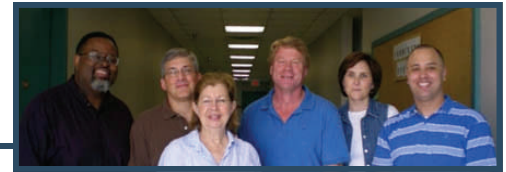


Our Department

A Word from Daniel A. Nathan, Chair



Greetings American Studies folks:

My first Chair's letter. Here goes. The 2009-2010 academic year was productive yet bittersweet. The department accomplished a great deal and is in the process of some challenging transitions.

As in the past, we hosted or co-hosted a number of interesting speakers and invited guests, including historian Peter Mancall, journalist and hip-hop activist Rosa Clemente, historian Devyn S. Benson, political scientist Steven Kautz, and the ever ebullient cultural studies scholar Jerry Philogene. One of the year's highlights was in March, when the department sponsored a well attended, lively event titled "Rethinking Southern History: A Panel on the Intersections of Race, Class, Gender, and Urban Studies" which featured Leslie Brown of Williams College and Skidmore's Winston Grady-Willis. It was an informative, stimulating session and was generously supported by the Department of History and the Black Faculty Staff Group. Also, thanks to Janet Casey, who introduced Ira Glass of National Public Radio at a jam-packed Zankel Music Center in March, American Studies also participated in one of the year's most popular all-college lectures.

In terms of our curriculum, we offered several new iterations of Introduction to American Studies (AM 103). In the Fall, Joshua Woodfork's course focused on adoption; the course considered different notions of family—historically, legally, ethically, racially, and many other ways. In the Spring, Greg Pfitzer's course examined competing representa-

tions and remembrances of the Civil War in several different mediums, while Mary Lynn's class studied natural and unnatural disasters, like the Revolutionary War Smallpox Pandemic, the Chicago Fire, the San Francisco Earthquake, and the Great Boston Molasses Flood of 1919. All of these courses emphasized reading critically, thinking historically, practicing interdisciplinarity, acknowledging diversity, and making connections. That's what we do, after all.

In addition to the good work happening in American Studies classrooms, the Department also sponsored numerous field trips. The following is a partial list. In the Fall, Mary Lynn took her Scribner seminar to Hancock Shaker Village in Massachusetts and to the Saratoga Battlefield. That same class also participated in an apple-picking expedition (along with two other Scribner seminars) on behalf of a regional food bank; collectively, they picked four tons of apples! Greg Pfitzer led students in his Hudson River course to several different locales: Prospect Mountain in the Adirondacks, Fort William Henry at Lake George, the G.E. hydro-electric dam in Corinth, and the Albany Institute of History and Art. In addition, the Methods and Approaches class, whose theme this year was community, decided to visit the monks and nuns of New Skete, a contemplative monastic community of men and women just outside of Cambridge, New York.

Probably the most important matters this year were related to personnel. On the one hand, I'm extremely pleased to report that Associate Professor Winston Grady-Willis, the College's Director of Intercultural Studies, earned tenure. A superb teacher, scholar, and citizen, Grady-Willis has been an excellent colleague and we are all thrilled that he (and his lovely family) will be here for years to come. On the other hand, I also have to report that Joshua Woodfork, who joined us in 2005 and has enriched Skidmore in many ways, is taking a leave of absence to accept an exciting position at American University in Washington, D.C. Obviously Skidmore's loss is AU's gain. We all wish him the best and want to thank him for his many contributions to the department and the college. He has made this a better school and community.

After 29 years of dedicated service, Nancy Osberg-Otrembiak

has decided to participate in the college's early retirement program. It's hard for me to imagine this Department without Nancy. For nearly three decades, Nancy has provided sterling academic support to American Studies and several other programs: Liberal Studies, Latin American Studies, and Neuroscience. Extremely knowledgeable, technologically sophisticated and creative, responsible and supportive, Nancy has long been a highly respected member of the Skidmore community. She has served as an important mentor for dozens of administrative staffers and provided invaluable service to faculty and students. She has been a pillar of strength and consistency, one of the unheralded people who make this place work. So thank you Joshua and Nancy. We wish you both the best and will miss you.

Speaking of which, we also wish all of our graduating majors and minors hearty congratulations. We will miss you, too. The senior majors this year were a particularly strong, close, memorable group. Hesitant to single people out, I need to mention that Claire Solomon was the 2010 American Studies Faculty Award winner and received Joanna Schneider Zangrando Student Opportunity funding for her Honors Thesis. Many other American Studies students earned distinction this year, too many to cite here. But trust me: we're proud to bask in your reflected glory.

So good luck, graduates, and please stay in touch. We look forward to learning about all the wonderful things you're doing.

Chair, American Studies Department

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Grady-Willis Tenured

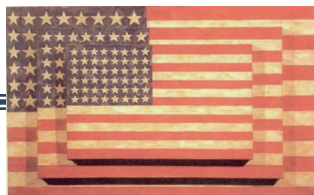
Winston Grady-Willis joined the American Studies Department at Skidmore College in the 2008 Spring semester. Having come from Syracuse University as a tenured professor in the Department of African American Studies, Grady-Willis was able to seek tenure at Skidmore in his third year. His tenure application came up last fall and, we are happy to report, has been approved by the Board of Trustees, and Winston is now tenured at Skidmore.

Winston says he "was drawn to the daunting challenge of joining a committed group here at Skidmore in helping to make diversity a substantive lived real-

ity." Wife Lisa (who teaches in Skidmore's Theater Department) and children, Bakari, and Emi, as well as the soon to arrive (at that time) Ajani, all approved of the move.

Winston teaches courses that "seek to illuminate and complicate African American experiences, Black feminists, civil human rights, and the U.S. South. My teaching draws from a number of disciplines and interdisciplinary fields, including history, Africana Studies, and Women's and Gender Studies."





AMERICAN STUDIES Majors/Minors Abroad Experiences

Manpreet "Preety" Aujila '11

The past two and half months in Morocco have been unpredictable in the best way possible. Coming into the country, I had no expectations. Even though I had read and heard different things about Moroccan culture, I knew very little about the country and its history. I came with an open mind, knowing that I would have to make some major lifestyle changes. My experience has both surprised me and made me realize more about myself and people very different from me.

Living with my home-stay family has been one of the highlights of the semester. The home in the medina (old city) of Rabat that I live in has a Turkish toilet and four rooms split between six people. There is little privacy; the home is a communal space spent with the family at all moments of the day. My family is less strict than most families, which I enjoy and means I had no curfew. Living in the medina is an equally interesting situation. There are mosques at every corner of the street, no room for cars on the alleyways, lots of cats, and endless veggie stands, corner stores, and snack shops.

The worst part of medina and new ville city life is getting called to and harassed on the street by Moroccan guys. Times like these are a reminder that I am in a country where men have the upper hand and religion, Islam, is manifested as a moral authority that can dictate the way the society works. Being a woman is a disadvantage in many ways. It's harder to go out alone and feel com-

fortable, especially at night. Being here for two a half months has made me extremely familiar with Rabat and the medina though, which has been really nice



and will be hard to leave.

For my independent study project I'm going to look at drinking culture in an Islamic society through the different lenses of class, gender, location, and religion. I'm going to be traveling around Morocco and comparing the situation in various cities: Fes, Meknes, Essaouira, and Chefchaouen. Even though Islam considers drinking alcohol a "haram" or forbidden, many Moroccans drink and go out to bars the way Americans would.

Out of most Islamic countries, Morocco certainly is one of the most liberal and some parts, like Casablanca, are the most westernized. Coming back I expect culture shock to a certain degree. I know that the

pace of life will be faster, which will be one of the major things to get used to again. Being able to shower everyday will feel strange, although having a room all to myself will be a delight. I know that if I have the means, I will come back to Morocco and that this is only the beginning of my exploration abroad.

Brian Connor '11

G'day my fellow American Studiers,

I'm having a bonza time Down Under, throwing plenty of shrimp on the Barbie, and perpetuating many other Australian stereotypes



that are ingrained in Americans' perceptions of Australia.

The portrayal of Australia in American media has little basis in cultural reality; rarely do Australians drink Fosters, shrimp are called

Continued on page 10
(See **Abroad Experiences**)

American Studies 2010 Faculty Award

CLAIRE SOLOMON is the 2010 recipient of the American Studies Faculty Award. Claire has demonstrated both excellence and growth in the major, proving herself an extraordinarily versatile student in a wide array of American

Studies courses on autobiography, identities, specific decade studies (50s and 60s), historical imaginings and courses in music. This all comes to fruition in her Senior

Seminar project (which evolved into a Thesis) on memory and music.

