign recognition and support, and forever changed the face of the world.” We also visited the 155-foot obelisk commemorating the American victory in the Battles of Saratoga, located in the Village of Schuylerville, approximately eight miles north of Saratoga Battlefield. Dodging some late afternoon raindrops, we rounded out the trip with a visit to Saratoga Apple where we had more than our share of donuts and cider.



Professor Gregory Pfitzer

It has been a busy and productive academic year. I taught three courses in the fall semester, each of which brought its own unique joys. At the 100-level, I offered Myth and Symbol in American Studies, in which students studied the life-cycle of national fables, considering how myths develop initially as mirrors for reflecting and testing cultural experience; how they gradually change over time to accommodate altering cultural conditions; and how they eventually outlive their usefulness. In particular the course focused on the pervasive mythology of the American frontier, paying special attention to how, once the physical frontier disappeared in the late nineteenth century, Americans transferred their ambitions for the West to imperial outposts in the Caribbean and the Pacific in the early twentieth century, and then to outer space in the late twentieth century, where astronauts replaced cowboys as the archetypal American heroes and where the successes and failures of Western frontier development were recapitulated in space exploration and development. Among other things, we had spirited conversations about whether the latest Star Wars movie (*Rogue One*) fits into the mythic constructions we discussed in class. The consensus was that it does.

At the 200-level I offered my course on Hudson River Culture. Students from many different disciplines across the college studied the Hudson River as an environmental entity, an economic and political concern, and especially as a cultural symbol. Students were asked to consider how popular and official attitudes toward the Hudson have reflected changing cultural priorities for residents of the valley and for the nation at large. We began with indigenous cultures and extended our analysis to the present, but the focus was primarily on the nineteenth-century, since it was in that century that the Hudson had its greatest influence on and most dramatic confrontations with regional and national history. The course also has an ecological aim. Rivers have played a crucial role in historical development, determining patterns of settlement, nurturing crops, transporting goods, destroying cities. Issues of water control are among the most important communities and nations face, so we paid a good deal of attention to river management and the ecological preservation of the river, especially on weekly field trips to places such as the Saratoga Battlefield, Prospect Mountain, Cooper's Cave, the Albany Institute of History and Art, and the Speier Falls hydroelectric plant, and the site of PCB dumping by General Electric in Ft. Edward.

I also taught the 300-level Senior Seminar, the culminating or "capstone" experience in the American Studies major. The seminar is designed to help students find academic meaning and focus in the work they have already completed at Skidmore and to provide a bridge to the world beyond college by requiring them to confront squarely those two nagging questions: 1) "What is the purpose and meaning of what I have learned in college to date?" and 2) "What will I do with my American Studies degree when I graduate?" Answers to these questions were sought in the context of producing a major research paper whose topics included Satire in South Park, the Censorship of Marvel Comics, the History of Coffee in the U.S., the Colin Kaepernick Protests, Tailgating at Penn State and Women in Sports Broadcasting and Entertainment. (These are now available for your perusal in the departmental office.) I did my best to help the American Studies faculty defeat the seniors in the annual bowling event that directly proceeds the submission of these final papers. Truthfully, I was a liability.

In the spring I taught AM-241: Mark Twain's America which charted the complex relationship between Samuel Clemens and his literary persona Mark Twain while exploring the connections between the literary characters Clemens created and the American audiences for whom he wrote. Twain, like the culture he described, was filled with contradictions. While he tried to warn Americans of the dangers of the period in which they lived--identifying it as a materialistic "Gilded Age"--he was also one of its most naïve and notorious victims. While Twain is closely associated with a vernacular school of humor deriving from the American West, he spent much of his adult life in cosmopolitan eastern cities and abroad. These contradictions and others like them revealed to my students the degree to which Twain was a representative figure of an age he helped to define, and hopefully they discovered that a study of his life and works can tell us much about a nation undergoing profound and rapid change in the form of class struggle, agrarian retreat, industrialization and imperialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Some enterprising students in the course ventured to the Mark Twain Museum and Home in Hartford, Connecticut. No one made it to the Twain's Boyhood Home in Hannibal, Missouri, but I'll be there this summer when I complete with my family a Twain-themed riverboat cruise on the Mississippi River aboard the American Queen.

