



Spring 2014

American Studies

For a variety of reasons, the 2013-14 academic year was momentous for the Department of American Studies. Many good, productive things happened, although there was also a bittersweet event.

Perhaps the most prestigious moment was in February, when the much beloved and respected Greg Pfitzer gave the 2014 Edwin M. Moseley Faculty Lectureship, which honors "special achievement in research and/or creative work" by a Skidmore faculty member and is regarded as the highest honor a Skidmore faculty member can receive. Pfitzer was the first American Studies faculty member to win this award since 1975, when David Marcell was honored with it. Pfitzer's lecture was extremely well attended, by faculty, students (especially American Studies majors), and a wide range of community members, including Mia, Mike, and Sally Pfitzer. The lecture was great, part intellectual autobiography, part mediation on the different ways we can know the past. It was a wonderful and rewarding evening.

Other members of the department also gave well-attended and received lectures on campus this year. Also in February, I gave the Spring Research Colloquium lecture, which was titled "Baseball as the National Pastime: A Fiction Whose Time is Past." I was told it went well. And in March, Beck Krefting presented a dazzling Faculty-to-Faculty talk, "A Spoonful of Sugar...: Charged Humor from Dick Gregory to Kate Clinton," sponsored by the Faculty Network. Krefting's talk was based on her soon-to-be-published book *All Joking Aside: American Humor and Its Discontents* (Johns Hopkins University Press). Later in March, Skidmore alumnae and Visiting Assistant Professor Megan Williams moderated an evening with Janet Mock, a trans activist of color and author of *Redefining*

Realness: My Path to Womanhood, Identity, Love and So Much More. Gannett was packed and Williams did a great job of engaging Mock and fielding questions.

Yet perhaps the most important AM faculty-related event this year was the most bittersweet. After more than forty years of teaching and serving Skidmore in myriad capacities, including authoring the college's history, *Make No Small Plans* (2000), Mary C. Lynn retired in December. For many of us, it is hard to think about Skidmore's American Studies department without Mary. At her retirement ceremony in December, I began my remarks by saying: "Mary Constance Lynn is a Skidmore College treasure. She has had a singular and important career and made this a better institution in countless ways, for more than forty years. Generations of Skidmore colleagues and students have been enriched by her intelligence, knowledge, wisdom, generosity, and decency. Her retirement is well earned and a significant loss to the Department of American Studies and the Skidmore community." Thankfully, though, Mary has been appointed the official historian of the college and will still be on campus working on the next chapter of Skidmore's history.

Due to Mary Lynn's retirement, we conducted a national job search, which began in the summer, to hire a new American Studies colleague. More than six months later, after a challenging, time-consuming process—we received more than 400 applications—the administration granted us permission to hire two new tenure-track faculty members. We could not be more thrilled to welcome William Calvo-Quirós and Amber Wiley to Skidmore and American Studies. Calvo-Quirós will be joining us in the fall of 2015, from the University of California, Santa Barbara, where he is finishing his PhD in Chicana and Chicano Studies, and the University of Michigan, where he has accepted a postdoc with the National Center for Institutional Diversity. Wiley, whose PhD is in American Studies from George Washington University, will also join us in the fall of 2015, after she completes a yearlong architectural tour of the world, thanks to the H. Allen Brooks Travelling Fellowship she was awarded from

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Meet our Seniors



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Kyle N. Giard-Chase

Gabrielle Diana Gignoux-Wolfsohn

Grace Ellen Hammerstein

Mackenzie Griffin Lacy

Christopher Timothy Lawton

Julia Hope Mandel-Folly

Veronica Jane Monroe

Matthew Berger Schonfeld

Jung-Hee Schwartz

Martha Olson Snow

Rebecca Chloe Stern

Sara Ashley Vosburg

Emily Rose Werner





AM 103 001 Intro: Wizard of Oz

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). **M. Williams, 4 credits**

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AM 103W 001 Intro. to American Studies

This class will introduce the field of American Studies, using an interdisciplinary

analysis of the concepts of Culture, (Sub)culture and material culture in America. This class will explore the complexity and diversity of American life through the use of various case studies such as: toys (Barbies), sonic devices (walkman/iPods), body modification (tattoos, hair styles), fashion, car culture (hot-rods/lowriders), and the process of collecting. The final project for this class will analyze American youth culture as it applies to the study of college student realities (e.g. Skaters, Punks, Emos, Fraternities/Sororities, hipster etc.). (Fulfills social science requirement.)