Claire's writing and research skills are impressive, as can be witnessed in her Senior Thesis Project, *The Presence of Song: Constructing Musical Memoirs* (for more on Claire's thesis, see "Senior Honors Theses").

As well as being an American Studies major and our Faculty Award winner, Claire minors in English and Honors Forum.

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

Congratulations, Claire!



SENIOR HONORS THESES

Claire Solomon '10

The Presence of Song: Constructing Musical Memoirs

Music provides us with a unique way to construct individual and collective narrative histories and to think about the personal and historical construction of memory. Community is created when many voices become one song—when people begin to sing together, to listen together, and to play together. Every Friday for the last seven months I visited Prestwick Chase, a senior living community in Saratoga Springs, New



Continued on page 11
(See **Thesis—Solomon**)

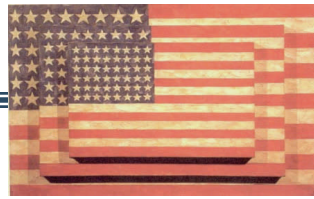
Gemma Striker '10

Illusions of Change: Social Movement's Inability to Deconstruct America's Sexual Norms

My thesis investigates how American social movements that have attempted to change America's sexual values. Currently America's construction of sex and sexuality creates a culture of silence. As a result, America has as high STI rates and high teen pregnancy rates as compared to our European counterparts. Thus, America's sexual silence has had problematic health and social implications that are unique to America.



Continued on page 4
(See **Thesis—Striker**)



AMERICAN STUDIES Senior Majors/Minors

Elizabeth Arzt, New York City, NY (Major)

Liz, who minors in International Affairs, plans eventually to go to grad school, once she has discovered her specified field. For now she plans to "put my Spanish language skills to good use traveling through South America with a non-profit volunteers program." Liz wants future AM majors/minors to know "it's a wonderful department with supportive faculty, so utilize their knowledge and experience. Enjoy your Senior Seminar experience! The course is a rare opportunity to get familiar with your classmates interests and writing styles. Learn something new about your colleagues who you have been sitting next to for the past three years." Liz enjoys reading, dancing, ceramics and yoga in her free time,

Over the summer, Emily will be working for a photography company on Long Island while she searches for a more permanent job somewhere in the



Northeast. She and her sister are thinking of traveling to Maine, London, Montreal, or some other interesting place new to them. While she has no current grad school plans, she'd like to eventually find a job dealing with the arts, social media, advertising or publishing. Throughout her years at Skidmore, Emily was involved in SEC (Student Entertainment Company), and EAC (Environmental Action Club) and is currently the treasurer of the American Studies club. She advises her AM major/minor colleagues "to make the most of, learn from, and enjoy every opportunity you have, every person you meet, and every idea you can make happen. Study abroad, take a wide variety of classes, and enjoy the wealth of knowledge that each professor can give you!"

Rachel Cohen, Weston, CT (Major)

Rachel is excited to note that she begins a "real life job" on June 7th at a media bartering firm



(Orion) trading as a junior trade negotiator. American Studies became her major because on

"Accepted Candidates Day I walked past the American Studies table and just knew. Then the first semester I took Pre-Civil War with Professor Pfitzer and I was hooked." Rachel suggests future AM majors and minors "make sure to utilize your professors. Being able to talk to them openly is one of the greatest parts of a small school." In her free time, Rachel enjoys traveling, going on adventures, and meeting new people.

James Dillon, Clinton, NY (Minor)

James transferred to Skidmore in the Fall '07 semester from NY Maritime College; his major here at Skidmore is Business. Like many of you, he plans to spend some time over the summer nailing down a job or getting started in one. While at Skidmore, James has been an active participant in the Men's Varsity Crew (F07), Intramural Softball, and the Skidmore Calling Program, as well as a member of the Senior Gift Executive



Committee. His free time interests include skiing, spending time on the water, and most anything that gets him outdoors. James became a minor in American Studies because the classes offered in the department interested him. He'd like to tell junior and sophomore majors and minors to "take any class that seems of interest to you; the great thing with American Studies is that it includes a wide array of topics, so don't be afraid to explore."

Krista Glencross, Merrimack, NH (Major)

Levine Internship Award

Krista, who also majors in Government, is looking forward to a summer internship with the New Hampshire Commission for Human Rights. In the

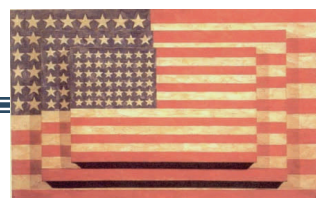
*Continued on page 9
(See The Seniors)*



and says she became an AM major when she noticed courses such as hip hop, culture and politics of the 60s. She says they "jumped out at me as fascinating studies of dynamic cultures and communities. I enjoy analyzing songs, literature, cultural phenomenon that tells a story about the time period from which they derived. There is no other discipline where the imagination can roam as freely as it does in American Studies."

Emily Bresnick, Merrick, NY (Major)

Emily, also an American Studies Department Student Assistant for two years, and an Art History minor, says she became an AM major because she "wanted to learn about the United States in a way that could incorporate my various interests of the visual arts and design, pop culture, the twentieth century and much more. Being an American Studies major allows me to see the differences and make connections between those things and how they impact modern American culture." Emily enjoys photography, watching movies, playing Scrabble and Yahtzee, as well as visiting her sister, and interior design.



“Never Can Say Goodbye” or What I Learned in Twenty-Nine Years

by Nancy Osberg-Otrembiak

After being launched on April 12, 1981 from Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida, the space shuttle “Columbia” orbited the earth 36 times and landed successfully at Edwards Air Force base in California on April 15. Also on April 15, 1981, President Reagan announced unconditional pardons for two former FBI officials convicted of authorizing illegal break-ins of homes in the early 70s. Joe Louis, who held the heavyweight Boxing Champion of the World title for almost 12 years, from 1937 to 1949, died on April 12, 1981. The minor league baseball Pawtucket Red Sox and Rochester Red Wings began a 33-inning baseball game on April 18, 1981 (and the Mets thought 20-innings was a lot). The game was suspended at 4:07 AM the following day (Pawtucket later won in the 33rd inning). President Reagan left the hospital and returned to the White House on April 11, 1981 after being wounded in an assassination attempt 12 days earlier.

In April 1981, I began my Skidmore career. I started as a temp/floater and filled in for PE and Dance (when they were still housed in a little trailer located approximately where the Sports Complex parking lot is now) and the Office of Alumni Affairs (which then called the fourth floor of PMH home). There was a stint in Special Programs, the Counseling Center and also a very small academic department (which at that time boasted

three professors) over on the third floor of Ladd Hall – American Studies. Everything from that first day has been a learning experience on many levels, not just academically -- though I was quite fortunate to earn my BS in Social Work here at Skidmore.

Skidmore taught me to accept that things happen for a reason. While floating around the campus, I applied for the secretarial position in the Education Department. Although I was interviewed I was not hired, and for a time, I wondered if perhaps I wasn’t cut out for academia. Soon after, one of offices in which I had temporarily worked found themselves without secretarial support. I applied for the position, and soon I was a permanent member of the American Studies department. I have always believed that I got the better end of the deal by losing out on the position in Education which left me free to accept the one in American Studies. Things happen for a reason. Skidmore has taught me that what seems to be a high priority now just may end up being the least important thing on a “to-do” list by the end of the day. But the most important thing I have learned in my time at Skidmore is that people who possess Ph.D.s are completely incapable of using a mailing tape dispenser! I hope that brings a chuckle to all my supervisors/friends/

colleagues in the department.

I could make a really long list of all the things I’ve learned in 29 years at Skidmore, but the hardest lesson I’ve learned comes at the end of every semester when all the students leave, and especially in the spring when some leave us having no plans to return trip in the fall. I’ve learned that I could never say “goodbye.” And I still can’t. So I’m not saying goodbye to Skidmore or to any of the wonderful people who have come into my life at Skidmore. I’m saying (à la Bob Hope) “thanks for the memories,” thanks for the laughs (and even the tears), thanks for the understanding, the patience, and most of all the support through so many rough personal years. Especially fond thanks to all of the American Studies Department members — those who are no longer here as well — for all the wonderful years. I have been truly blessed to have worked with people who not only value the work they do, but how it affects those for whom they do it. So if I don’t say goodbye to you, it’s not because I don’t think you’re worth a goodbye. It’s because I don’t want to think of this as the end when it is really the beginning.

