

Spring 2022

Skidmore College

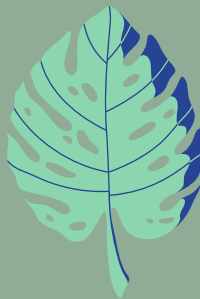
American Studies Departmental Newsletter

Featuring

FACULTY



SENIORS

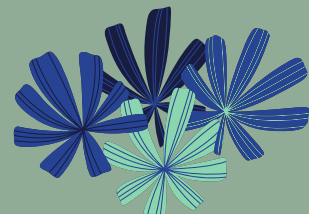


EVENTS

MAJORS



ALUMNI



Hi Friends of the American Studies Department:

I'm writing as chair of the department to let you know that we had a full and highly successful academic year in 2021-2022. Although it was not clear in late August whether we would be able to hold in-person classes due to an uptick in pandemic variants, we managed to make it through the entire year in that modality, albeit wearing masks for the majority of the time. Members of the department wish to express their admiration for our students, many of whom have been dealing with COVID for more than two years now and yet, for the most part, continue to do their readings, write their papers, take their exams, and deliver their presentations. Despite many challenges, they have persevered and even thrived, as the student profiles in this newsletter attest.

Congratulations to the graduating seniors of the class of 2022 especially who completed their capstone projects in the fall. Their reward was the chance to compete with the faculty in our annual bowling outing at the Strike Zone in December. Although the professors dominated on the lanes, we were no match for the students in the Bumper Car activities that followed. In fact, the faculty chose wisely not to participate in this stress-relieving exercise as the road rage displayed by some of the seniors was quite impressive (and scary).



We introduced some popular new courses this year (Dan Nathan's "Books That Changed America," for instance), conducted some splendid symposia ("Building a New Table: Black Feminism and the Next Generation" from Tammy Owens's Black Feminist Thought course), and produced some impressive podcasts (Aaron Pedinotti's "The Rise and Fall of the New Deal"). Students presented their work in a variety of venues and formats, most notably at Academic Festival, where Maya Gmach, Sam Knox, Samantha Horowitz, and Brynnae Newman reported on the excellent work they did all year long on their respective honors thesis projects.

The American Studies department hosted and co-hosted a number of outside speakers this year. In September we invited Professor David Woolner of Marist College to speak to the seniors about the process of writing a major research paper. COVID restrictions made it impossible for him to get

to campus, but we Zoomed with him as he walked us through the trials and tribulations of producing a major capstone project, using his most recent work—“FDR in his Last 100 Days: Setting the World on the Path to Peace”—as a case study. In March, Jeff Segrave, who teaches a Sports Cinema course in the department, invited one of our former American Studies majors, Dustin Foote ('17) to speak to students about his most recent documentary film work. After graduating from Skidmore, Dustin earned a Master's Degree in documentary filmmaking from Wake Forest University. A “documentary storyteller who pursues ideas that meet at the intersection of sports and society,” he has covered topics such as the effects of climate change on the ski industry, college athlete compensation, and stadium voting in a pandemic.

In April the department hosted the biennial Kuroda Symposium, featuring guest presenter Professor Nina Silber of Boston University. On Friday night she delivered a keynote address titled “A ‘New Dealer of the 1860s’: Remembering ‘Honest Abe’ in 1930s America.” The lecture considered ways in which The New Deal era witnessed a surprising surge in popular engagement with the history of the Civil War era, particularly with the memory of Abraham Lincoln. By chronicling how, during a moment of enormous national turmoil, the events and personages of the Civil War provided a framework for reassessing national identity, class conflict, and racial and ethnic division, Professor Silber demonstrated how historical memory offers people a means of understanding and defining themselves in the present. On Saturday morning, Professor Silber critiqued student papers in a workshop designed to treat questions of historical methodology and process. Two students who wrote papers for American Studies courses, Samantha Horowitz ('22) and Anika Eastman ('25), presented their work and received some helpful feedback and praise from our guest.

The Department also co-sponsored several events across campus, including a lecture by Professor Tammy Kernodle from Miami University titled “Your Friend Langston: An Examination of Langston Hughes’ Collaborations with Black Women Musicians.” The talk, part of the Tsou Residency overseen by the Music Department, explored the collaborative relationships that Hughes cultivated with folk singer Odetta, jazz musician Nina Simone, and composer/pianist Margaret Bonds during the late 1950s and 1960s, illuminating the intellectual labor of black women within the mid-century Black liberation movement. Prof. Kernodle visited Professor Owens’s Black Feminist Thought course and discussed further her work on the confluence of Black music, gender, and politics. In the last weeks of the semester, the department co-sponsored a talk with the International Affairs program by Alison Howell, Associate Professor of Political Science at Rutgers University, titled “From Intelligence to Resilience: The Persistence of Race Science?” The lecture investigated “the case of military psychology, examining two modes of standardized psychometric testing significantly developed in the US Army one-hundred years apart: WWI intelligence testing, and post-9/11 resilience testing.”

We wish all our students a safe and relaxing summer and look forward to hearing from the graduating seniors in the weeks and months ahead as they begin their post-Skidmore careers.