TBD 4 credits

AM 201L 001 American Identities: Pre 1870s with workshop

A study of the changing ways Americans have defined themselves, from colonization to the mid-nineteenth century. Relying heavily on primary sources, the course examines critical issues and periods including race, ethnicity, gender, class, culture contact, revolution, reform, and war, as well as men and women whose lives and work reveal the cultural temper of their time. Taken in conjunction with AM201, the workshop complements AM201 class sessions. Classic texts and documents in American culture from 1620 to 1877 are examined in depth. The workshop includes additional reading, journal writing, oral presentations, a field trip, and assignments in the American Studies-History Lab. **Note(s):** (Fulfills social sciences requirement; designated as a Cultural Diversity course.) **G. Pfitzer, 4 credits**



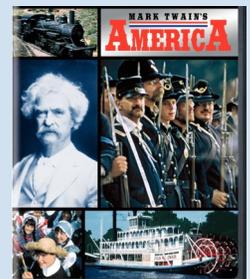
AM 234 001 American Sports/American Culture

A historical examination of 300 years of sport in America as an important expression of culture, conflict, and meaning. Special attention is devoted to the ways in which contemporary sports provide a window into politics, economics, racial and ethnic relations, class formation, and gender identity. Students analyze the ways in which Americans have played, watched, and understood sports and will focus on some of the recurrent cultural values, trends, and symbolism associated with American athletes and public life. **Note(s):** (Fulfills social sciences requirement.)

D. Nathan, 4 Credits

AM 241 001 Mark Twain's America

A study of American culture from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century through the life and works of Mark Twain. Using Twain's essays, letters, short stories, and novels as points of reference for discussions of major themes for the period of Twain's life (1834–1910), the course focuses on issues of regionalism, class, race relations, technology, humor, and imperialism. **G. Pfitzer, 4 Credits**





AM 260A 001 Civil Rights in the Twentieth-Century United States

An examination of the interactions of individuals, groups, institutions, and agencies seeking to achieve, enforce, or dismiss those civil rights guarantees contained primarily in the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments to the Constitution of the United States and in subsequent twentieth-century legislation. Although a major focus of the course is on the attempts of women and African-Americans to secure full civil rights protections, students are encouraged to investigate civil rights issues that range beyond these two groups. The course uses a variety of materials including legislative histories, autobiographies, executive orders, judicial decisions, biographies, histories of specific aspects of the civil rights struggle, journalistic accounts, documentary films, works of fiction, and oral histories.

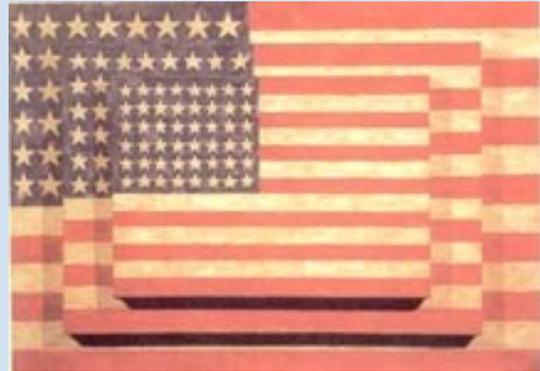
Note(s): (Fulfills social sciences requirement.)

M. Williams, 3 Credits

AM 360D 001 American Cultural Periods: World War II

The Second World War is often remembered by Americans with nostalgia as “The Good War,” a moral war, with a clear enemy – the Axis powers – and a clear cause – the victory of democracy over fascism. During this period, the United States government sought to rally public support behind the war effort by representing the country as the leader of “the free world.” Through tightly monitored and heavily censored popular culture, the wartime government constructed an image of the United States as the champion of equality.

M. Williams, 4 Credits



AM 374 001 Senior Seminar

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.