Woodfork Takes Leave to American U.

Joshua Woodfork, who has been with the American Studies Department since fall 2005, has decided to go on leave and join American University’s faculty this fall.

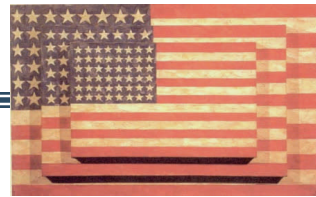
In light of the commencement of Joanna Zangrando’s phased retirement, and of upcoming sabbaticals for Greg Pfitzer and Dan Nathan, the American Studies Department opened it’s door to Joshua in 2005. Joshua came to us from the University of Maryland where he was a Ph.D. candidate working on his dissertation titled: “Shifting Whiteness: U.S. White Parents of Black and Biracial Children.”

Joshua earned his B.A. at Colby College (where he served on the Board of Overseers) and his M.A. at Michigan State University. His teaching interests focus on primarily whiteness studies and multiracial studies, including the idea of border crossing and racial boundaries. He has also worked on an ethnographic study consisting of focused-life history interviews and participant observations with six biracial and bisexual/gay young men.

At Skidmore, Joshua has taught courses on Critical Whiteness in the U.S., Adoption, American Autobiography, Diversity in the U.S., Life History, and the African-American Experience. In November 2006, Joshua co-facilitated (with Kristie Ford in Sociology) “The What, Why, and How of Multicultural Education,” an In-Service Professional Day at Episcopal Academy, in Lower Merion, PA. He also co-founded and co-facilitated a new Black Faculty and Staff Group (BFSG). The BFSG group mentors students and sponsors campus wide events. In 2008, at its Annual Freedom Fund Education Celebration, the Saratoga Branch of the NAACP honored and awarded Joshua, along with Kristie Ford, with its Community Service Award. Joshua and Kristie were also honored as a team at the Skidmore Employee Recognition and Retirement Luncheon in 2008 with the President’s award. The awards are intended to celebrate and symbolize the wide range of contributions by individuals and groups to the quality of campus life.

Continued from page 2
Thesis—Striker

To investigate the possibilities of changing the culture of silence, I ask the question: Can social movements which represent sexual minorities change how America constructs sexuality and sexual norms? To answer this question I investigated the feminist and gay rights movements in the 1980s whose advocates proposed changing America’s views on sexuality in regards to same-sex relations. I found that it wasn’t possible for this social movement to change America’s sexual constructs and instead these movements independently changed their rhetoric to create sexualities for gay and lesbian relationships that fit within the heterosexual values of America. These social movements also ostracized sexual minorities through the homonormative identity that these movements created to fit within America’s current norms. Therefore these social movements did not change norms to include various sexual expressions but rather create a norm that mimicked heterosexual norms and could be accepted into the existing value system.



The Faculty

Joshua C. Woodfork

I spent the '08-'09 academic year on pre-tenure sabbatical leave. During this period, I lived near Salem, MA and spent significant time in Washington, DC. I worked on revising my dissertation into a manuscript and contacted several publishers. Returning to the Saratoga Springs area last August, I moved from near the horse racetrack to living between Lake Lonely and Saratoga Lake. In the fall, I taught Diversity in the US and a new course for me here at Skidmore, Introduction to American Studies, which is now offered each semester with various themes. Using intersectional analysis and an interdisciplinary approach, my topic was adoption (parenting). In the spring, I taught the African American Experience, Critical Whiteness in the US, and Life History. In the latter two classes, students not only wrote traditional papers, but they also used alternative formats to complete their assignments, including audio, video, and hybrid presentations. In addition to teaching this year, I served on Skidmore's Committee on Admissions and Financial Aid. In January 2009, I joined Colby College's Board of Trustees and currently serve as the vice chair of its Admissions and Financial Aid Committee. In November, I attended

the American Studies Association conference in Washington, DC and presented at the New York University's Faculty Resource Network's conference in Atlanta, GA. In April, I attended the "Still Brave: Black Women's Studies at 25+ Symposium" at the University of Maryland. Finally, after careful consideration, I have decided to go on leave and to join American University's faculty this coming fall. This professional and personal opportunity feels like one that I cannot pass up. I have enjoyed my experiences with Skidmore students over the last five years. Skidmore has been good to me and I remain grateful. I look forward to keeping in touch with alums and colleagues. Thank you.

Gregory M. Pfitzer

I spent the summer clearing out of the American Studies chair's office to make room for our new captain of the Ship of State, Professor Nathan. Shoe-horning myself into his old office was no easy task. It required several student workers, a backhoe, and the purging of hundreds of cherished books, but I'm now ensconced in Tisch 330 and enjoying my return to full-time teaching. This year I taught AM201: American Identities, AM250C: Hudson River Culture and AM374: Senior Seminar in the fall, and AM 103: The Civil War in American Memory and AM 360C: The

*Continued on page 14
(see The Faculty)*



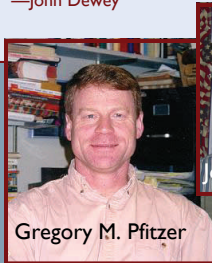
Daniel A. Nathan



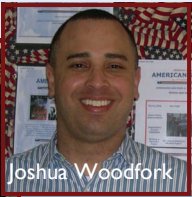
Winston Grady-Willis

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

—John Dewey



Gregory M. Pfitzer



Joshua Woodfork



Janet Casey

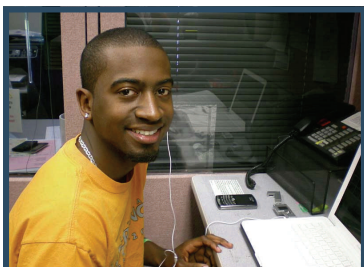


Mary C. Lynn

The Student Assistants (SA)

Lavere Foster '11

Lavere joined the American Studies department at the beginning of the spring semester to replace SA Elise Fariello '11 who went abroad (read her abroad experience on page 10).



Lavere had just declared American Studies his major last fall when he realized

he must be taking all these AM courses for a reason! He hopes next fall to declare a minor in Sociology. Lavere likes playing basketball and hanging out with his friends. Lavere says college means he "constantly gets to meet new people. I like the relationships that I form with each of my professors. And I like the independence that I have gained from being at college." Lavere hopes to continue his education in grad school after graduating from Skidmore.

We are sad to say goodbye to three amazing

senior student assistants, **Emily Bresnick '10,**



Krista Glencross '10,



..and Elena Milius '10..

You can read all about them in the Senior section of the Newsletter (beginning on page 3).

Majors and Minors

	MAJORS	MINORS
2011	Manpreet Aujla	Odemaris Alicea
	Brian Connor	Ismatu Alison-Konteh
	Elise Fariello	Karen Granados
	Rainey Ferdinand	Timothy Lemp
	Suzanne Finkel	Emily St. Denis
	Lavere Foster	
	Elizabeth Franke	
	Kelsey Hastings	
	Eve Lewis	
	Kate Neri	
	Eliza Perkins	
	Andrew Schrijver	
2012	Courtney Spiller	
	Alexander Stavrou	
	Alexander Steinberg	
	Eliza Straim	
	Mary Ann Weiss	
	Brooke Williams	
	Megan Barlow	
	Abigail Bowling	
	Adam Becker	
	Jessica Garretson	
	D'Juan Gilmore	
	Isabel Kagan	
	Kathryn Lazell	
	William Madden	
	Rebecca Meyer	
	Benjamin Mickelson	
	Allison Otto	
	Hannah Ronson	
	Callison Stratton	
	Eric Strebel	
	Jacob Wolf	
	Steven Zapata	

In October, a handful of students from Professor Mary Lynn's "American Taste" class (a First-Year Experience Scribner Seminar), along with a few students from two other FYE Seminars (Barbara Black's "American Dreams" and Beau Breslin's "American Liberties"), took a trip to Saratoga Apple to pick apples for the Hudson Mohawk Regional Food Bank. Before the



**American Taste for Apples
October 2009**

day was over, students and professors not only enjoyed some beautiful autumn weather and some amazing camaraderie, but they also managed to end the day with a harvest of four tons of apples. That should have kept the food bank supplied through the apple pie season for Thanksgiving and Christmas. Kudos for a job well done!