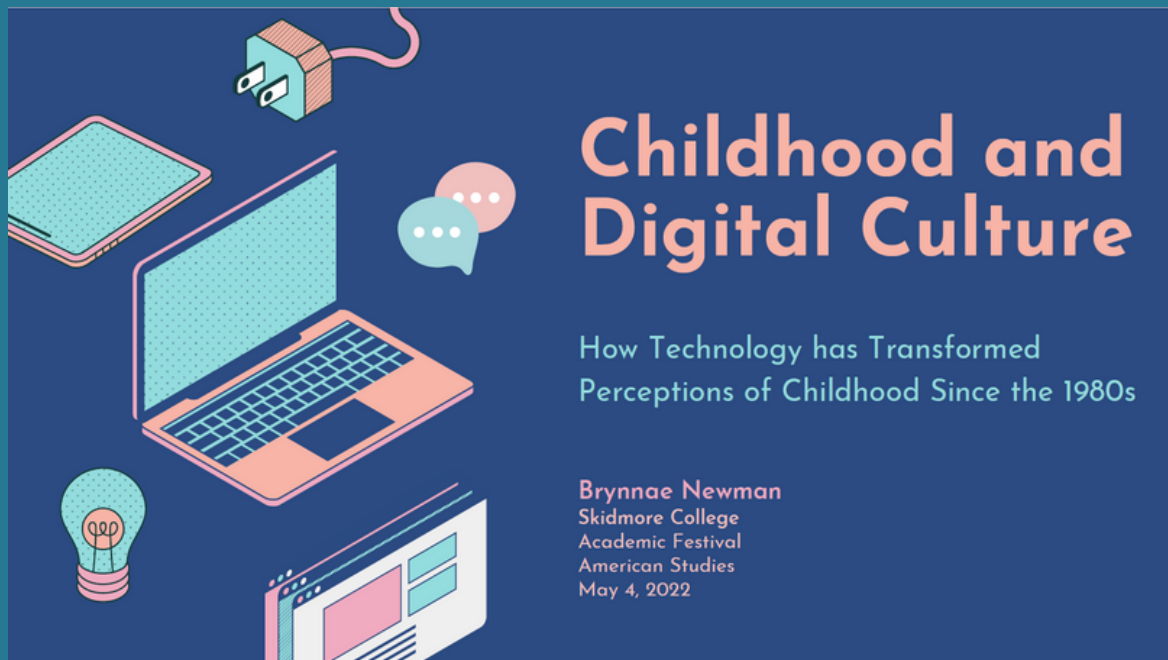
Best wishes,

Greg Pfitzer, Chair, American Studies

Honors Projects in American Studies

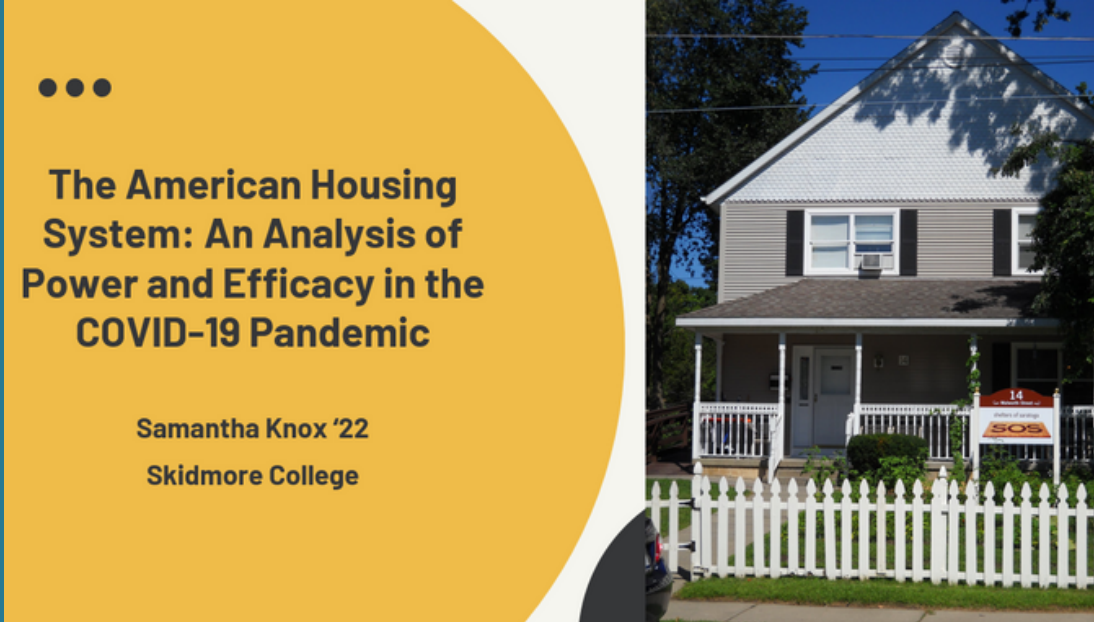


Maya Gmach: An online exhibit and public installation of artwork made by local veterans groups, Arts4Vets, accompanied by interviews with the veterans themselves to gain insight into their experiences making art, and how it has served as therapy to combat trauma from their service. Maya's honors thesis and online exhibit will be archived in the Library of Congress courtesy of Arts4Vets.

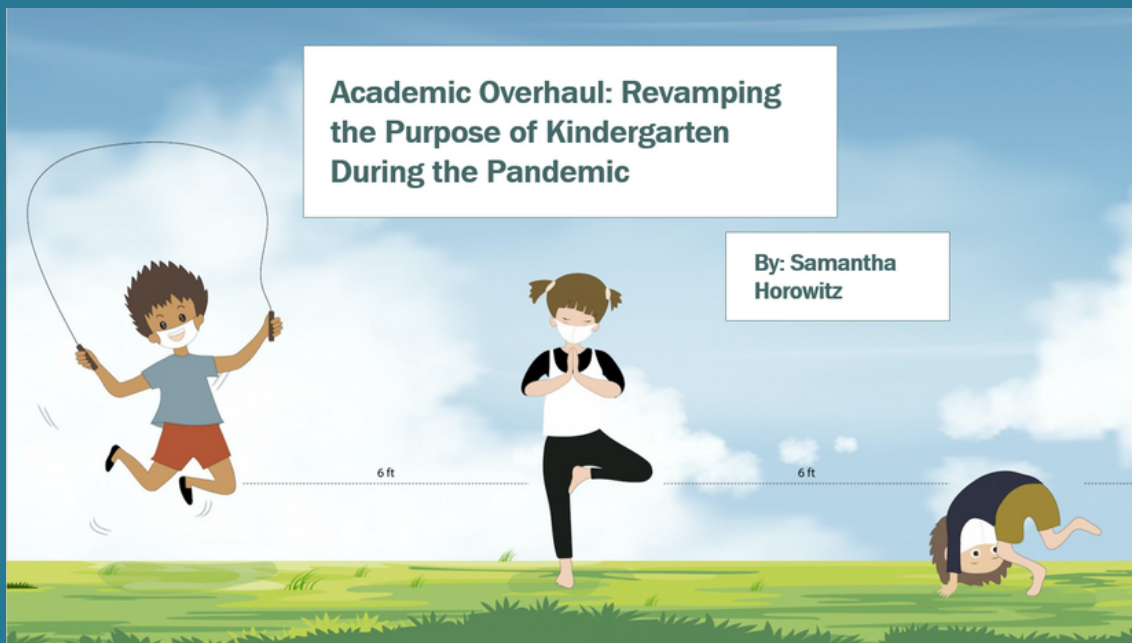


Bryanne Newman: An investigation of the effect of technology on the perceived destruction and dismantling of the cultural concept of "childhood," with special attention to the effects of cell phones and social media on the common hobbies and behaviors of American youth.