G. Pfitzer, 4 credits



AM 376B 001 City in American Culture

An examination of the growth and impact of urban life on American culture. Using fiction, film, histories, sociological studies and material culture, the course examines the relation between the perceptions of urban life and the actualities of that experience. By focusing on how varying reactions to the urban experience result from economic, ethnic, or gender differences, the course explores such topics as: the effect of industrialization, the waves of rural migration and overseas immigration, the concentrations of wealth and poverty, the impact of architecture, and the parks and planning movements.

Note(s): 300-level courses in American Studies are not ordinarily open to first-year students except by permission of the instructor. **TBD, 3 Credits**

Alumni News

I thought you'd be interested in seeing an American Studies degree in action, and had to share my latest project!

I'm not sure if I mentioned it, but about a year and a half ago, I began writing a music and culture column for the Huffington Post, which has garnered a fun little following.

Back in June, I wrote a column about my experience with the Grateful Dead - a band that I came to love as a child and that has had a profound and lasting impact on my life and how I view the world. In response to that article, a number of people began emailing me their stories of how the band affected their lives. The stories were hilarious, touching, sometimes sad, but always very beautiful and personal. I thought that there should be - and could be - a way to capture these stories and the magic that they represent.

I began to develop a project which has now become The Endless Tour Project, a multimedia experience that will chronicle the Dead's final 1995 tour city-by-city, date-by-date, and will recreate the tour through the voices, memories, photographs and artifacts of those who were there. You can learn more about it here: www.endlesstourproject.com.

I will begin the tour on February 19, 2014 in Salt Lake City and will finish it on July 9, 2014 in Chicago. I'll be driving to all cities on the dates of the original shows, interviewing individuals in each city, keeping a film camera rolling, writing daily blogs, and will capture music and stories from those who were at the shows to create my own tapestry of what it would have felt like to experience the 1995 tour in full. Ultimately, the project will be part American road adventure, part social experiment and will serve as a unique look into the Grateful Dead's contemporary community.

I'll be compiling all of the experiences and stories into a book called, *Notes from the Promised Land*; it'll be the first book about the Dead by a young woman and that explores the extent to which the GD's music, values and philosophies live on in present-day America.

It's a big undertaking, but one I'm really excited for and energized by! Given its historical and cultural slant - and its likeliness to be a contemporary Deadhead ethnography of sorts, I thought you'd be interested in checking it out. I've been very fortunate to get the Dead "family" blessing - full access to their archives, interviews with their publicist, crew members and press via the Dead networks. Ben & Jerry's might even be interested in sponsoring the project.

I'll be sure to keep you posted of updates along the way. And, hey, it may just be a dissertation without the PhD.

Here's to American Studies leading to interesting and fascinating life paths!

Many best,

Joanna Colangelo '02



Mary Lynn began working in the American Studies Department in 1969, while finishing her Ph.D. in history at the University of Rochester. Mary taught generations of students in courses from colonial New England, the 1920s, and the 1950s to religion in America, and *Born in America*. Mary also taught courses that contributed to programs such as Liberal Studies, Gender Studies, Environmental Studies, and the Honors Forum. Her scholarship includes publishing three annotated journals of German mercenaries in the American Revolution and the editing of *Women's Liberation in the Twentieth Century*. She is most widely known for authoring *Make No Small Plans: A History of Skidmore College in 2000*. "At last December's faculty meeting President Glotzbach announced Lynn's appointment to the new position of College historian." We will miss Mary on third floor of Tisch Learning Center.

*Quotes taken directly from the winter issue of SCOPE magazine 2014.

Daniel Nathan

Last academic year (2012-13), I was on sabbatical, which was great. So this past year was a back-in-the-saddle-again experience. And despite a few saddle sores, it was a good year, my twelfth in a row at Skidmore. In the fall, in addition to serving as Chair again, I taught two new courses, a new version of AM 103, which was about the tumultuous year 1968, and Senior Seminar, which Greg Pfitzer has taught for more than ten years. Both were challenging and, I think, successful courses; I know I learned a lot. This semester, teaching a class I have long thought about, AM 376X Reading *The Wire*, which is about the critically acclaimed HBO series, has been terrific, one of the best pedagogical experiences of my Skidmore career.