The American Studies Club

By Emily Bresnick '10, Treasurer
(President Elise Fariello '11 is abroad)

The American Studies Club was involved with many different events over the 2009-2010 academic year. On December 11, 2009, the club co-sponsored the annual "Bowl-a-Thon" to celebrate the completion of AM374 Senior Seminar research papers. Fueled by pizza and soda and bolstered by the bowling power of American Studies minors, upcoming seniors, and their friends, the eleven Senior Seminar students – with their personalized bowling T-shirts – engaged in a Battle for the Pins against professors of the American Studies department. Although both sides claim victory, the gathering was a success.

During the Spring 2010 semester, the American Studies Club helped promote a fascinating panel lecture with Professor Leslie Brown of Williams College and Skidmore's Professor Winston Grady-Willis. The lecture, called "Rethinking Southern History: A Panel on the Intersections of Race, Class, Gender and Urban Studies," brought up issues relating to Black community development in 20th-century Durham, N.C. as well as the Black struggle against apartheid in 1960s-70s Atlanta, Georgia. The lecture fueled an interesting and thought-provoking discussion about race relations and growing up in the South.

The American Studies Club is looking forward to another great year of lectures, events, and the annual bowling party.

Elise Fariello '11 will continue next year as President of the Club, but a new Treasurer will be needed. Please email Elise (efariello@skidmore.edu) if you are able to help in this capacity.

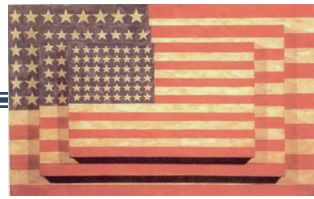
The American Studies Bowl-a-Thon

December 2009



For some reason there were no "action" shots of the Bowl-a-Thon this year, and it could be due to the fact that both sides (Faculty vs. Students) claim victory in this challenge! However, the AM 374 Senior Seminar class upped the requirements of the competition by making their very own bowling shirts for the contest! Pictured — Three in front row: Gemma Striker '10, Claire Solomon '10, Liz Arzt '10; Five in second row: Emily Bresnick '10, Elena Milius '10, Krista Glencross '10, Emme Newcombe '10, Keke Mullins '10; Four in back row: Rachel Cohen '10, Jordan Klein '10, Andrew LaSane '10, Professor Pfitzer

(Picture by Elise Fariello '11)



Academic Festival

May 5, 2009

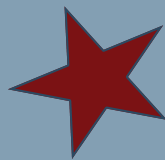
Students at Skidmore strive for excellence. While in class and during much of their free time, they write thoughtful papers, perform music, conduct scientific experiments and mathematical research, and create provocative works of art. The quality of independent thinking that characterizes the Academic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

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

—Taken from the Academic Festival Brochure



To the right are pictures from the American Studies portion of Academic Festival. Students presenting (Jordan Klein [Minor] '10, Claire Solomon '10, and Gemma Striker '10) commented on the challenges of doing historical research and preserving cultural memory in the context of Honors Thesis work. Presenting in three widely different areas of historical investigation, Jordan (*A Fair to Remember: Depictions of the American County Fair*), Claire (*The Presence of Song: Constructing Musical Memoirs*), and Gemma (*Illusions of Change: The Inability of Social Movements to Change American Sexual Norms*) discussed the common methodological challenges they faced in researching the past and analyzed the consistent patterns of interpretation they employed in investigating the place of historical memory in the American consciousness.



The Presence of Song: Constructing Musical Memoirs

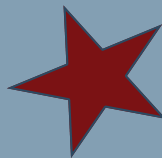
Claire Solomon

May 5, 2010

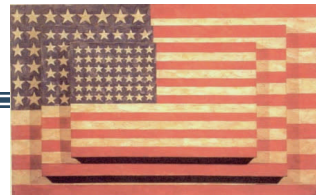


Illusions of Change: The Inability of Social Movements to Change American Sexual Norms.

Gemma Striker
American Studies Honors Thesis
Skidmore College, Academic Festival
May 5, 2010



(Pictures by Emily Bresnick '10)




Grady-Willis Award and Panel Discussion

Winston Grady-Willis, Associate Professor in American Studies and Director for Intercultural Studies, who is the student-elected Commencement speaker for the 2010 graduating class, was one of two faculty members honored with the 2010 President's Award. President's Awards are presented each year to members of the Skidmore faculty, staff, and student body who have embraced the educational mission and cooperative spirit of the College through their exemplary commitment to personal excellence, campus pride, and community service. The awards are intended to celebrate and symbolize the wide range of contributions by individuals and groups to the quality of campus life. This year there were a total of 24 nominations.


Winston joined Williams College Associate Professor of History Leslie Brown (who has taught at Skidmore in the American Studies department) in a panel discussion titled "Rethinking Southern History: A Panel on the Intersections of Race, Class, Gender and Urban Studies." For more information about this panel discussion, please see the American Studies Club report on page 6.

MARCH 1,
2010




RETHINKING SOUTHERN HISTORY:
A Panel on the Intersections of Race, Class,
Gender and Urban Studies

PMH 202
5:30 P.M.



WINSTON GRADY-WILLIS
Director, Intercultural Studies and
Associate Professor,
American Studies
Skidmore College



LESLIE BROWN
Assistant Professor
of History
Williams College

PROUD CO-SPONSORS:
AMERICAN STUDIES DEPARTMENT & CLUB, HISTORY DEPARTMENT, BPFG

AM 221 Visits the New Skeet Community

In AM 221 (Spring 2010) students were challenged by Professor Dan Nathan to write proposals for a field trip to a location within 100 miles that would provide a first-hand expression of community. Prof. Nathan was impressed with some of the choices students



Brother Stavros with one of the puppies.
(Picture by Jessica Garretson)

made, and their explanations of why their choice fit the criteria.

The class decided to visit the Communities of New Skete. New Skete is a religious community of men and women dedicated to monastic life in the Orthodox Catholic Church. The community consists of the Monks of New Skete, the Nuns of New Skete, and the Companions of New Skete. Each of the three communities lives in separate houses within three miles of each other outside the small village of Cambridge in rural upstate New York. The Nuns support themselves through iconography, religious cards and plaques, and gourmet cheesecake. The Monks of New Skete breed and train German Shepherds. They have published books regarding dog training and care, and have a program on Animal Planet.

Hudson River Course Field Trips

Saratoga Battlefield



Fort William Henry, Lake George, NY

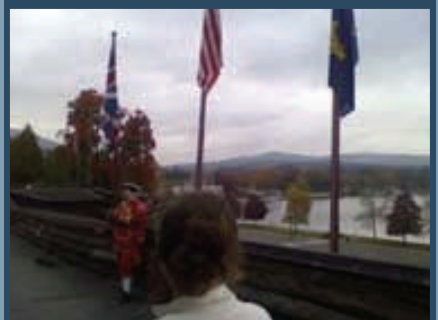


During the Fall 2009 semester, Professor Pfitzer's Hudson River class ventured away from campus to visit some historic sites along the Hudson. In October they took a trip to the Saratoga Battlefield where they "traversed the battleground and discussed the military strategy used by General Johnny Burgoyne to attempt to separate New England from the rest of the colonial empire" (quotation from Prof. Pfitzer).

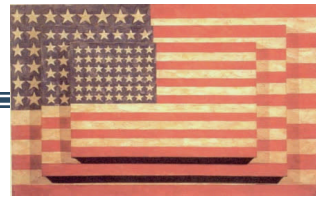
In early November the class made its way to Fort William Henry on Lake George. "We visited the site in association with our reading of James Fenimore Cooper's novel *The Last of the Mohicans* which is set in part at the Fort. Re-enactors demonstrated for us how the 18th century cannons were fired during the French and Indian War" (Pfitzer).

Not pictured, but also visited were the GE Hydro-Electric Dam in Corinth which was a study in how the river was harnessed in the 1930s and a trip to the Albany Institute of History and Art to view Hudson River Paintings.