Professor Gregory Pfitzer cont.

Finally, in the spring term I taught AM-368: The Sixties, a consideration of the major events of the 1960s, including the New Frontier, the Cuban missile crisis, the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the war in Vietnam, the civil rights movement, the sexual and gender revolutions, the rise of rock and roll, the counterculture, the moon landing and other landmarks of the decade. The course considered not only what happened during those climactic years, but why such events were so important to subsequent American development, and how perceptions and historical memories about the 1960s have changed over time. Students participated in numerous in-class exercises, including role-plays, mock trials, campus sit-ins, and a trip to the radio station to conduct a Sixties Revival Show.



I managed to find a little time to work on a book project tentatively titled *The Negotiated Past: The Making of the Childhood of Famous Americans Series*. For several years I've been reading and analyzing the nearly 200 "COFA" published between 1932 and 1972 by Bobbs-Merrill of Indianapolis. It's my contention that these volumes had a significant influence on the historical sensibilities of a generation of baby boomers (myself included) who read COFAs voraciously and derived from them their first juvenile understandings of what history was as a discipline. The series reveals important things about the climate of mid-twentieth century intellectual life, especially as it related to the education of young people to the forces of patriotism and nationalism in the 1940s and 50s. The COFA series also raises interesting questions about the ways in which children absorb history and about their capacities for distinguishing between historical fiction and fictional biography. While the promoters of the series at Bobbs-Merrill were very clear that these works should be read as fictional accounts that relied on invented dialogues and imaginary figures and events and should not be considered exact transcriptions of the past, they also advertised the volumes as part of a series informed by history that could serve as a suitable point of entry for students hoping to gain insight into the history of their country. These decisions reflected prevailing attitudes about what children were capable of understanding with respect to the past. Additionally these volumes are important for what they can tell us about the "negotiated" quality of history. In my manuscript I focus on the production histories of such works and what they suggest about how historical understanding emerges in the collaborative (and sometimes dysfunctional) interactions among publishers, authors and illustrators. The editorial correspondence between members of the Bobbs-Merrill staff and the authors of the volumes is quite rich and is a significant source of information about how history is manufactured and disseminated in juvenile book markets. It is my contention that we must come to understand the spirited contests that sometimes emerge among these parties and that always contribute to the final histories produced.

I hope everyone has a pleasant summer. I look forward to seeing many of you next year.

-Greg Pfitzer



Gabriela Pérez

Class of 2017

I did not know I was black until I got to Skidmore. I am grossly over-simplifying what is a many-layered, complex idea about the intersections of all of my identities, but I did make a conscious effort to unravel my blackness within my explorations in the American Studies major. To that end, my fall Senior Thesis looked at Colin Kaepernick, a black former quarterback of the San Francisco 49ers who refused to stand for the National Anthem during his games and how his methods harken back to black nationalist and black power movements of the 1960s. This semester, my Honors Thesis became an intensely personal autoethnographic study of Queensbridge Houses, the largest public housing complex in North America that is predominantly African-American and Latinx. I examined how 1) tenants have come to interpret the meaning of community

and 2) how their notions of community center around alleviating the effects of historical trauma and cultural violence.

I do not know what it means not to be Dominican-American, but studying and accepting blackness as part of my identity has been one of my most valuable journeys at Skidmore. Being an American Studies major and having the full support of the entire faculty, staff, and my fellow majors has made the experience a fulfilling and passionate one.

To the next American Studies class: Good luck next year, and take advantage of any and all learning opportunities!

Dustin Foote

Class of 2017

My plans after graduation are still up in the air. But starting in June, I will lead hiking trips at Overland Summers for a few months. I have also applied to graduate school for documentary filmmaking, and I am still waiting to hear back. Hopefully all goes well!