Before that, though, back in November, I attended the American Studies Association in Washington, D.C., where Greg, Mary, Beck, and I interviewed semi-finalists for our tenure-track job search. It was an interesting, stimulating, productive experience. That Greg and I were able to attend a Knicks-Wizards game was an added bonus. Speaking of travelling on behalf of the college, during spring break I did a site visit on behalf of the office of Off-Campus Studies and Exchanges and checked out the Skidmore in Paris Program. It was a quick but informative experience. Oh là là, most of those Skidmore students in Paris are having a great academic and cultural adventure.

In terms of scholarship, I published "Baseball As the National Pastime: A Fiction Whose Time Is Past" in the *International Journal of the History of Sport*, contributed some entries to *American Sports: A History of Icons, Idols and Ideas* (2013), and made some halting progress on my two book projects.

I also served my first year as the President of the North American Society for Sport History (NASSH), which has been more taxing than I had imagined it would be. Part of that work included chairing the NASSH Graduate Student Essay Award contest, which was rewarding; it's good to see what emerging scholars are working on. This year's NASSH conference is being held in Glenwood Springs, Colorado, in late May. It is lovely venue and I'm looking forward to the meeting, where I will be moderating a session and giving a paper.

Thereafter, I'm going to keep plugging away on my writing projects, finally watch *Breaking Bad*, *Mad Men*, and *Deadwood*, enjoy spending time with my family in our new house, do some travelling, and, as ever, get to a few Orioles games and eat some steamed crabs.





Mackenzie (Mack) Lacy

How 4 years at Skidmore impacted my life:

Not only academically, but in every aspect of my time here, being at Skidmore has taught me how to think. That may seem like a simple or maybe even pretentious statement, but I really think its true and it has been invaluable. Being at Skidmore encourages you to want and be able to engage with the world around you, in all its many facets, in a positive and productive, or at least analytical, way. Its taught me to think creatively and appreciate new experiences. And on top of it all, from mentors to life-long friends, I've had the incredible pleasure of spending time with some of the most wonderful and impressive people I've ever met.

Grace Hammerstein

I decided to become an American Studies major because it allowed me to take classes that stretched across multiple fields of academia that fascinated me; gender studies, culture studies, history etc. I loved the professors in the department as well as my fellow majors.

While I don't plan on going into anything like policy or teaching, I think the American Studies major will benefit me in many different creative fields. I am interested in television and socially-conscious advertising— knowing a thing or two about American culture certainly wont hurt.



Martha Snow

Though I don't know what my long-term plans are, I am excited to be doing a project this summer that speaks to many important themes that I have always loved about American Studies. I will be travelling across the country for

6 weeks with an organization called Road Trip Nation, conducting interviews with inspiring people on the theme of Design for a public television series. From this, I hope to be able to connect my interests in storytelling and social justice to my passions for art and design. From there, who knows what the future holds, but I am eternally grateful to the American Studies department and faculty for helping me find a home for my interdisciplinary brain!



Sara Vosburg

My Scribner Seminar was American Memories, which was taught by a professor in the American Studies department. I had really enjoyed history in high school, and after taking this seminar, I knew I wanted to take more classes in this subject in college. After reading the

American Studies course descriptions in the college catalog, I became interested in many of the classes listed, so I knew that I would always be able to find a class that I liked each semester. I also liked that there were not that many required classes for the major, so I would have the freedom to take whichever American Studies classes interested me the most. Since I am also pre-med, this major allowed me to still be able to complete my science requirements while also taking fun classes on interesting and diverse topics.



Emily Werner

I decided to become an American Studies major during my freshman year at Skidmore and I couldn't be happier with my decision. Every professor I've had and every class I've taken has allowed me to look at American culture and history in a different way. The class offerings were so specific—I loved spending an entire semester studying and really understanding every aspect of Mark Twain, the Civil War, and the 1920s.



Jung-hee Schwartz

American Studies allowed me to explore a range of academic interests because of its interdisciplinary freedom. I fell in love with the faculty and department and they have helped me grow professionally, personally and academically. I am so grateful to the members of my class for engaging me in provocative and stimulating conversation. They have also been influential to my education and I am grateful to have been part of this cohort. My plans for the future remain unknown, but I hope to critically engage with and contribute to the world around me with tools that I have learned from being an American Studies major.