Fort William Henry, Lake George, NY



Pictures by Andrew LaSane



Continued from page 3

THE SENIORS

fall she is off to Suffolk University graduate school where she will study Criminal Justice. At Skidmore, Krista has been busy in Women's Field Hockey, Lacrosse (06/07), and has been a member of the Search Committee to hire a Dean of



Student Affairs. True to both her AM and GO majors, Krista spent the spring of her Junior year at the American University's Washington Semester Program. Krista says she became an American Studies major because "I've always loved American history and culture and the department allowed me to ask the bigger questions of 'why.' There is also something to be said about a smaller department — the Senior Seminar created a unique group dynamic that cannot be found in a lecture hall. Her advice to current and future AM majors is to "go abroad and study in a program or subject that is not offered at Skidmore." Krista spends spare time snowboarding and enjoys summering on Lake Winnepesaukee.

Jordan Klein, Hartford, CT (Minor)

Jordan's Self-Determined Major in Museum Studies seems a nice mix with an American Studies mi-



nor. She says she took on the AM minor because she "loved the way that American Studies allows you to explore so many parts of culture. It takes into account so many important aspects of society and acknowledges their inter-relationships in both history and contemporary dynamics. I also personally saw a lot of important correlations

between American Studies and the way I tried to approach my major." Jordan says possibly she will stay in Saratoga for the summer to work at the Tang, and maybe work in a road trip as well. She has applied "to all sorts of museum positions" and is interested in "exhibition design, curatorial work, and museum graphics." She hopes to work for a couple of years to hone her museum skills and interests before heading to grad school. Jordan has been an active member of Skidmore Crew all four years at Skidmore. She also ran the Student Art in the Library program during her senior year, as well as being a member of academic council. She likes reading, cooking, blogs, and cooking things from cooking blogs. She advises non-senior majors to "1. Take as many classes with Professor Pfitzer as possible; 2. Major... don't minor; 3. Snacks." (A possible reference to Senior Seminar or the 60s course!)

Andrew LaSane, Charleston, SC (Major)

After graduation, Andrew plans to spend a month or so at home before returning to Skidmore to work for the Pre College Program



for the third year in a row. And then Andrew is off to New York City for graduate school. He has been accepted in the Master program at NYU and the New School for General Studies and at this time plans to accept the NYU invite. Besides academic pursuits, Andrew's time at Skidmore has been filled by serving on the UJIMA Executive Board (3 yrs.); as a member of RAC (Random Acts of Craft), RAICES, Project Unity, as President of the Hip Hop Alliance, and as one of the five original Skidmore representatives for the Black and Latino Male CHAS conference. He has also DJ'ed on WSPN for three years. In the little bit of free time he has left, Andrew loves to draw, walk around campus blaring music from his laptop, hang out with his friends, and occasionally destroy the AM professors in bowling matches! Andrew became an AM major because it "was the only discipline that I felt myself in its curriculum and the only one that I felt my ideas and contributions

to discussions were more important than memorizing and regurgitating theories and the ideas of others." He feels future AM majors and minors shouldn't "choose your courses based on ease or reputation. Take courses that challenge, confuse, inspire, and intrigue you."

Elena Milius, Boston, MA (Major)

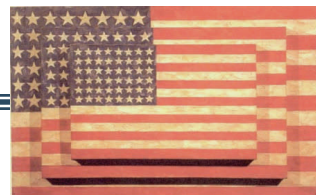
The Dante Award

Elena, whose minor is Italian, was busy with a lot more than academics at Skidmore. She "spent a good deal of my time hanging out in OSDP at Project Unity. When I wasn't in the ICC, you could find me falling out of my flip flops, enter-



taining Skidmore hopefuls, and checking rowdy parents across Case Green. If I wasn't walking backwards, then I was probably running around the intramural gym playing soccer. But if you couldn't find me there, then I was most likely in Tisch 303 taking copious notes or learning how to be a professional person." She adds, if you haven't seen her recently, "it is simply because I live in the Department and don't know my way home anymore." Elena will spend some of her summer getting her vitamin D on, enjoying frappes, and learning how to make crab cakes. For future plans, she says she would like "to take a shot at teaching at the high school level so I can ground myself again and also enjoy the privilege of being the teacher and the student. I then will dive back into academia and attend graduate school either in the South or Northeast (which probably means I will end up in the Southwest)." Elena's advises under classmates in American Studies to recognize "there is a divide between expectation and reality — build a bridge and connect it!" She choose American Studies as her major when she "wandered in to a class with Andrew," and "was enticed because we go bowling, but eventually I stayed because I learned this is where I belong." Extracurricularly, Elena says "If I could write and eat all day then I would do just that (sometimes I do)."

Continued on page 13
(See The Seniors)



Continued from page 2

Abroad Experiences

prawns here, and, contrary to what "Crocodile" Dundee would have its predominately American audience believe, the nation is one of the most urbanized in the world.

There is, however, an incredible amount of purely Aussie charm about its cities and suburbs, and from an American Studies perspective, many interesting cultural minutiae to be



studied.

There are many parallels to be drawn between Australia and America, most obvious of which is the fact that they are both new worlds, settled by Europeans and purged of indigenous populations relatively recently. The two also have very similar cultural narratives revolving around the settlement of their vast frontiers. They do, however, greatly differ in certain respects. Americans fought a war of independence to rid itself of the crown, while Australia voted by referendum to retain commonwealth status as late as the 1990s.

Despite Australia's obvious cultural inheritances from the British, such as cheeky accents, today the nation finds itself more culturally aligned with America. This is partly due to the two countries' official policy of "mate-ship" as outlined in the ANZUS Treaty, but more due to American cultural domination, observed in the ubiquitous McDonald's and 7-11s and in the all-American television programming. However, Australia has managed to maintain its own culture in significant ways.

I've heard a saying here that America's dream is Australia's reality, and in one respect that appears to be true. Australian society is rooted in the Aussies' "fair go" philosophy, which states that everyman ought to have just that. Due to this founding principle, the minimum wage is around 15 dollars an hour, and, consequently, the prospect of owning a home and a car is a reality rather than a dream.

Anyway, enough about my love affair with this incredible country. I still love the good ole U S of A, and I can't wait to get back to

Skidmore next fall. I hope you've all had a great semester. Take comfort in the fact that you've actually been able to read and get work done, free of the relentless temptation to hit the beach that plagues my every waking moment.

Elizabeth "Leigh" Franke '11

Washington Semester and Skidmore in Paris

The semester in Paris has been really fun so far and definitely different than I expected. I've been taking art, art history, French and dance but my favorite class would probably be a history and politics of France class that is particularly interesting since I spent last semester in Washington. I didn't think the two semesters away from Skidmore really had anything to do with each other, but comparing and seeing how different two cities can be in terms of values and culture is very interesting, especially coming from a city that is built around American politics to a city where it is très chic to criticize them. I've gotten to know the city pretty well by now and I can see why so many people want to come here. There are so many cool little neighborhoods and parks and so many good things to eat. My favorite area is the Marais, the Jewish district, where you can find a combination of falafel restaurants, Jewish patisseries, contemporary art galleries, fancy stores and lots of old historic houses. I'm about to head out on spring break to Spain and Morocco, which I am very excited about. I'm trying to think of all the things I want to do and see and eat in Paris before I leave in a few weeks, but am also very happy to come back to Skidmore (finally) for the summer and senior year.

Mary Weiss '11



I'm abroad in Copenhagen and it's absolutely wonderful! Currently I'm on spring break on a ski trip to Val Thorens, France in the Alps. It's organized by DIS, my program, and we're here for a week. I'm having the time of my life snowboarding in powder, sunshine, and blue skies. Denmark is slowly getting nicer too. We can actually see some sun these days.



I've gotten to tour western Denmark, Malmö (Sweden), Dresden, Weimar, and Berlin (Germany), Prague, Geneva, and France. In terms of American Studies, Danes are different than Americans in that they embrace a more homogeneous mindset versus Americans' diverse, melting pot mentality. Denmark is almost like a tribe and people are insular and seem cold at first but are friendly, warm and helpful when you break the proverbial ice. For the most part people are complimentary of America and envy the "bigness" of our country -- big cars, homes, parties/what they see on MTV, etc.



Elise Fariello '11

I've been studying English Literature, my second major, over here in London at University College. Mahatma Gandhi and Alexander Graham Bell are some of its alumni! London is a great city to study in; there are countless historical and cultural landmarks all around. I live right around the corner from one of Charles Dickens's houses and have frequented a pub he used to go to. London is also great because of its proximity to other places. I've already been to Italy and just got back from Croatia, both of which were beautiful. I also have plans to go to Berlin and Dublin.



It has been both strange and fascinating to get outsiders' opinions of American culture. From talking to local Londoners I have discovered how differently American culture is viewed over here. It has been both a humbling and enlightening experience that I would suggest for any American Studies major looking to obtain new and unique opinions on American culture and also learn more about other cultures and ways of life.