Honors Projects in American Studies



Samantha Knox: An analysis of how the Franklin Community Center, a local Saratoga service provider, as well as Benefaction, the Skidmore community service club, provide practical ways of dealing with those who fall through the cracks of programs such as the Emergency Rental Assistance Program.



Samantha Horowitz: A discussion of the need to provide kindergartners with ample opportunities for play and socialization in American schools, focusing on how academic work has crowded out playtime over the years.

SENIORS



Sam Knox

This year I completed my thesis on the American Housing system in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. By examining the work of my employer, Capital Access, a disaster relief organization, as well as Saratoga Spring's Franklin Community Center and Shelters of Saratoga, I compared both federal and local organizations that aided individuals through financial and moral support in the face of a housing crisis. In the fall, I analyzed Capital Access as a case study for the efficacy of a social welfare program, specifically in regard to sustainable aid. In the spring, I extended my research and focus on the local level, examining the ways in which the FCC and SOS's policies aimed to assist the homeless population, as well as low-income renters with housing; the most important part of my research to me, however, was cultivating a discussion on what responsibilities we have as graduating Skidmore students to our town's most vulnerable populations.

Outside of the American Studies department, I am a Media and Film Studies minor with a focus in documentary making. My American Studies knowledge has shaped not only my interests in documentary, but also all aspects of my life, to think critically about my role in the communities I am a part of. I am a lover of the WSPN radio station, where I have had an interview show for four years, a musician, and I love to crochet.

Favorite American Studies Class: Americans in Outer Space, Black Feminist Thought

I'm from Carmel, NY

Fun Fact: I play guitar!



SENIORS



Samantha Horowitz

My hometown is Hopkins, Minnesota.

Favorite American Studies class: The 1960s

My thesis explores the transition from play-based to academic instructional approaches in the kindergarten classroom, and how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the way that young students learn today. Play-based pedagogy and practices used to dominate the kindergarten classroom, empowering students to actively participate in the learning process. Within this child-centered model, teachers took a backseat while children were given the freedom to play and explore. However, since the 1983 publication of “A Nation at Risk” and the broad system of standards that ensued, the American education system has experienced a notable paradigm shift. It was only a matter of time before academic work started creeping into early childhood education, crowding out playtime and stifling the once nurturing essence of kindergarten. The current model of standardization and accountability is alarming, but the onset of the global pandemic could present an opportunity for overhaul. As we work to transition young students back to in-person learning, we need to account for their social and emotional needs now more than ever. I discuss the importance of providing today’s kindergartners with ample opportunities for play and socialization.

Outside of the American Studies department, I majored in Education Studies and worked toward obtaining certification in Childhood Education (Grades 1-6). Next year, I plan to pursue a master’s degree in Reading Education at Vanderbilt University. While at Skidmore, I was also a member and a captain of the Swim and Dive team, and I worked as head tutor at the Writing Center.



SENIORS



Katie Kenna

Nyack, NY

Thesis Summary: My senior thesis dissected the relationship between an event and the place in which it occurred. The 1906 murder of Grace Brown on Big Moose Lake, New York, continues to echo in the minds of Americans, as versions of the story continue to be adapted, ideologically matching their corresponding years of production. Little progress has been made towards understanding how the murder has impacted Big Moose Lake or how Big Moose Lake, hidden in the wilderness, has impacted the dramatization of the murder. Further, little effort has been made towards the investigation the role the murder played in establishing a cultural identity of the lake and its surrounding communities. My goal was to understand the social, political, economic, and historical complexities of Big Moose Lake through the lens of the immensely culturally significant event of Grace Brown's death. Big Moose Lake also happens to be where I have the privilege of spending my summers. Growing up on Big Moose Lake, the place has grown dear to my heart. I intended to weave together two narratives about the lake, studying a changing landscape over time, answering the question: who has ownership of this land? I argued the increase of American privatization of the “wild spaces” of Big Moose reflects changes in American ideals and the encroaching power of industry. This power continues to impact the lake, dooming history to repeat itself. The same ideologies of wealth and prosperity that displaced the Indigenous people of the region, that resulted in the murder of Grace Brown and her unborn child, are forever altering the meaning of Big Moose Lake, and complicating the question of who owns it.

Favorite AMST Class: Hudson River Culture

Outside AMST: I have minors in Art History and Media and Film Studies. This past semester, I enjoyed tapping into my artistic and creative sides. I completed my Structured Field Experience, a ghost hunting mock-umentary about the Saratoga Homestead Hospital. This summer I am looking forward to relaxing up at Big Moose Lake!

Fun Fact: I secretly fostered two puppies in an on-campus apartment during spring of my junior year.

SENIORS



Maya Gmach

Brooklyn, NY

Thesis Summary: In the fall, I wrote my thesis on how the treatment of U.S. veterans' access to mental healthcare varies depending on race. I explored how outside barriers, such as socioeconomic status, historical distrust of healthcare institutions, and the bureaucracy of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs contribute to racial disparities that exist for minority veterans. Bringing my research from the national scale to the local, I focused my honors project on how community organizations develop art therapy programs for veterans. I created an online exhibit and in-person art installation showcasing the artworks of veterans from the local group, Art4Vets. I was fortunate to interview a few of the veterans from this group and get their experience on how creating artworks may be a process of healing.

Favorite AMST Class: Civil War in American Memory; Post-9/11 America

Outside of American Studies, I work as an intern at the Tang Museum and created a series of workshops that explore a piece of art through dance and movement. I also curated a Hyde Cabinet exhibit with Brynnae Newman at the Tang about restorative crafting during the pandemic. Other interests at Skidmore include dance, painting, and a minor in Black Studies. These passions combined create an incredible experience where I've met amazing people and learned valuable critical thinking skills.