This past fall I wrote my senior thesis on the history of photography, focusing on the popularization of photography due to George Eastman's invention of a simpler and cheaper camera. Eastman Kodak changed photography for the better and its effects on the ways we see, share, and remember our world are still felt to this day. The topic was a perfect combination of my personal and academic interests in photography, as well as a way to blend my American Studies major and Art History minor. Although it was an intense and challenging process, I am proud of the final product.

Being an American Studies major has given me the opportunity to intern and volunteer with several institutions in the Saratoga community, including the Caffè Lena History Project, the New York State Military Museum, and the Saratoga Springs Preservation Foundation. These experiences were great opportunities to apply my classroom knowledge into a workplace environment and discover some of the career paths I might take with an American Studies degree.

I am not yet sure what the future holds for me, but American Studies has prepared me for a future with endless possibilities. I want to thank all the American Studies professors for supporting me over the past four years and providing me with an academic home here at Skidmore. You will all be missed!



Julie Mandel-Folly

I will be moving to Los Angeles this coming September to pursue a career in television writing.

I became an American Studies major because it was one of the only departments that would allow me to explore my primary interests (comedy, television studies and pop culture) in a rigorous academic setting. Within our tightly knit department, I have learned more about American culture and the methodological approaches to studying it than I could have imagined. Last fall, I wrote my senior thesis about the ways the messages of the feminist movement were furthered by single women in the American sitcom for the past forty years, and received excellent instruction and support. The American Studies major has helped me grow as a writer, researcher, student and person in ways for which

I will always be grateful. The faculty, staff, and students have all been unrelentingly supportive and I have loved the time I spent in the department!

the Society of Architectural Historians. William and Amber, we are confident, will be able to hit the ground running once they get to Skidmore and will provide us with new and exciting curricular offerings.

Speaking of curricular offerings, this year was successful partly because of Megan Williams and Mel Adelman's good work. Megan, as many of you know, is a 2003 Skidmore graduate, with a PhD in American Studies from the University of Kansas. As Greg Pfitzer's sabbatical replacement, Megan taught *six* courses this year, including a popular version of AM 103, which uses *The Wizard of Oz* to introduce students to American Studies. The venerable Mel Adelman, who taught at The Ohio State University for 29 years before retiring, twice pinch hit for us this year, teaching one class each semester. This summer, he will reprise a version of his spring class on Baseball and American Culture.

Of course, keeping the good ship American Studies on course was our able and always amiable administrative assistant Sue Matrazzo. This year was particularly taxing for her, given the complexities of coordinating a tenure-track search with over 400 applicants. That the search, and the year in general, was successful was due in large part to Sue's diligence, organizational skills, patience, and good cheer. In addition to all of her regular responsibilities, think about all the other things she helped us do programmatically.

We brought historians Jim Cullen (Ethical Culture Fieldston School) and Allen Guttman (Amherst College) to campus in the fall to give lectures and meet with students, and in the spring short story and TV writer Rafael Alvarez, who gave a reading at Northshire Book Store and came to my class on *The Wire*. We co-sponsored public events like Janet Mock's lively Q & A session and an event in the Wilson Chapel about *12 Years a Slave* and Solomon Northrup, led by Rachel Seligman, Assistant Director for Curatorial Affairs at the Tang Museum, and Clifford Brown of Union College, who co-wrote (with David A. Fiske), *Solomon Northrup: The Complete Story of the Author of Twelve Years a Slave*. We hosted a Career Development Center workshop, organized by Lauren Dodge, to discuss job-seeking strategies with our students and which was attended by three American Studies alumni: Megan Williams, Lauren Roberts, and Jackie Abodeely. Later in the year, my AM 221 students and I ventured on a memorable field trip, to West Point and a private tour of the United States Military Academy (thank you Claire Lindsay and Sharyn Amoroso), on our quest to understand better a much different kind of educational institution and community. Of course, no catalog of the year would be complete without mentioning the annual, post-Senior Seminar bowling party in December. For the umpteenth year in a row, I am proud to say, that the American Studies faculty beat (barely) the students, who were especially spirited. As the late great baseball manager Casey Stengel used to say, "You can look it up."