I decided to become an American Studies major as a sophomore because I was interested in various aspects of American culture. As a graduating senior, I have no regrets with my decision. In fact, I encouraged others, mostly underclassmen, to declare an AM major.

My favorite memory from my time as a major occurred recently. A few days ago, I presented my Honors Thesis at academic festival. I was humbled by the response I received, specifically from other scholars in the department whom I admire greatly.

It's bittersweet to be a part of the Skidmore American Studies alumni. But I am excited for what the future holds and I wish the best for the department going forward.





This academic year was full of challenges and triumphs. I was on family leave in the fall after a new addition to my family – I became the legal guardian for my niece Joo-Yung, who moved across the world from Pyeongtaek, South Korea to upstate New York. She started sixth grade and I started a new journey in motherhood.

Upon returning to teaching in the spring I taught three classes – AM-101W Cultural Geographies, AM-264 African-American Experience, and AM376 City in American Culture: DC. It was a wonderful combination of topics and was a really invigorating semester. I had taught both *Cultural Geographies* and *African-American Experience* before, though this iteration of the courses included new assignments and engagement with local people and places. Brian Yates, Program Manager Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, visited Cultural Geographies and gave an extremely thorough, succinct, and enriching lecture on the canal. I hosted members of the Rapp Road Historical Association with a documentary screening of *Crossroads: The History of Rapp Road* and a panel discussion that was open to the whole college. Four student impressions from the screening and panel were highlighted on the MDOCS website: <http://www.skidmore.edu/mdocs/news/2017/042517-rapp-road-the-story-of-an-albany-place.php>.

While each of the three classes had different pedagogical aims and were constructed to provide different levels of learning experience, from the introductory to the advanced, all incorporated the use of Social Explorer. Skidmore acquired a subscription to this map-making software last year. Social Explorer offers Census Data from 1790 to 2010, among other types of information like the American Community Survey and the Religious Congregations and Membership Study. All my courses used place-based inquiry in some way, so Social Explorer was a great tool to add to the skills students developed. In that same vein, students from the Cultural Geographies and City in American Culture classes had an orientation to the GIS Center for Interdisciplinary Research led by Alex Chaucer, GIS Instructional Technologist, to think about the map-making process before they started their Social Explorer assignment.

Another unconventional assignment that students completed in the African-American Experience course was their final paper – an art analysis of a piece of work that is included in the permanent collection of the Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery. This assignment was developed in conjunction with the Accelerate: Access and Inclusion at the Tang Teaching Museum Grant, a project of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. I met with Tang curator Rebecca McNamara to survey pieces that could speak to the African-American experience and would be immediately accessible to students lacking an art history background. From that consultation we arranged a class viewing in which students visited the Tang with nine art pieces pulled specifically for them. These included work by Romare Bearden, Barkley Hendricks, Lorna Simpson, and others. Students wrote down their initial impressions, picked their top three choices for analysis, then eventually did research and writing on one of those selections. The process spanned about a month, with class discussion time dedicated to each piece. Students were able to reflect on their initial impressions and their final understanding of the piece after doing further research. I also did some personal reflections in conjunction with the Accelerate Grant, in which I was interviewed to discuss Carrie Mae Weems' "When and Where I Enter the British Museum," a photograph in the Tang permanent collection. The video recorded interview will be available on the Tang website in the near future.

Though I was not teaching in the fall, I was still busy. I had two book chapters published: "A Model School for a Model City: Shaw Junior High School as a Monument to Planning Reform," in *Designing Schools: Space, Place and Pedagogy*, edited by Julie Willis and Kate Darian-Smith (Routledge, 2016) as well as "A Modern-Day WPA," in *Bending the Future: Fifty Ideas for the Next Fifty Years of Historic Preservation in the United States*, edited by Max Page and Marla R. Miller (University of Massachusetts Press, 2016). In November I spoke on two panels for the latter: "Bending the Future: Preservation as a Tool for a More Just World," at the Jones Library in Amherst, Massachusetts, and "Power Play: Harnessing the Tools of Preservation," at the Providence Preservation Society Annual Symposium in Rhode Island. In the spring I was invited to speak at the Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation on the topic of the former book chapter, giving a talk entitled "MICCO: Urban Renewal With the People, By the People, For the People."