SENIORS



Brynnæe Newman

Pompton Plains, NJ

Thesis Summary: Presently, technology is accessible to people of all ages; with the invention and rapid advancement of the internet, it has become a primary source for learning, entertainment, and social interaction. My essay investigates the effect of technology on the perceived destruction and dismantling of the cultural concept of “childhood.” I analyze how technology has transformed children’s lives since the 1980s to discern the effects of cell phones and social media on common hobbies and behaviors of American youth. I argue that the introduction of cell phones and social media has greatly altered childhood in a way that both benefits and harms society. Specifically, I use discourse analysis and visual analysis of cultural products such as social media posts and artworks to examine changing cultural perceptions of childhood.

Here is the link to the website I created: <https://xd.adobe.com/view/e24eb1f2-0695-4427-bf81-d9bf0af35bd6-b71d/>.

Favorite AMST class: Besides the Senior Seminar course, my favorite American Studies class would have to be either Critical Museum Studies or The 1960s!

Outside AMST: I am a double major in English and American Studies and a minor in Studio Art. I love seeing how my interests in these departments overlap.

SENIORS



Jackie Ray



Thesis Summary: I completed my thesis in the fall of 2020.

My thesis centered the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and a teacher's impact on its efficacy. I began with a detailed history of the IDEA's creation and implementation, including critical reception and the reception of different U.S. Presidents. In addition, I also researched and discussed what education for individuals with disabilities looks like under the contemporary IDEA, with a close look at special education. I highlighted some of the many challenges students and teachers in special education face today, including racial achievement gaps, bullying from peers and teachers, funding, and under-diagnosis or misdiagnosis. The final part of my thesis consisted of information from two interviews I held with two different special education teachers. With these teachers, I was able to hear directly about contemporary struggles and progress of special education. We also spoke about their experiences regarding the efficacy of the IDEA, and the importance of the classroom teacher and school administration to ensure the IDEA is properly working

Favorite AMST class: Sports Cinema and Post-Apocalyptic Literature and Film

Where are you from: Rockville Centre, NY

Outside of American Studies, I am also an Education Studies major. This past fall, I completed my student teaching in a fourth-grade classroom in the Saratoga area. Post-graduation, I am going to receive my master's in childhood special education in hopes of having a classroom of my own. Outside of academics entirely, I am involved in Skidmore's Theater Department and an employee for our costume shop. Also, I work as a tour guide in Skidmore Admissions.

Fun Fact: I love baking. My favorite dessert to bake is carrot cake or banana bread!

SENIORS

Sophia Newberg



Sofia Newberg (She/Her)

Philadelphia, PA

Thesis Summary:

“Dead Malls Walking: The Hauntology of the American Mall”

The array of malls in America today shows a spread of new, renovated, re-purposed, tired-but-functional, and now “Dead” malls. “Dead” malls are a phenomenon of the past positioned in a present that no longer has any use for them. Hauntology, a term coined by Jacques Derrida in the 1990s, refers to the study of specific sociocultural elements which return from our cultural past to haunt us in the present as specters. My capstone explores the “Hauntology” of the (Dead) Mall and the subculture of people who consume Dead Mall content. I argue that American malls are hauntological because they embody a sense of a failed American Utopia. I ask such questions as: What does this say about our modern relationship to old icons of consumer culture? What happens to a monolith of culture once it dies? I answer these questions by analyzing the subculture of Dead Mall enthusiasts, modern-day “Ghost Hunters” who are creators and consumers of Dead Mall content are online. I conclude that such enthusiasts are nostalgic for past glory days but also captivated by decline and the promises of prosperity that haunt our culture today

Favorite AMST class: American Past in Film, Americans in Outer Space.

Outside of AMST, I am dedicated to media production. I have a minor in Media and Film Studies, which has allowed me to explore my interests in the field. Throughout my time at Skidmore, I produced over fifteen films, with one, "One the Places you Won't Go," winning an MDOCs Golden Acorn Award in 2020. In addition, I had the privilege to work with the Skidmore Admissions Department with their Social Media Marketing team as a Student Ambassador for all of Skidmore's Social Media platforms but with a particular focus on the Tiktok page. Through this, I had the opportunity to interview President Marc C. Conner for his inauguration to introduce him to the Skidmore community! I plan to continue my passion for media production within my career and continue to be a storyteller!

Fun Fact: I swallowed a Wyoming quarter when I was four and I have kept it all this time and I am getting it made it into a necklace!

Fall Course Offerings

AM 101W 001 Growing up in America

Tammy Owens TR 9:10-11:00 credits 4

Students will study the history of American childhood to learn how major social, cultural, political, and economic changes in the U.S. have defined the nation's culture. Students will gain a better understanding of how our ideas and beliefs about what it means to be an American have influenced our ideas about childhood as well as the role of children and young adults in shaping our world. Students will examine a diverse mix of sources including literature, archival documents, films, music, and social media. (Fulfills humanistic inquiry; fulfills expository writing).

AM 101W 002 Rise and Fall of the New Deal

Aaron Pedinotti WF 12:20–2:10 credits 4

This course introduces students to the disciplinary parameters and methodologies of American Studies via a semester-long engagement with a major topic in twentieth-century American History that has recently begun to loom large in contemporary public discourses: the set of Depression Era Federal Government programs and reforms known as the New Deal. Throughout the course, the New Deal will serve as a practice object for applying the concepts, models, and empirical methods of American Studies to the understanding of historical topics. Students will learn about basic approaches within the field, apply them to the analysis of the New Deal, and in so doing, acquire skills that can be used in the analysis of other historical eras as well as contemporary culture. In addition to learning about the history, governing philosophies, and economic ideas that informed the New Deal programs, students will learn about the complex ways that the New Deal has functioned as a marker of historical memory and a contentious political signifier in the decades since its occurrence.

AM 101W 003 The Wizard of Oz

Gregory Pfitzer MW 4:00-5:50 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 233 Representations of the American Past in Film**Daniel Nathan TR 11:10-12:30 M 7-10 credits: 4**

An examination of how Hollywood filmmakers have represented the American past with special attention to the implications of movies for the construction of American cultural identity. Students will analyze films as historical documents that reflect (and sometimes reproduce) the ethos or cultural politics of the period in which they were made and first viewed. Through the use of popular culture theories, students will consider the ways in which films inform (and sometimes obfuscate and subvert) historical understanding. (Fulfills social sciences requirement.)