The department was also pleased to grant Zangrando Opportunity Fund monies to support several students (Mack Lacy and Becca Baruc), and is proud to announce that this year's American Studies Faculty Award winner is Kyle Giard-Chase, who was one of five AM majors to write an Honors Thesis and earn departmental honors. The other four are Mack Lacy, Veronica Monroe, Becky Stern, and Sara Vosburg, all of whom did an outstanding job of presenting their Honors Thesis work at Academic Festival; the room was packed, by the way. Kyle, it is also worth noting, hit the trifecta this year: he also won the annual Gender Studies award and a Periclean Scholar Award for his Honors Thesis, which is about the men who fought for respect and remediation during the 1980s and 1990s, when HIV/AIDS devastated gay communities. We are impressed.

At this time of the year, many of us are looking forward, to the summer and beyond. Surely that is what Beck Krefting is doing, as she is about to begin her well-earned pre-tenure sabbatical. We will miss her, hope she has a fun, productive year, and are pleased that Megan Williams will be her sabbatical replacement. With Commencement around the corner, our soon-to-be-graduating American Studies majors and minors also have their sights on the future. This year's class of fourteen seniors was particularly strong and vibrant, and had a wonderful *esprit de corps*. We will miss them, of course, but are excited for them, too, and are more than curious to learn about their future adventures and successes. Congratulations to all our seniors and all the best.

Sincerely,





Kyle Giard-Chase

I became an American Studies major so that I could look critically at the culture that I grew up in and am a part of. Now that I am about to graduate, my long-term plan is to use my American studies major to go on and get a masters degree in social work. However, for the time being, I'm taking a break from school and starting a labor organizing internship at Vermont Workers' Center in Burlington, VT.



Matthew Schonfeld

As a Freshman, I was completely undecided of what I wanted to study here. On a whim, I took Beck Krefting's Intro to American Studies: A Humorous (Dis) Course, and I was hooked. As an American Studies major I've done a lot of work studying American music culture and how American culture has influenced the music that it produces. Most specifically I've focused on Hip Hop culture. In the past four years I've written for several online music publications reviewing concerts, conducting interviews, and writing longer form pieces about music culture at large. As well, I've written and edited a widely-read independent, student-run blog focused on student life and campus culture. My American Studies experience has certainly taught me that it can be important, productive, and valuable to study any aspect of American culture--music, and Hip Hop culture, is just one that I have gravitated towards. In the future, my American Studies degree will help me think constructively and critically about the culture around me. As of now, I'd like to continue writing and working in the field of arts and cultural journalism, but all that could change any minute.

Becky Stern



I knew I wanted to be an American Studies major two classes into Beck's Humorous (Dis)course my first semester of freshman year. The class forced me to examine my familiar world through social identities I didn't know I had. What I love most about this discipline is that it is versatile, welcoming creativity and encouraging discussions. Although I have no concrete plans for the future, I am confident that my American Studies degree can take me to the White House and beyond.

Veronica Monroe



Being an American studies major opened up a whole world of academic possibilities I had not thought possible when I entered college. I came to Skidmore with the intention of being a pre-med student and, by chance, took an American studies course my second semester Freshman year. From then on I was completely hooked, realizing I didn't have to stay within the confines of one subject or discipline. Since becoming a major, I have eagerly perused my interest in music. I wrote my honors thesis on the 1970s punk rock movement and will have my first published piece in Industry Magazine this summer on the topic of independent record labels. What the future holds is unclear, but in the short term I will be continuing to work as the general manager for WSPN over the summer.



I have been on a full-year sabbatical this year, and therefore I have little to report that relates to my teaching or service in the department. Most of my time this year has been spent in my book-lined study at home or in my office away from Skidmore—Panera’s bakery. I did make an appearance at the annual departmental bowling event, but my arthritic knee did not allow me to do much to help my fellow faculty members. I did have a total knee replacement in January, however, and I vow to be back next year to defend the faculty’s reputation on the lanes.