Continued on page 11
(See **Abroad Experiences**)

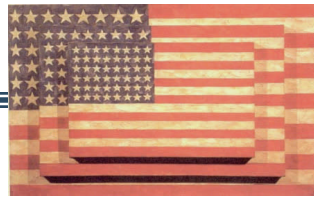
As much as I have cherished my time in London, I cannot wait to return to Skidmore next year and apply my new experiences to my work there. I hope that the department and everyone in it is having a great semester!

Brooke Williams '11

London is an incredibly diverse, welcoming city, and I quickly fell in love with it. As a major "museum person" who hopes to work in one someday, I'm absolutely in heaven here—London is home to the British Museum and the British Library, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the National Gallery, the National Portrait Gallery, and so many more. And there is more to do here, from shopping at the eclectic vintage markets in Camden to enjoying a pint of Guinness at the St. Patrick's Day festival in Trafalgar Square. London is very much a student-friendly city, and I could not have imagined a more rewarding, engaging abroad experience than this one.

Continued from page 2
Thesis—Solomon

York. I met with residents from the Enclave, Prestwick Chase's wing for residents who cannot live independently. Each week we gathered as a group and embarked on a musical journey through the past and the present. I encouraged residents to construct "musical memoirs"—stories from their pasts that they described first musically and then anecdotally. I asked one primary question: Why is music such a powerful tool for memory? I explored answers to that question in various forms, primarily in reference to the ways in which people tell their stories through music, as individuals, group members, and as Americans. I thought about how we use music to create and to cross cultural boundaries, and to further understand one creative means through which we become and express ourselves. The songs we sang and listened to were not only about the specific individual's past, they also helped me to understand episodes of history through music. Each week with my group was a gift, for me and for them. We sang together, we shared together, and we remembered together.



Picturing the Past: Illustrated Histories and the American Imagination, 1840-1900

In March 2008, Greg Pfitzer's newest book (titled above) was released by the University of Massachusetts Press. In 2009, Pfitzer spent many hours in collaboration with CLIO, a website which seeks to illustrate the unique role of visual images in American history, bringing his book to life as an "online exhibit." CLIO sees "visualizing history as a process of creating images that record or interpret past events or accounts of past events. An undertaking that forges ties between historians,

filmmakers, web designers, and new media producers in their efforts to produce original, credible, and engaging history" (taken from CLIO website). The aim of CLIO is to promote visual literacy by exploring the variety of ways that images enhance our understanding of the past and challenges us to hone our interpretative skills. To see Pfitzer's book online and the online exhibit, [click here](http://www.cliohistory.org/visualizingamerica/picturingpast/) (<http://www.cliohistory.org/visualizingamerica/picturingpast/>).

Notes



News



Notes



News



Notes

Lauren Dougherty Roberts '04 put her passion to work in her new (9/09) position as Saratoga County's Historian.



Bryn Varley Hollenbeck '00 (who taught in the American Studies Department 2008-09) and husband, Corey, were blessed with their first child, Juliet Elizabeth Varley Hollenbeck on September 8, 2009.



Marcy Bouley Eckel '96 and husband Richard's first child, Sydney Farrar Eckel, was born on December 26, 2008 (almost two now). Their second and third children (yes, that's twins!) are due to make their appearance sometime in July.



Alexis Reynolds '03 sent us a Christmas card saying that "Life in Austin continues to go well. The job is demanding but very rewarding when the federal regulations are actually adhered to and a road avoids historic property!"

Joshua Lauren '07 has been working at Summer Search in San Fran-

cisco since last July and says "I am really enjoying it. I'm a mentor and program coordinator and I work primarily with low-income, higher achieving, immigrant high school students in the Bay Area. Although I do miss some things about Baltimore and the East Coast I am settling in nicely here in San Francisco."

Lucy Waldrop '01 says "I am working for a history professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee on a potential popular culture textbook. At Marquette Archives I have an internship. Right now I live in Milwaukee (I've been in WI for over 5 years now) and I'm in grad school. Things are moving along."

Katie Morris '08 writes "things are going really well for me. I love teaching the second grade, my class this year is great, and I love the school where I'm teaching. I just moved into a new apartment in Philadelphia with a friend of mine from high school. So all and all things are really great, and now I'm hoping to go to grad school in California next year."

James White '08 landed a full-time job last August at [Books of Wonder in New York](http://www.books-of-wonder.com/), NY, as its in-house copywriter for its marketing department. "I do like NYC but I fear I will always be a bit of a country boy." James and **Mike Matias '08** (who is working on a Masters Program in American Studies at NYU) are sharing an apartment in Astoria, Queens.

Megan Williams '04 successfully defended her dissertation prospectus in October 2008 and applied for several 2009-2010 fellowships. She participated in roundtables, completed a graduate certificate, published journal articles and essays, and has been teaching. On a personal note, Megan and husband Ric are about to celebrate their third wedding anniversary this month.

andré carrington who taught in the American Studies department as a New York University Minority Fellow from Fall 2007 through Spring 2009, successfully defended his dissertation and is now a doctor of philosophy. He's teaching in the Liberal Studies Program at NYU where his title is Master Teacher. Sounds very Zen-like

Laura Russak '00 last April moved outside of Boston and is living in Watertown, MA with her cat Rascal (also a Skidmore alumni). "I received my Masters as a Reading Specialist from Boston University and I have been teaching 8th grade reading in Waltham, MA for the last six years. To this day, I still discuss with my students the unique experiences I had as an American Studies major and the impact that had upon my understanding of our country and myself."

FALL 2010 COURSE OFFERING

Why study America?
Here's 50 good reasons:**AM 103-1, Intro to American Studies**
TuTh, 12:40-2:00, TLC 302 (Inst. TBD)

Introduction to the interdisciplinary study of American culture, past and present. Emphasizes reading critically, thinking historically, practicing interdisciplinarity, and acknowledging diversity. Students will analyze and synthesize multiple kinds of primary sources (such as fiction, film, music, art) and disciplinary perspectives (sociology, economics, media criticism) to appreciate better the complexity of American life and culture. (Fulfills social science requirement.) W. Grady-Willis, M. Lynn, D. Nathan, G. Pfitzer, J. Woodfork

**AM 103W-1, Intro: Myth/Symbol in America, MWF, 10:10-11:05, TLC 307 (Pfitzer)**

This course considers the ways in which Americans have attempted to make sense of centuries of national experience through myths and symbols that represent allegorically the fundamental belief systems of the culture. It focuses on the "life cycle" of national fables: their birth from the womb of cultural necessity; their maturity and adaptation in the face of changing cultural conditions; and their decline and death as they outlive their usefulness. Specific typologies studied include frontiersmen and women, gangsters, scientists, aviators, and more. The course also treats the concepts and interpretations of the "myth and symbol" school, especially "classic" works by American Studies scholars on the metaphorical significance of the virgin landscape, the new Adam, and the machine in the garden.



"Much as they may deplore the fact, historians have no monopoly on the past and no franchise as its privileged interpreters to the public."
—C. Vann Woodward, historian

AM 233, American Past in Film
TuTh, 9:40-11:00, TLC 303 (Nathan)

Films powerfully influence how many people understand the past. "For many," writes historian Mike Wallace, "because cinematic modes of perception seem so real, moviepast is the past." This course critiques how Hollywood filmmakers have represented American history. It examines Hollywood 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. The intent of the course is *not* to critique films as straightforward history or to assess their accuracy and reliability. After all, most feature films do not make bold "truth" claims about their subjects; they are usually content to remain loosely—sometimes very loosely—connected to their historical referents. Moreover, it would be foolish to expect Hollywood to provide moviegoers with historical truth when myth and fantasy are so much more profitable. Rather, the course encourages students to engage in a dialogue between the past and the present, and to consider the ways in which one particularly vibrant form of popular culture informs (and sometimes obfuscates and subverts) historical understanding.

**AM 236, Jazz: A Multicultural Expression, MW, 5:10-6:30 (Rosengarten)**

Explores the history of jazz music, often referred to as the only truly American art form, focusing in particular on the rich interaction among many diverse cultures, classes, ethnicities and geographically distant peoples which produced the emergence of jazz in the first decade of the twentieth century. Examines the combinations of African, African-American, European, Latin-American and American folk influences that emerged in different eras to produce what is now considered to be "American Classical Music." Students will develop the ability to listen effectively and deeply and understand what they hear in the context of style and history, becoming familiar with the most important jazz creations, and understanding how they relate to American culture and history.