AM 342 Black Feminist Thoughts**Tammy Owens TR 12:20-2:10 credits: 3**

This multidisciplinary seminar will chart and examine the development and expression of Black feminist thoughts, particularly in the United States. The course will focus on the intraracial significance of gender, sexuality, race, ability, and class, as well as the complex interplay among these variables. Emphasis will also be placed on illuminating Black feminist resistance and activism in several distinct, yet overlapping, contexts, including under conditions of servitude, the Black club women's movement and the reemergence of Black feminisms and womanism from the late 1960s onward. In this class you will be introduced to the roots of modern Black feminist thought vis-à-vis Anna Julia Cooper and the prescient writings of Lorraine Hansbury. Later, the focus will be on Black feminist theorizing particularly the intellectual development of radical Black feminist thought and lesbian separatism during the 1960s and 1970s and late 20th century transnational feminisms.

AM 346 True Crime in America**Daniel Nathan WF 10:10-12:00 credits:**

A critical examination of contemporary American true crime narratives, that is, accounts about a criminal act or acts based on fact rather than fiction. The course argues that true crime narratives throw into relief particular cultural concerns and values and help us understand American culture and the complex relationships among criminality, deviance, ethics, identity, justice, power, and representation. Students will considers questions such as What do true crime narratives tell us about the complicated relationship between power and justice at specific historical moments? Who has wielded (legitimate and illegitimate) power? And when crimes have been committed, what forms has justice taken, and who has administered it?

Note(s): Fulfills social sciences requirement; fulfills bridge experience.

AM 351D 001 Black Girlhood Studies**Tammy Owens WF 12:20-2:10 credits 4**

Black Girlhood Studies explores representations and narratives of black girlhood in American culture from the nineteenth century to the contemporary moment. Students will analyze black girlhood and the stories of black girls through a diverse collection of sources including young adult literature, personal narratives, social media, dance, music, archives, and recent scholarship in Black Girlhood Studies. Students will examine topics such as the racialization of girlhood in America, the criminalization of black girls, sexual literacy, youth activism, and Afrofuturism.

AM 374 Senior Seminar**Beck Krefting TR 3:40-5:30 4 credits**

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.

1960'S REVIVAL SHOW

Skidmore College AM - 368 Spring 2022 Sixties Revival Show

Playlist in order with names, song choice, and timestamps! I apologize to Grace Nash for not catching her segment!

Samantha Horowitz - "These Boots Are Made for Walkin" by Nancy Sinatra

Leanne Garten - "Subterranean Homesick Blues" by Bob Dylan

Aidan Hammond (Stand in by El Buch herself) - "Wouldn't It Be Nice" by The Beach Boys

Isaac Markman - "Sunny" by Cher

Maya Gmach - "Try a Little Tenderness" by Otis Redding

Maya Croissant - "Sunday Morning" by The Velvet Underground and Nico

Sofia Newberg - "San Francisco (Be Sure to Wear Flowers in Your Hair)" by Scott McKenzie

Grace Hill - "Piece of My Heart" by Janis Joplin, Big Brother & the Holding Company

Sam Knox - "Give Up The Funk (Tear the Roof Off the Sucker)" by Parliament

Lily Walsh - "Summertime" by Janis Joplin, Big Brother & the Holding Company

El Buchanan - "Have You Ever Been (To Electric Ladyland)" by Jimi Hendrix

Katie Cooper Kenna - "Fortunate Son" by Creedence Clearwater Revival

Tova Petto - "I Want You Back" by The Jackson 5

Marnie Lipton - "Our House" by Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young!

Sarah Spruill - "Never Can Say Goodbye" by Gloria Gaynor

Professor Greg Pfitzer - "A Day in the Life" by The Beatles



[https://soundcloud.com/sofia-newberg/skidmore-college-am-368-sixties-revival-show?](https://soundcloud.com/sofia-newberg/skidmore-college-am-368-sixties-revival-show?utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing)

[utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing](https://soundcloud.com/sofia-newberg/skidmore-college-am-368-sixties-revival-show?utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing)Add a little bit of body text

Professor Aaron Pedinotti



This year, I focused my energies primarily on teaching. I taught my version of Introduction to American Studies—entitled “Rise and Fall of the New Deal”—for the second time. This allowed me to further develop the themes of the course, which surveys the history of the New Deal social order from its origins to its eclipse by the neoliberal era. This time around, I expanded the focus on periods of American history that preceded and helped to shape the New Deal, including Reconstruction and the Progressive Era.

The new material on Reconstruction allowed for further exploration of the ways in which structural racism affected the New Deal’s implementation. The course explored how the end of Reconstruction and the rise of the Jim Crow system left the United States with a political map in which the Democratic Party was dominated by white supremacists into the 1930s and 1940s, a situation that guaranteed that the New Deal’s implementation would reflect the racial inequalities of American society. In addition to this course, I also taught my courses on Gaming in American Society and Culture and American Horror Fiction, which I always greatly enjoy teaching.

In my free time, I also launched a podcast related to the topic of my course on the New Deal, entitled “New Deal Studies.” So far, I have published four episodes. The first is an interview with the well-known Yale political scientist Stephen Skowronek, author of the groundbreaking book *The Politics Presidents Make*. We discussed the ways in which Skowronek’s theory about repeating structural patterns in American political history relate to the rise and fall of the New Deal political order. The link to that episode is: <https://newdealstudies.fireside.fm/1>.

My second and third episodes are the two parts of an interview with historian and New York Times columnist Margaret O’Mara, author of *The Code: Silicon Valley and the Remaking of America*. The first part of our conversation focused on the ways in which the New Deal laid the economic and infrastructural groundwork for the rise of big tech in the late twentieth century. (It is here: <https://newdealstudies.fireside.fm/2>.) The second part concerned the ways in which the high-tech revolution was tied up with the fall of the New Deal order and the rise of neoliberalism. (It is here: <https://newdealstudies.fireside.fm/3>).

My fourth and latest episode is an interview with Skidmore’s own Beau Breslin, professor of political science, about his latest book, *A Constitution for the Living: Imagining How Five Generations of Americans Would Re-write the Nation’s Fundamental Law*. Beau and I discuss his book’s alternative history of America, in which the constitution is periodically rewritten at generational constitutional conventions, examining its relationship to the New Deal and other aspects of American history and the present. (It is here: <https://newdealstudies.fireside.fm/4> -- and if you want my two cents, this is a good one to start with, even though it’s the fourth one to be published. Beau is an excellent conversationalist, and I’m very happy with how this episode came out.)