While I have missed being in the classroom, I have enjoyed the opportunity the sabbatical afforded me to focus on my scholarship. I spent much of my sabbatical completing my book project, *History Repeating Itself: The Republication of Children’s Historical Literature and the Christian Right*, which deals with the ways in which antiquated history books have found a new life among homeschoolers. The advertising release from the University of Massachusetts Press says: “Recently publishers on the Christian Right have been reprinting nineteenth-century children’s history books and marketing them to parents as ‘anchor texts’ for homeschool instruction. Why, Gregory M. Pfitzer asks, would books written more than 150 years ago be presumed suitable for educating twenty-first-century children? The answer, he proposes, is that promoters of these recycled works believe that history as a discipline took a wrong turn in the early twentieth century, when progressive educators introduced social studies methodologies into public school history classrooms, foisting upon unsuspecting and vulnerable children ideologically distorted history books. In *History Repeating Itself*, Pfitzer tests these assertions by scrutinizing and contextualizing the original nineteenth-century texts on which these republications are based. He focuses on how the writers borrowed from one another to produce works that were similar in many ways yet differed markedly in terms of pedagogical strategy and philosophy of history. Pfitzer demonstrates that far from being non-ideological, these works were rooted in intense contemporary debates over changing conceptions of childhood. Pfitzer argues that the repurposing of antiquated texts reveals a misplaced resistance to the idea of a contested past. He also raises essential philosophical questions about how and why curricular decisions are shaped by the ‘past we choose to remember’ on behalf of our children.” The book will be available in October.

I also began work on a new book project, tentatively titled *The Negotiated Past: The Making of the “Childhood of Famous Americans” Series*. The mid-twentieth century children’s historical series published by Bobbs-Merrill consisted of over 200 volumes published between 1932 and 1975; it helped establish the prevailing historical sensibilities of young readers of the baby boom generation (like me). It did so by employing formulaic literary strategies that emphasized a child’s perspective on human experience. “With a hint of ‘you-are-there,’ each biography opens with the birth and early childhood of its subject and then traces his or her life chronologically, highlights both successes and failures,” an advertisement for the Bobbs-Merrill series noted. “Best of all, these biographies are realistic, yet warm and perceptive. None of the subjects are portrayed as saints or sinners, but as humans who had the will to achieve.” The works of fictionalized biography sought to appeal to children on their level—to provide stories “about kids just like they are who play with their friends, disobey their parents and get in trouble, but still display the determination and drive to contribute to society.” The publishers also bragged that the volumes were “capable of stirring a youngster’s heart as well as his mind,” giving the youngest reader “a vivid sense of his inheritance as an American.” I hope to focus on the editorial choices made by the publishers at Bobbs-Merrill as a way of understanding how the histories I absorbed at a young age were constructed and promoted. I am especially interested in instructions that were given to authors detailing editorial priorities with respect to history as a subject matter for children. In pursuit of this project I conducted a series of interviews with re-publishers of the “Childhood of famous Americans” volumes, especially Florrie Kichler, a former employee at Bobbs-Merrill and current editor of Patria Press’s.

Young Patriots Series. This series represents an effort on the part of Kichler to revise slightly and reissue thirty of the original Bobbs-Merrill volumes that have gone out of print. I am interested in the alterations Kichler made in “updating” these volumes for late twentieth and twenty-first century young readers. Among other things, she “modernized” language (changing Negro to African American in the biographical volume on Mahalia Jackson, while Redskins became Native Americans in the book on Juliette Low); and she eliminated some “objectionable” scenes in other volumes (including descriptions of lynching). This project should keep me busy for the next few years.

I look forward to learning what everyone has accomplished this year and getting back in the classroom where I belong.

Study Abroad student experiences...



Last year I studied abroad in Freiburg, Germany on the IES European Union program. As a Government and American Studies double major with no

prior knowledge of German or really international affairs, the program was both intellectually stimulating and extremely terrifying. From environmentalism to policy briefings, I took four courses that explored different aspects of the EU. But the best part of my program (besides studying the ever evolving EU) was the travel seminar component. I went to ten countries and over fifteen cities with IES. I drank wine under the Eiffel tower. I discussed the granny crisis in a cramped studio in Madrid. I slept in a tent with three best friends in the middle of a field in Munich. I argued about Catalonian secession in Barcelona. I danced until 6 A.M. in Prague. I walked along the remnants of the Berlin Wall and touched the Coliseum in Rome. But most importantly, I called the cutest—most picturesque—city in southern Germany home for four month. I recommend this program to *any* government major who has a craving for travel and a stomach for brezels, schnitzel, and beer. The IES EU program is a fantastic opportunity for Government majors to experience and witness first hand the workings (or not) of European political systems, while learning a few things along the way. Please contact me with any questions and check out my blog on the IES website!