**AM 260-1, AM Bestsellers & Popular Culture, MW, 2:30-3:50, TLC 305 (Casey)**

From Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1851-52) to Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* (2003), American bestsellers have much to tell us about the social, political, and commercial

preoccupations of our society. In this course, we will read examples of popular American novels from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a means of studying both the publishing industry and popular culture. In addition to reading the novels themselves, we will consider illustrations and critical receptions, and watch one or two related films. Supplementary readings will focus on such topics as bestseller lists, "middlebrow" genres (including the romance and the western), and the role of the Book-of-the-Month Club. Students can expect to write several short papers and take mid-term and final exams.

**AM 260-2, Childhood in America, WF, 10:10-11:30, TLC 301 (Lynn)**

An interdisciplinary exploration of American culture from 1620-2010, focusing on the experiences and roles of American children. Beginning with Native American patterns, the class will explore Puritan notions of childish original sin, the increasing independence of young Americans at the time of the Revolution, the early Victorian ideas of children's innocence, class and childhood in the nineteenth century, and children's lives during and after plantation slavery. In the twentieth century we will consider the work of psychologists and education reformers such as John Dewey, John B. Watson, Sigmund Freud, Anna Freud, and Benjamin Spock, as well as emphasizing the importance of considering race, gender, class, and ethnicity in analyzing childhood. Our overall strategy will be to study American culture historically, and through fiction, film, and art by analyzing the lives of children, their experiences, and the changing ideas and policies which have defined American childhood.

**AM 260J, Diversity in the US**
TuTh, 2:10-3:30 (Inst. TBD)

An examination of the ways in which people in the United States try to reconcile the realities of cultural difference with preconceived notions of a unified America and American identity. Students will learn about the United States as a complex, heterogeneous society that has been profoundly shaped by both the connections and conflict implicit in its multicultural heritage. Students will also address interrelationships and tensions that character-

ize a culturally diverse democracy by examining how accepted cultural traditions intersect with contested themes such as race the family, adoption, gender, sexuality, and education.

**AM 342, Black Feminist thoughts**
WF, 12:20-1:40, TLC 308 (Grady-Willis)

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

**AM 360B, The 1950s**
TuTh, 11:10-12:30 (Lynn)

An interdisciplinary analysis of the decade of the 1950s in America. Using a wide variety of primary and secondary sources, including fiction, film, music, biography, autobiography, poetry, sociology, drama, and social criticism, the course explores the distinctive culture of this decade. It focuses on the way different groups of Americans experienced the period, studying conformity and consumerism, the beatniks, rock and roll, and the silent generation, as well as the roots of the protest movements and the counterculture of the 1960s.

**AM 374 Senior Seminar**
G. Pfitzer, MW, 4-5:30

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

SPRING 2010

NEWSLETTER

Continued from page 9
The Seniors

**Kathleen (Keke) Mullins, St. Louis, MO
(Major)**

Keke plans to spend her summer traveling abroad and job hunting. She intends to take a year off to work before attending graduate school for broadcast journalism. At Skidmore, Keke was a member of the Film Appreciation Troupe (07-10) and

In -



tramural Softball "Got Runs?" (F09). In free time she enjoys dancing, writing, traveling, and listening to music. Keke became a major because she "loved the aspect of cultural study while still being able to exercise and expand my writing skills." Her advice to future and current AM majors and minors is to "enjoy it while it lasts and get as much as you can out of the experience."

**Emma Newcombe, Longmeadow, MA
(Major)**

**Phi Beta Kappa
Honors Forum**

Periclean Scholar Award

The Sally Chapman Thompson '48 Prize in Literature

Emma not only has a minor in Spanish, but she also has a second major in English! Over the summer she plans to work for a summer camp called Overland. She will be working for their



writing program "teaching 7-9th graders how to improve their writing in the morning, and then I'll lead hiking/biking/rafting trips in the afternoon." After Overland, Emma will be "either working as a tutor for MATCH, an inner city high school in Boston, or possibly working with a research team for *Governing* magazine in Washington, D.C.," where she would be researching Obama's policies, etc.). In the next year or two she would like to go to graduate school, likely in American Studies. Emma has been an active member of *Folio* (06-07) and participated in *Saratoga Reads!* (06-07). Her favorite activities include hiking, traveling, reading, and she is an avid foosball player. She became an AM major after taking Professor Lynn's class "New England Begins" in her sophomore year. "I was hooked," she says. "I immediately fell in love with the interdisciplinary aspect of American Studies — I love history and literature, and got both of them in all of my courses. I felt an immediate bond with the professors and the other majors because of the small size of the department. I will never forget my experience as an American Studies major!" She says future and current AM majors should recognize that "American Studies offers such a variety of courses — don't be afraid to try something new or different — some of the courses you know the least about can be the most exciting!"

Emilie Shea, Cohasset, MA (Minor)



Emilie is an Inter-

national Affairs major who spent her freshman year in the London program. Over the summer she plans to move to Jackson, Wyoming, but has no plans beyond that at this time. Emilie has been involved in the International Affairs Club and the Skidmore Ski team and simply loves being outside. She says she became a minor because she "loves the department," and suggests to future AM majors and minors to "take a class with Mary Lynn!"

Claire Solomon, Merion, PA (Major)

**Phi Beta Kappa
Honors Forum**

**Joanna Schneider Zangrando Fund
American Studies Faculty Award**

Candace Carlucci Award

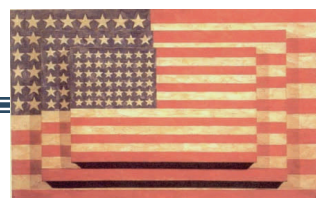
**Katherine Scranton Rozendaal Citizenship
Award**

SGA Senior Leader Award



Claire, who minors in English, says her summer plans "are really 'beyond my summer plans.'" Shortly after graduation she will drive to Jackson, MS, to begin a two year Education Fellowship at the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life. "Essentially I will spend the next twenty-four months driving to synagogues all across the south to lead services, teach religious school, create community and cultural programs, meet interesting people, and eat a lot of crawfish and/or barbeque." Claire has spent the last four years involved in SGA, programming and leading services for Hillel (Skidmore's foundation for Jewish Campus Life), and singing with the Skidmore Community Chorus (though she says "probably not enough"). Claire enjoys "laughing, singing, talking, and sitting in the window nooks at the library—but probably not at the same time." She says "It's Professor Nathan's fault," she became an AM major. "He taught my first-year seminar, American Memories, which introduced me to the wide and wonderful world of American Studies." Claire's suggestions to future AM majors and minors includes a list: "1. There really should be a bench by the windows on the hallowed third floor of Tisch—you should probably make that happen; 2. Take advantage of office hours and open doors (and even closed doors if you knock), our professors are phenomenal; 3. Utilize our community both on campus and off; I did my senior thesis with a group of older adults at a nursing facility off campus, and it was one of the best deci-

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The Faculty

Sixties in the spring. As these courses suggest, I ranged widely in a temporal sense, having taught about the “lost colony” of Roanoke in the sixteenth century and the politics of reform in Roanoke, Virginia in the twenty-first (they are not the same place, by the way). The Civil War course has been especially rewarding because it is a new offering that considers how Americans have remembered and commemorated the Civil War from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. Drawing on depictions of the war in fiction, film, popular history, memorial sites, music, television and re-enactors’ conventions among other cultural sources, it focuses on how memory and history have interacted in the popular imagination to shape the cultural legacy of the conflict. I supervised some wonderful senior projects (featured in a notebook in the department office, if you are interested) and led some adventure-some field trips to Hudson River venues (see website pictures of cannons firing at Fort William Henry in Lake George). My Sixties students will be celebrating the decade during a “Happening” at my house in the next few weeks (They are required to appear in Sixties garb, including “flowers in their hair.”)