Happily, I have continued to find a place and a voice here on campus. In February I was interviewed for *This is Skidmore*, the official podcast of Skidmore College: <https://soundcloud.com/skidmorecollege/s02e07-professor-amber-wiley>. I developed a new course for the 2017-2018 academic year as a part of the IdeaLab Grant funded by the Arthur Vining Davis Foundation. The course, Historic Preservation Theory and Practice, is upper-level yearlong seminar developed to focus on the history and theory of preservation in the fall semester that progresses into a practicum in the spring semester.

This summer will be a busy one. I'll be participating in the Moore Documentary Studies Collaborative Storytellers' Institute as a Faculty Fellow, will conduct research and writing for two weeks in Washington, D.C., as part of a book and museum exhibit project, and will teach at the Appalachian Institute for Creative Learning for two more weeks. There will, of course, be me time – a quick jaunt to Montreal for the jazz festival in June, and a similarly short but significant trip to Jamaica in August that will have me refreshed and ready for what the fall has in store.

STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCE

Hello fellow American Studies Majors!

In the fall of 2015 I transferred as a sophomore to Skidmore. After only a few short days on campus I came across the Tisch Building and later, the American Studies department. My eyes widened upon discovering some of the various course offerings such as American Sports/ American Culture taught by Professor Dan Nathan and The American City taught by Professor Amber Wiley. As a native of the nation's capital, with a passion for the history and culture of my native country, I knew this was the major for me.

The idea of spending a semester abroad has long been on my mind. I have been afforded opportunities to hike the Rocky Mountains, stand at the base of Mount Rushmore, and give tours of our United States Capitol building. I have traveled cross country in a Volvo Cross Country more than a few times. All this may provide sufficient basis for a love of country and for American Studies. However, when it came time to decide on study abroad, my past experiences offered me little guidance. I had never traveled outside of the US before and my knowledge of foreign languages was capped at a far-from-fluent level of Spanish speaking. All this, coupled with a fear of homesickness, made for, in my mind, a slim chance of abroad study. This was all set to change during the summer of my junior year.

One evening at the dinner table my father pulled out his old passport that he traveled with when he was a student in London during in 1979. Flipping through the pages, he showed me the stamps he collected from his travels that semester. France, Italy, Greece, Germany, the Netherlands, some traveled to by train, some by plane. I was amazed. So many different cultures located in such close proximity to one another. He recounted to me days when he would simply "pick up his backpack, a map, and go!" I knew from this point on that traveling abroad was simply a must if I were to satisfy my interest in exploration, adventure, and great fun. So the chance to study at King's College London for the spring semester of my junior year was sort of a dream come true. Now back after more than four months living abroad, I am pleased to say it was an experience I will never forget.

Studying French and German politics, contemporary European film and film noir, academics at Kings engaged me in topics that were new to me. Though I had taken numerous classes in American government, society, and film, I had no appreciation for the European perspective. My coursework at King's instilled in me a deeper understanding and appreciation for multilateralism. Whether on a political, artistic, or purely social level, I come away with newfound abilities to engage with ideas, objects, and people different from me.

I came to know an incredible city, one rich in history and famous for its diversity, its culture, its restaurants and infinite destination points. I was also fortunate to get out of the city on several occasions to explore new places that until then I had only heard or read about. At first, I traveled around the United Kingdom, exploring Bath, Oxford, Stonehenge, and the beautiful Lake District in the north. My travels later took me to Spain, Denmark, and across the English Channel to France. Looking back on my experience I am forever indebted to Skidmore, King's, and that summer evening flipping through my father's passport.