—Becky Stern



I spent my first semester as a freshman doing the FYE London program, and enjoyed traveling around Europe and being in a different city and culture. This semester I went to DC with my semester off and in-

terned at the Naval History Museum. While I was there I created captions for an upcoming exhibit on the War of 1812. I also spent a lot of time in the museums in the city.

—Brooks Robinson





It is hard to believe that yet another year has passed here at Skidmore College let alone that we made it beyond the end times forecasted by the Mayan calendar in 2012. My colleagues warn me that next year will pass even more quickly, since I will be on year-long sabbatical starting June 2013. I intend to savor every moment, though I will miss being in the classroom. It has been a busy year in many regards...here's the story, in brief.

Last September, I submitted my manuscript in full, titled *All Joking Aside: American Humor and Its Discontents* (Johns Hopkins University Press), and though I have had to contend with proofing and indexing the book in these past months, the bulk of the work for this project is done! The book will be available for purchase

September 1, 2014. Additionally, this past spring I published a review essay on the book: *We Killed: The Rise of Women in American Comedy* (2012) in *Studies in American Humor Journal*. The primary source information is fantastic, but the delivery and structuring of the material is a little "meh." Last summer I began research for a new book, co-authored with anthropologist Chad Huddleston, titled: *Prepper Nations: Adapting to Potential Futures*, wherein we aim to explain and analyze the growing and evolving prepper movement in the United States. I traveled to several prepper/doomsday expos to gather data on vendors and the populations consuming these products and information. This summer I will resume work on this project with the help of research assistant and American Studies major Becca Baruc (Class of 2015). Ms. Baruc and I will also be co-authoring an article on the ways social media is transforming the production, exchange, and consumption of stand-up comedy, which we plan to present at the American Humor Studies Association/Mark Twain Circle of America Quadrennial Conference in December in New Orleans. Ultimately, this work will lay the groundwork for developing two book proposals, one on preppers and the other on social media and comedy. BOOM!

This year, in addition to regular course offerings, I taught AM 342: Black Feminist Thoughts, a course last taught in fall 2010 by Professor Winston Grady Willis. In other words, I had big shoes to fill. Having availed myself of Skidmore's collaboration with Faculty Resource Network, I spent a week in New York City last June in classes and workshops on Black women writers led by Professor Beverly Guy-Sheftall. This experience informed my revamping of AM 342 and the new iteration focuses on the history of Black feminist theory as well as analysis of popular culture artifacts exemplifying themes in Black feminism in genres such as music, literature, film, and theater. Other course offerings were equally gratifying; in particular, I led my first Scribner Seminar on historical foodways and food politics last fall and students enrolled in the course worked with the co-curricular group Environmental Action Club to assist in campus-wide composting, the relocation of the Skidmore garden, and the nation-wide Real Food Challenge Campaign. I am incredibly proud of the work that was done by these first-year students, many of whom continue to contribute their free time to these efforts.

On the service front, I was honored and flattered to be a part of the committee working to establish the new Media and Film Studies minor, which was a successful undertaking as of spring 2014. We held a job search in the department and hired not one, but TWO incredible new faculty members who will join our ranks in 2015. I continue to serve as advisory board member for the Gender Studies Program and am excited to announce that Professor Chandra Talpade Mohanty will be our fall 2014 Coburn lecturer. My role on the Bias Response Group became more involved as I worked in tandem with Dean Rochelle Calhoun and Professor Eunice Ferreira to advise a performance project drawing from the transcriptions of a dozen interviews conducted with reporters of bias and the college staff and city officials handling such reports. This culminated in three performances of *On the Record* in early April in Falstaffs, each of which was followed by a dialogue with Intergroup Relations facilitators and/or a post-performance talk-back with directors, advisors, and actors.

Last year, much to my surprise, I was nominated by the senior class to speak at commencement. Drawing from my speech during this momentous occasion, I will include here one of my tips for life for all graduating seniors: "Know your limitations and play to your strengths; others are none the wiser and it makes you look and feel like a rock star."

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