Before I go, I want to thank my American Studies colleagues—Greg, Beck, Dan, and Tammy—for their continued friendship and support; and my students for all of the wonderful and illuminating conversations that I’ve had with them throughout the year. As always, it has been the human connections that make teaching worthwhile.

Professor Beck Krefting

I had the great fortune of taking a full-year sabbatical this past academic year. This meant zero teaching and College service obligations. Instead, I focused my energies on securing and administering a grant from the Mellon Foundation, advancing my research agenda, developing new initiatives as Vice-President of the American Humor Studies Association, and working towards new professional opportunities.

Last year, Professor and Program Director of Black Studies Winston Grady-Willis and myself launched the Racial Justice Teaching Challenge which invited faculty to revise courses to address racist structural inequalities. The challenge became the foundation for obtaining a successful multi-year, multi-pronged \$1,185,000 grant from the Mellon Foundation, titled: *Africana Studies and the Humanities at Skidmore: Transnational Explorations in Social Justice*. The granting period runs from 2022-2024 and includes hiring two postdoctoral fellows in Black Studies, running the Racial Justice Teaching Challenge, creating learning communities for staff and faculty to expand and apply new knowledges focused on racial justice, and providing funding for research collaborations attending to the same. Professor Grady-Willis and I are sharing the administration of the grant along with a stellar steering committee comprised of five committed faculty/staff members.

I continue to maintain a robust research agenda, keeping up with a number of different projects. In the past year, I published a chapter titled, “Maria Bamford: A/Way With Words.” In *Taking a Stand: American Stand-up Comedians as Public Intellectuals* (University of Mississippi Press, 2021). I have three more chapters placed in edited collections that are forthcoming in the next year-ish, including two chapters focused on the history/historiography of stand-up comedy, in the United States and Morocco (respectively). Lucky me, I snagged a faculty development grant that supported me to conduct research in the archives at the National Comedy Center in Jamestown, NY, and to continue research and analyses around the performances of Hannah Gadsby, a Tasmanian lesbian stand-up comedian who took the world by storm back in 2017 when she premiered a special called *Nanette*.

Because I was on sabbatical this year, I made time for more presentations and talks than I typically do. Sadly, many of these continued to be conducted virtually but it appears that the coming year may afford us more opportunities to congregate in person. I participated on panels at the American Studies Association and Modern Language Association and co-presented with Professor Grady-Willis at the American Association of Colleges and Universities Conference on Diversity, Equity, and Student Success. I’m currently working on developing talks for two invited lectures in Germany in June, one at the University of Leipzig and the other a symposium on disparagement humor being held at Dresden University of Technology. Busy, busy.

Professor Beck Krefting

This year I served the second year of a two-year stint as Vice-President of the American Humor Studies Association, a national scholarly organ advancing the field of humor studies via conferences and its attendant journal for which I also serve on the editorial board: *Studies in American Humor*. This year I piloted a program called the First Book Workshop, which brought fourteen humor studies scholars across North America together for a series of roundtables focused on successful practices for moving a dissertation into a published monograph. I also developed a Subvention Funding Initiative that awards monies to scholars seeking to defray the costs of book publications in the field of humor/comedy studies. Myself and two other officers in AHSA co-organized a Works-in-Progress Conference, a four-day virtual conference inviting participants to discuss research underway and bring questions to audience members rather than fetishizing a polished final product. I was joined by Vulture comedy writer, Jesse David Fox, for a roundtable discussion focused on our respective book projects: “Books-in-Progress: A Conversation on Comedy Histories.” This summer I will migrate into the position of President for the association and look forward to conducting a self-study to identify areas of growth for the organization.

I can’t wait to get back into the classroom next year, especially to work with AMST majors in Senior Seminar and to pilot courses that have been adapted for the Bridge Experience. I will also be stepping into the exciting new role of Director of the Center for Leadership, Teaching, and Learning. I have already begun planning for New Faculty Orientation in the fall and putting together a supportive team of student workers. Oh yeah, and I got promoted to Full Professor—BOOM!

Professor Daniel Nathan

The 2021-2022 academic year was my twentieth at Skidmore. Without question, Skidmore has been an extremely rewarding place to work, learn, and grow.

Among the many Skidmore-related things for which I am grateful is the indefatigable support that the Department of American Studies has provided me over the years. This past spring, for instance, with the encouragement of our super terrific chair, Greg Pfitzer, I designed and delivered a new course called Books That Changed America. The idea had been brewing for years and was partly inspired by Jay Parini's *Promised Land: Thirteen Books That Changed America* (2008). Historian David McCullough neatly encapsulates the course's central idea: "It's happened many times—a book—a single book has changed American life, changed our history, the book itself became an event in the American experience." The course was an interdisciplinary examination of a handful of disparate books—such as Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885), W. E. B. DuBois's *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), and Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), among others—that altered how many people see, think about, and live in the world. They were not all best-sellers when they were published or great works of art. But they all, as Parini writes, "shifted consciousness in some public fashion, however subtly" or they opened "fresh possibilities for the ways Americans live their lives." One of the things that made the course a success was my decision to draw on local talent and expertise to enrich the material. So, for example, on the second day of class, I invited some colleagues—social psychologist Sheldon Solomon, historian Tillman Nechtman, and literary scholar Barbara Black—to talk about "how to read a book." I wish you had been there. It was electric. They were all erudite, engaging, funny, and wise. My students leaned in the whole session. Some students told me that they thought it was the best class they had ever attended. One told me she called her parents to tell them how interesting and inspiring it was. I suppose that's what happens when you assemble an All-Star team.

Over the rest of the semester, I had a wide range of colleagues come to class to talk about specific books. Our American Studies colleague Tammy Owens joined us for our discussion of *Narrative of the Life of Fredrick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* (1845). Jamie Parra of the English Department Zoomed in for our conversation about Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* (1854). Greg Pfitzer, who teaches a class on Twain's America, visited when we were reading *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Sociologist John Brueggemann joined us when we studied DuBois's *The Souls of Black Folk*. And A. J. Schneller from the Environmental Studies and Sciences Program Zoomed with us, from Australia (at 5:30 AM Aussie time), to help us better appreciate *Silent Spring*. Needless to say, the class was incredibly rewarding, for me and many students, and it was a testament to the ways in which Skidmore faculty members often informally collaborate and are willing to share their ideas, knowledge, and insights.