Jack Spiegelman '18



FALL 2017

AMERICAN STUDIES COURSE OFFERINGS

AM-101W 001 The Wizard of Oz

Professor Gregory Pfitzer

MW/F 9:05-10:00 Credits: 4

An interdisciplinary analysis of *The Wizard of Oz*, this course will examine the numerous adaptations of L. Frank Baum's classic tale to introduce students to the study of American culture, past and present. Students will read critically, think historically, practice interdisciplinarity, and acknowledge the intersections of race, class, and gender in order to analyze the ways that *The Wizard of Oz*, in its many versions, has reflected and shaped American culture. Students will consider primary and secondary sources that explore Oz through a range of media (fiction, film, theater, television, and music) and from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. In addition to reading Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), students will consider MGM's *The Wizard of Oz* (1939); the "super soul" Broadway musical, *The Wiz* (1975), and its 1978 film adaptation; Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side of the Moon* (1973); Gregory Maguire's *Wicked* (1996); Stephen Schwartz's 2003 Broadway musical version of the Maguire novel; ABC television's *The Muppets' Wizard of Oz* (2005); and the television mini-series *Tin Man* (2007).

AM-101W 002 The City

Professor Amber Wiley

Tu Th, 9:40-11:00 Credits: 4

Introduction to the interdisciplinary study of American culture, past and present. Emphasizes reading critically, thinking historically, practicing interdisciplinarity, and acknowledging diversity. Students will 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. **Note(s):** (Fulfills social science requirement.)

AM-261C 001 Holocaust and American Culture

Professor Daniel Nathan

WF, 8:40-10:00 Credits:3

This course has two emphases. The first third will focus on what Americans knew about the Nazis' genocidal policies in the 1930s and 1940s, how and when they knew it, and why the U.S. government and Jewish leaders were mostly ineffective in halting or mitigating the murder of some six million European Jews (among others). It will also consider the initial American reaction to learning about the Nazi death camps in 1945. The remaining two-thirds of the course will employ an interdisciplinary methodology to critique and put in context a variety of texts-films (documentary and feature), a TV series, graphic non-fiction, museums-created by and for Americans that have represented the Shoah ("the catastrophe"). The course will engage issues related to power and justice. It will probe the ways in which those in power in the United States did less than they could or might have done to save thousands of European Jews. It will also consider the power of popular culture to teach people lessons about the past and social justice. Ultimately, the class is about the power of remembering and representing the past, and the perils and possibilities that are part of those processes.

AM-264 001 African American Experience

Professor Amber Wiley

Tu Th 11:10-12:30 Credits: 3

An exploration of the development of the distinctive culture of the southern region of the United States. The course examines myths and legends of the Old South, including those surrounding the origins of the plantation system, southern womanhood, and the development of the slave and free communities of the region in the antebellum period. Topics include the myths and legends of the New South, the legacy of the Civil War and Reconstruction, the imposition of segregation, modernization of agriculture and industry, and the migration of African-Americans northward. The course culminates in a study of the civil rights movement, and recent demographic, economic, and political changes.

Note(s): (Fulfills social sciences requirement.)

FALL 2017

AMERICAN STUDIES COURSE OFFERINGS cont'd.

AM-265 001 Pop History

Professor Gregory Pfitzer

M 11:15-12:00 and WF 10:10-11:30 Credits: 4

A topical examination of the creation, dissemination, and consumption of "pop"ular history in American culture. The course will examine the ways in which Americans absorb history through vernacular forms of communication, including radio dramatizations (*The Cavalcade of America*); cartoons and comic books (*Classics Illustrated*); television programs (*Time Tunnel* and *Drunk History*); movies (Disney's *Pocahontas*); living history demonstrations (Civil War re-enactments); and rap music (Flocabulary's *Hip-Hop History*). The interrelationships among popular, elite and folk history will be explored.

AM-351D 001 Historic Preservation Theory and Practice

Professor Amber Wiley

WF 12:20-1:40 Credits: 4

Historic Preservation is a necessarily interdisciplinary field. Born of grassroots efforts to safeguard our country's early heritage and to create a sense of "national lineage," this field has expanded to include city planning, public history, archaeology, landscape studies, and economic development, to name only a few allied fields. As such, this **yearlong course** composed of one semester of *History and Theory of Preservation* (4 credits) and one semester of a *Preservation Practicum* (3 credits), with an option to attend the *National Park System Advisory Board Landmarks Committee Meeting* (1 credit) should appeal to upper-level students in the fields of American Studies, Art Administration, Art History, Business, Environmental Studies, History, and Political Science, etc. The course will take advantage of the local resources in the Capital Region. Guest lectures from specialists from the Saratoga Battlefield National Historic Park, Saratoga Springs Preservation Foundation, Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor and the New York State Historic Preservation Office will be central to the class structure, in addition to site visits. Students will also have the chance to attend a National Park Service meeting in Washington, D.C. in the fall.

AM-356 001 Sports Cinema

Professor Jeffrey Segrave

MW 2:30-3:50, S 7:00-9:00 Credits: 3

This class puts in context and critiques feature films and documentaries about sports to understand and appreciate—aesthetically, historically, culturally—a wide variety of experiences and issues. The course is also intended to enhance visual literacy, and thus students will assess the films *as films*, which have their own codes and conventions. As one would expect, most of the films we will study were made and set in the United States. A notable exception is Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia* (1938), which chronicles and celebrates the 1936 Berlin Olympic games. We will screen several "classic" sport films—among them, *Knute Rockne—All American* (1940), *Raging Bull* (1980), and *Hoop Dreams* (1994). After spring break, we will pair a Hollywood feature film with a related documentary: so, for example, Ken Carlson's *Go Tigers!* (2001), which is about high school football in Massillon, Ohio, will be paired with Peter Berg's *Friday Night Lights* (2004). The point is *not* to suggest that documentaries provide a more accurate version of sporting reality; rather, it is to consider what different kinds of visual texts, grammars, and discourses do well (and poorly) and how they interact with and enhance one another. Students are required to attend a weekly evening film screening.

AM-374 001 Senior Seminar

Professor Gregory Pfitzer

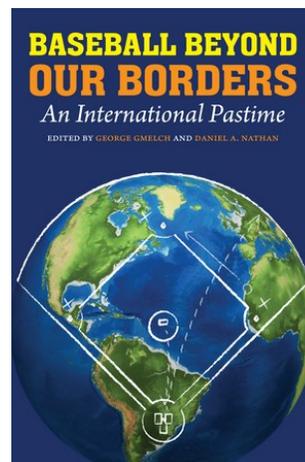
MW, 4:00-5:50 Credits: 4

Exploration of primary and secondary sources in the interdisciplinary examination of a particular topic in American culture. Students will pursue a major research project or prepare an honors thesis proposal. Required of all senior majors. Open to majors only; normally taken in fall semester of senior year.

Note(s): 300-level courses in American Studies are not ordinarily open to first-year students except by permission of the instructor.

Professor Daniel Nathan

It is official. Having worked at Skidmore for fifteen years now, I am a full-fledged veteran. (I suppose my hair is a tell.) Time flies and all that. In the fall, I taught two courses: my 1968 version of Introduction to American Studies (now numbered AM-101) and American Autobiography (AM-362). I thought the classes went well, but sometimes I'm not the best judge. Also in the fall, I began serving a three-year term on the Committee on Appointments, Promotion, and Tenure (CAPT). It was hard, time-consuming work but it went well and it was rewarding. I also continued my service on the MDOCS Advisory Board. More important, though, Zoë Elizabeth Nathan's Bat Mitzvah was in the fall. It was a joyous occasion. Like her brother before her, the kid did great. It was a pleasure to share the occasion with so many of my AM and Skidmore colleagues and friends. This spring, I taught American Studies Methods and Approaches (AM-221) and, for the second time, Sport Cinema (AM-356). Both classes had some super students. I'm pleased to report that Health and Exercise Science faculty member Jeff Segrave, a polymath and lovely human being, will teach Sport Cinema for us in the fall. In terms of scholarship, I had a good year, too. My book *Baltimore Sports: Stories from Charm City* (University of Arkansas Press) was published in the summer. I was invited to the 2017 Annapolis Book Festival to talk about and promote it. This March, an anthology I co-edited with anthropologist George Gmelch, *Baseball Beyond Our Borders: An International Pastime* (University of Nebraska Press), was published. In terms of work in progress, I finished a chapter on the famous New York City saloonkeeper Toots Shor for a book about New York City. As the current Past President of the North American Society for Sport History (NASSH), I chaired the NASSH Distinguished Lecturers and Awards Committee, which once again went smoothly. This year's NASSH conference is being held at California State University – Fullerton in late May. As always, I'm looking forward to the meeting. This year, I will be moderating a session and commenting on some papers. I also plan to have some fun in the SoCal sun. This summer I'm going to keep plugging away on my writing projects (one of which I have to finish by September), do some travelling with my family (to Europe, in celebration of a big birthday), do some much needed yard work, spend some time in the Berkshires, and, as ever, root for the Orioles and eat some Chesapeake Bay crabs.