Professor Daniel Nathan

In addition to my teaching responsibilities, I have been chipping away at variety of projects. I finished a few. Last May, I presented work at the annual North American Society for Sport History (NASSH) conference (which was online due to the pandemic). My paper was about the Palio di Siena. It's an amazing tradition: a semiannual, 90-second, bareback horse race in Siena, Italy, which I attended a few years ago and have been writing about ever since. Additionally, I published a chapter titled "Narrative/s in Sport History" in the *Routledge Companion to Sports History* (2022). I also have a brief essay on the strong man Eugen Sandow in the soon-to-be-published catalog for the Tang Teaching Museum's FLEX exhibition, which was co-curated by Dan Curley and Gregory Spinner. And in late May, I will give the John R. Betts Honor Address at the NASSH meeting in Chicago.

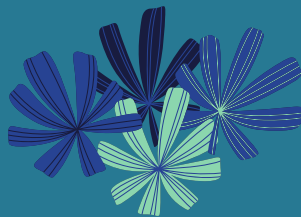
In addition to this work, I continue to serve as an Associate Editor of the *Journal of Sport History* and as co-editor of the University of Texas Press's Terry and Jan Todd Series on Physical Culture and Sports. Both positions are rewarding and enable me to stay abreast of developments in my field and to help fellow scholars produce first-rate work.

Looking back on the year, and the last twenty, I have a tremendous sense of gratitude for Skidmore, my colleagues and students, and many others, that make this place what it is: a nurturing, engaged place of learning that is making positive contributions to the common good.

I hope everyone has a great summer.

Best,

DN



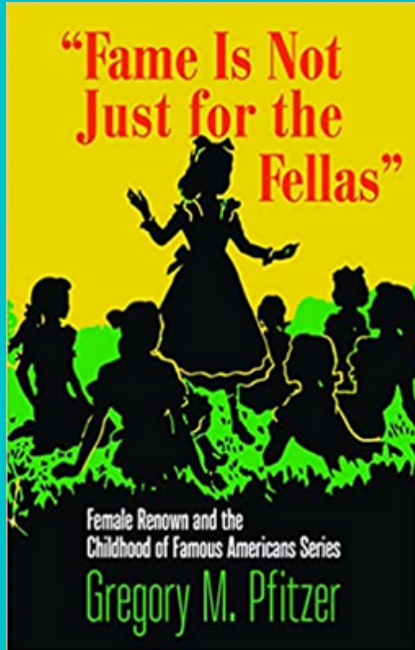
Professor Pfitzer's year in review

The academic year 2021-2022 has been a busy and fulfilling one for me. In the fall I taught Senior Seminar and had the pleasure of helping ten hardworking students complete their senior capstone projects on a wide variety of topics, from “dead malls” to “Real Housewives.” (For a complete list of topics for the 2021-2022 academic year, see the departmental website under the tab: Student Information).

In the fall I also taught a new Bridge Experience course: Americans in Outer Space. It centered on the 1969 Apollo 11 moon landing and the intense debates it sparked among Americans about the value and future of the U.S. space program. Some found the mission inspirational, fulfilling the centuries-long desire of voyagers to “slip the surly bonds of Earth” and to explore the universe beyond. Others protested against the spending of 35 billion dollars on a project that they deemed of little value to ordinary citizens, ridiculing the Apollo project as a calculated effort “to fleece the taxpayer” by funding “vicarious adventures instead of hospital beds.” We considered the cultural, political and economic contours of this debate about the lunar landing, with special attention to the power and justice dynamics associated with efforts to find answers to lingering and unresolved questions associated with it, such as: Who has access to space? What groups have the authority to control its use? Who should be responsible for funding its exploration? And how do the lenses of identity, ethnicity, gender, nationality, socio-economic class and race inform these decisions? Students developed personalized policy responses to the Planetary Society’s request for recommendations about future space colonization, private ownership of space, and the militarization of space and debated the efficacy of NASA’s proposed return mission to the moon scheduled within the next few years.

In the Spring I reprised my course on The Sixties, much of which felt extremely relevant given some of the pressing social and political questions occupying our thoughts these days. We conducted a Sixties Revival Radio Program in April in which students selected a song and provided some production history prior to playing it on the air. Students in the course celebrated the end of the semester with a gathering at my house in which they featured some highly entertaining retro-Sixties clothing and styles.

Professor Pfitzer's year in review



I found time to complete work on a book, *Fame Is Not Just for the Fellas: Female Renown and The Childhood of Famous Americans* due out this December. Here's the description that appears on Amazon: Between 1932 and 1958, thousands of children read volumes in the book series *Childhood of Famous Americans*. With colorful cover art and compelling—and often highly fictionalized—narrative storylines, these biographies celebrated the national virtues and achievements of famous women like Betsy Ross, Louisa May Alcott, and Amelia Earhart. Employing deep archival research, Gregory M. Pfitzer examines the editorial and production choices of the publisher and considers the influence of the series on readers and American culture more broadly. In telling the story of how female subjects were chosen and what went into writing these histories for young female readers of the time, Pfitzer illustrates how these books shaped children's thinking and historical imaginations around girlhood using tales from the past. Utilizing documented conversations and disagreements among authors, editors, readers, reviewers, and sales agents at Bobbs-Merrill, "Fame Is Not Just for the Fellas" places the series in the context of national debates around fame, gender, historical memory, and portrayals of children and childhood for a young reading public—charged debates that continue to this day.



Finally, on a personal note, I'm awaiting the birth of my first grandson. His parents and I will let him make his own choices regarding where to attend college, but, just in case, I've scheduled a pre-enrollment interview for him with Skidmore Admissions for the fall of 2039. If he does come to Skidmore, he'll have less choice regarding major, as grandpa will do all he can to make sure he finds his way to the American Studies department.

Update: Arlo Gregory Pfitzer has arrived.

Professor Tammy Owens

“But please remember, especially in these times of groupthink and the right-on chorus, that no person is your friend (or kin) who demands your silence, or denies your right to grow and be perceived as fully blossomed as you were intended.”

Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*

I have thought of literary genius Alice Walker and her writings about growth and gardens all academic year. If you've taken my courses, there's a good chance that you already know that I think about Alice Walker rather frequently. In many of my courses, students read one of my favorite essays by Walker that reminds us to always search for have planted seeds before us. Those ancestors of our past who plant the seeds usually endure challenges that we would deem unbearable in our current moment; yet often mindlessly and without grace, we reap the benefits or enjoy the harvest purchased with their blood, sweat, and tears. In this season of meditating on Walker's words, especially the opening quote, I now realize that I have been relying on this passage as scripture or “words-to-survive-Covid-by.” That is, in all the areas of my life that carry the most weight, I anticipated that any hardship or difficult situation would stimulate some form of growth. Thus, there no were problems too great or unfortunate mistakes. Everything, and I mean everything, and everyone was approached as fertile grounds for growth. Leaning on Alice Walker's words, this growth, no matter the circumstances that instigated it, was necessary for me to blossom as the teacher-scholar, colleague, and mother I was intended to be at this moment.



Like the students, thanks to Covid, I had a lot of strange and heavy firsts this academic year. For instance, this academic year was my first year of teaching in person at Skidmore even though this is my second year as a professor at Skidmore. Stepping on campus this year felt like starting a new job all over again. Also, teaching in person each week meant that this was my first time being away from my two-year-old son consistently for more than a few minutes. The most impactful of the firsts this year was rearranging how I teach and research according to the life changing events that have altered everything—Covid and child birth! This year was my first time whole-heartedly accepting that my life has drastically changed. I changed everything that did not fit my new life—from the way I managed class time to starting a new routine of waking up every weekday morning at 4:30 am to walk and write! I made room for the new skills and new parts of me to grow rather than consistently trying to fit old ways of knowing into new ways of living. I'm a morning person now who likes to walk at the crack of dawn! Who knew?

Professor Tammy Owens

I tried my best to share this new sense of approaching everything as opportunities for growth with my students in the classroom. At times, this looked like me reshaping my syllabus and assignments to provide more room for students reflect on their own experiences in the past couple of years and use this experiential knowledge as a key theoretical lens in their work. For example, in AM101: Growing Up in America, students developed maps of their childhood and presented them in class as a sort of “show-and-tell” demonstration. The maps were beautiful! The maps helped students understand how place shaped their childhood and the ways they understand or cope with experiences throughout their young adult lives. Their maps also provided opportunities for students to build community with each other in the classroom by sharing pieces of their home and the people who made home for them. Likewise, I made space for students to do more creative assignments that could speak to audiences beyond the college classroom such as op-eds and research symposiums in my Black Feminist Thoughts course. The students shared their brilliant research and then celebrated the hard work of our class over tons of cake!

Outside of the classroom, I shared my growth-in-all things approach with my colleagues by simply asking for help. You cannot have a conversation with me without my childcare woes coming up in our chat by no later than the two-minute mark! I’m terrified of everything when it comes to raising a little kid from birth! I have oftentimes found myself nursing this fear by working overtime to prove that I can do everything when it comes to being a mom with little to no help. At the same time, asking for help with kids still felt awkward and slightly akin to failure for me. This year, Walker’s words challenged me to grow as a mom too. The only way I could do this was by letting go a bit, trusting that I can make mistakes that will not be detrimental to my kid, and again, allowing people to help, especially my colleagues. I must say, I think the kid is a better scholar now that he’s been hanging out with professors around campus while I get a few things done. Look at him! He’s leading faculty meetings!



We made it through this year! It was tough, but we grew as teacher-scholars, students, colleagues, parents, friends, human beings, and the list goes on and on! Throughout the difficult moments, we planted seeds everywhere so that the ones who come after us will know that they can make it through all of the tough seasons. Hopefully, they’ll look back and see that they’ve blossomed too and will start prepping the grounds for yet another field of dreamers.

The Sixties



Fun gathering of the Sixties class at
Professor Pfitzer's home!

Kuroda Symposium

2022

**A "New Dealer of the 1860s":
Remembering "Honest Abe"
in 1930s America**



Presented by Nina Silber

Jon Westling Professor Of History and
Chair, History Department,
Boston University

Student Symposium

Students presentation of papers with remarks by Professor Silber

Jefferson Davis: An Unspoken Leader
Samantha Horowitz, American Studies

Remembering Emily: Dickinson's Path to Fame
Anika Eastman, American Studies

The Booker T. Washington/W.E.B DuBois Debate
and its Relevance Today
Kieran Yater, Political Science

Gilding Caesar: How the Sixteenth Amendment Expanded the Executive Branch
Christian Manke, History

Debate Over the Sixteenth Admendment
Justin Rizzi, History



Alumni

Josh Lauren '07 is the Alumni Director at his alma mater, The Park School of Baltimore. Josh and his wife Dr. Taieri McKenzie have a lovely daughter, Lola.

Claire Solomon Nisen '10 directs the Lasting Impressions program for DOROT, a nonprofit organization in New York City that addresses the challenges of an aging population. Married to reporter and researcher Max Nisen, she is the mother of the charming Miri.

Becca Baruc '15 Took on the new position in November 2021 as Project Director for Massive Change Network in Chicago.

Lisa writes, “**Dan Plumer '16** has been living in Madrid working as an English, P.E., drama, music, and dance teacher (would expect nothing less) and we had a little American Studies reunion in Spain! Thought we’d share the smiles 😊.”

Lisa Fierstein '16 works at Spotify as a content manager and editor for its educational blog on podcasting best practices: <https://blog.anchor.fm>.

A documentary storyteller, **Dustin Foote '17** is a video producer at Columbia University. This spring, he guest lectured in Professor Jeff Segrave’s Sport Cinema class, to great effect.

Laila Morgan '18 Will be attending graduate school at Columbia University to become a certified midwife. I decided on Columbia! As a midwife I’ll be able to provide people with empowering, compassionate reproductive health care from birth control to birth that centers their autonomy and decision making.

Liza Pennington '20 Now works in Communications and Author Events at Macmillan Publishers

Max Starr '21 has been “working in the Ceramics Department of Edinboro University of Pennsylvania for the 2021-2022 school year. It was an exciting opportunity as it offered me the chance to experience working in the field of ceramics education, something which I am passionate about and which I was strongly considering as a career path at the time.”



Graduation Day



From right-to-left Maya Gmach, Sam Knox, Sofia Newberg, and Katie Kenna.