Academic Festival

American Studies Honor Theses

Faculty Sponsor: Daniel Nathan, American Studies

Presenters: Dustin Foote '17, Gabriela Perez '17, Andrew Uebelein '17

Dustin Foote '17

“From Tailgating in Happy Valley to Running with Ralphie the Buffalo: The Cultural Significance of Pregame Festivities at Penn State and CU Boulder Football Games”

Like many other schools, Penn State University and the University of Colorado Boulder take their pregame college football rituals seriously. On game days in State College, Pennsylvania, a prominent tent community of tailgaters is constituted. CU has its own unique game day ritual: running its popular animal mascot, Ralphie the Buffalo, around the football field. These cultural practices are not trivial and thus my Honors Thesis scrutinizes, contextualizes, and critiques these traditions.



Gabriela Pérez '17

“What’s in a (Public Housing) Community?”

My Honors Thesis explores the meaning of the community in the New York City public housing system, specifically Queensbridge, the largest public housing development in North America. I attempt to answer the following questions: What was the original plan and vision for the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA)? How do the NYCHA negotiate management and community-building tactics? How is community formed and who can claim ownership? How does a marginalized community make these public spaces livable?



Academic Festival continued



Andrew Uebelein '17

“Writing, Producing, and Performing Socially Responsible Satire”

My Senior Thesis is about how well satirical television shows communicate their cultural critiques. It specifically examines how the humor in South Park is often misconstrued and misappropriated, which can create dissonance between the satirists’ intentions and how many audience members interpret jokes. For my Honors Thesis, I have produced a satirical web-series that is socio-politically critical (and hopefully funny and ameliorating) and remains clear in its intention to challenge social maladies.

Message from Academic Festival Coordinators

“Excellence matters at Skidmore College. Student write perceptive papers, conduct insightful scientific and mathematical research, choreograph breathtaking dances, and create stimulating theatrical productions. In labs, at field sites, in libraries and in studios, our students take ownership of their curriculum and demonstrate the mix of creativity and excellence that characterizes Academic Festival.”



AMERICAN STUDIES BOWLING NIGHT



The American Studies faculty and seniors took a bowling break for a much needed stress reliever at the Strike Zone as classed ended for Fall semester! It's always a fun competition between students and faculty.



Meet Alessandra Canario '18



Interweaving studies

April 11, 2017

An interest in vintage clothing has helped Alessandra Canario '18 shape and integrate her studies at Skidmore. She uses her American Studies major to trace social and historical themes behind fashion trends. She finds “something very romantic about how each thread interacts: in her fiber projects for her art minor. And she indulges her visual sensibilities with a minor in film and media studies. (Video photo by August Bomer-Lawson '17)

**Congratulations Andrew Uebelein 2017 this year's
American Studies Faculty Award recipient**



FUN PHOTO GALLERY OF THE YEAR'S EVENTS



Congratulations 2017 American Studies Graduates



Left to right: Professor Beck Krefting, Gabi Pérez '17, Professor Amber Wiley, Professor Dan Nathan, Benjamin Kim '17

Photo credit to Mark Gao

http://instagram.com/mark_gao

Zhenyang Gao