I’ve had some time to research and write (though not much). I did some work with webpage development this year, having collaborated on an Internet site (“Visualizing History: Picturing the Past”) with a not-for-profit educational company called CLIO (see www.cliohistory.org). I am currently at work on a book, tentatively titled *History Repeating Itself: Consensus and Continuity in Popular Historical Literature for Children*. It deals primarily with nineteenth- and twentieth-century popular historical literature produced for school-age children and addresses the questions of when and how young readers best absorb lessons of the past. I trace the rise and expansion of a genre of juvenile historical literature from the early nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, focusing especially on how the authors of popular texts originated and then vigorously defended a “master narrative” of the American past for school-age children. In the book, I analyze dozens of these volumes, noting especially their consistencies across decades. Like-minded authors in this genre borrowed (and sometimes stole) from each other to produce texts that were remarkably similar in subject matter, narrative voice, historical tone, and pictorial effect. It is my thesis that this consistency of approach reveals a psychological aversion to change on the part of popular authors and readers and a resistance to the idea of a contested and revised past, especially when it pertains to educating children. I also explore the original educational context in which these works were created and investigate the recent efforts of various contemporary publishers to reissue

such works for home school markets. I identify the positive (but mainly negative) aspects of these recycling projects, challenging their suitability for use among homeschooled children today.

I look forward to the summer when I hope to travel to Hattiesburg, Mississippi to conduct research at the De Grummond Archives of Children’s Literature as well as at the Huntington Library in California and the State Archives in Indianapolis, Indiana. Thanks everyone for a great year. Congratulations, majors and minors, for pummeling the American Studies faculty at bowling this year. We’ll miss you, seniors. I bequeath to you our favorite exclamation from Senior Seminar: “Yipe!” Most of all, we’ll miss Nancy, who retires this spring after three decades of service to the Department. How will we survive (to say nothing of these newsletters) without you?

Daniel A. Nathan

Dan Nathan had yet another interesting, productive year. He served as the Chair of the Department, which went relatively smoothly, thanks to everyone’s help, patience, and good cheer, especially Nancy’s, and to the steady mentoring of his senior colleagues. Among his four courses, he taught Introduction to American Studies (AM 103), which once again used basketball to examine and critique American cultural values and to introduce students to an American Studies sensibility. He also taught Methods and Approaches (AM 221), this time solo, and led a class field trip to the New Skete religious communities in Cambridge, New York. In the fall, he attended the American Studies Association annual meeting in D.C. and the Great Lakes Colleges Association Faculty Development Workshop in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Soon thereafter, his review of the HBO documentary *Thrilla in Manilla* appeared in the *Journal of American History*. In February, at Athletic Council’s behest, he led a pedagogy session about intercollegiate sport and academics. A month later, he presented a paper at the Middle Atlantic American Studies Association Conference in Philadelphia. In April, he gave a lecture to the Skidmore Club of Boston titled, “‘What the hell’s the matter with a society that offers a *football coach* a million dollars?’: Re-thinking the Role and Value of Intercollegiate Athletics.” Also this spring, he published a chapter in David K. Wiggins and R. Pierre Rodgers’s *Rivals: Legendary Matchups That Made Sports History* (University of Arkansas Press) and two essays: “The Making of a Fan,” in *NINE: A Journal of Baseball History and Culture*, and “Painting Pride and Prejudice: Kadir Nelson’s *We Are The Ship: The Story of Negro League Baseball*,” in *Black Ball: A Negro Leagues Journal*. Later this spring, Nathan is giving a paper at the North American Society for Sport History (NASSH) conference in Lake Buena Vista, Florida. Speaking of NASSH, with Nancy’s invaluable help and technological wizardry, Nathan, as Chair of NASSH’s Publications Board, developed and launched the *Journal of Sport History*’s web page: see <http://www.journalofsporthistory.org/>. As usual, his

summer plans include reading, writing, and relaxing with his family, at home and in the Berkshires.

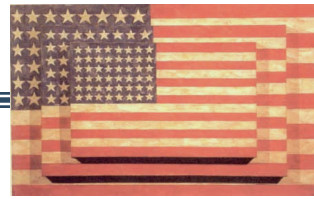
Mary C. Lynn

This course has been a disaster!

I’ve always been intrigued by stories of disasters and catastrophes. I don’t actually remember Pearl Harbor but I’m fascinated by those who do. This year’s H1N1 influenza virus encouraged me to read about the 1918 pandemic, which killed more American soldiers than did World War I. Reading Laurie King’s new detective novel which places her characters in post-earthquake California to solve a mystery sent me right back to the library to read more books about the San Francisco earthquake and fire. Epidemics, earthquakes, fires, hurricanes, and other catastrophic events, whether caused by humans, nature, or a combination of the two, seem to me to be unusual windows through which we can gain new understanding into the culture of the past. So when I was asked to offer a new writing intensive Introduction to American Studies course I decided it would be called Natural and Unnatural Disasters, and that it would explore changing attitudes toward such events in America.

Happily, a lively bunch of students, mostly of the class of 2013, shared my fascination and signed up for the class. I decided we would begin with some small earthquakes which struck Puritan New England in the 17th and 18th centuries (if you know me you know how the Puritans fascinate me too) and then take up the devastating smallpox epidemic which nearly lost Americans the Revolutionary War. We continued on to study the Chicago Fire (Mrs. O’Leary’s cow may well have been innocent) the Charleston earthquake of 1886 and the light it shed on race issues in that era, and then plunged into the twentieth century. Of course we had to explore the Galveston hurricane of 1900, probably the most lethal natural disaster in our history, the San Francisco quake and subsequent fire, (geoscientist and Lubin professor Amy Frappier visited the class to teach us all about plate tectonics and the causes of earthquakes) as well as a major forest fire which affected six states in 1910. (Skidmore alum Dan Berheide, who worked for the U.S. Forest Service for several summers as a sawyer, visited the class to discuss his experience with forest fires.) Undiscouraged by all these rather terrifying events, we also explored the 1918 influenza pandemic, the great Boston molasses flood of 1919 (no kidding!), the enormous Mississippi flood of 1927, the 1938 New England hurricane, and, of course, Hurri-

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The Seniors

sions I have ever made."



**Gemma Striker,
Tarrytown,
NY (Major)**

Gemma, a dance minor, has applied to a few internships and jobs for the summer and is waiting for responses. She plans on going "to graduate school for either Public Health, Social Work, or Public Policy in the near future after gaining some work experience in public health and grassroots advocacy." She loves dance, yoga, walks, listening to music, drawing and doodling, and relaxing with her friends. She has been the Head Peer Advocate for the Center for Sex and Gender Relations since her sophomore year. She also has been a member of Skidmore Nutrition Action Council and was Vice President her sophomore year. Gemma is a member of Terpsichore, a student dance group on campus, and the Yoga Club. She became an major when she "was introduced to American Studies through an amazing class, AIDS and the Public Sphere, with Richard Kim (former New York Minority Fellow). I then continued to explore American Studies taking classes with Professors Lynn and Woodfork. I liked American Studies because it allowed me to explore American culture and society and understand how American social structure and history affected different social identities." Gemma urges future majors and minors to "explore your options for American Studies beyond the courses offered in the department. These courses can count toward your 'American Subject courses.' I feel that I gained an interesting perspective learning about American through different academic lenses and through other students who weren't necessarily in the department. Also, I agree with Claire. We need a bench in the Tisch hallway!"

Nancy Osberg-
Otrembiak, Editor

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The Faculty

cane Katrina, which so devastated New Orleans, helped along by human error.

Before the class met for the first time, we began to learn of the apparent omnipresence of disasters in the world, as the earthquake devastated Haiti. Floods submerged part of Indonesia, unusually cold weather froze livestock in many parts of China, mudslides killed dozens of Brazilians, and grassfires destroyed many homes in rural Australia. The West Virginia coalmine tragedy and the Gulf of Mexico oil drilling rig explosion and possible oiling of the coastline of five states closed the semester. Periodically through the course I had to bring statistics to class to show that no, 2010 was not an unusual year for natural and unnatural disasters, it was just that we were unusually sensitized to the subject we happened to be studying.

Our main text this spring was Kevin Rozario's *The Culture of Calamity: Disaster and the Making of Modern America* (University of Chicago Press, 2007), in case any of you share my fascination with catastrophic events and would like to read further. Rozario, who teaches American Studies at Smith College, argues persuasively that Americans have long had a kind of "psychological addiction" to depictions and tales of disaster and that further, our economic and political systems depend in part on the threat of calamity for their authority. Rozario's book explores the changing way Americans have imagined and managed disasters from the 17th century to the 21st pausing along the way to visit turn of the century Coney Island, with its depictions of the Galveston hurricane, the Johnstown flood, and the volcanic eruption of Mount Pelee which destroyed much of Martinique in 1902. Early 20th century Americans didn't have Bruce Willis movies or end of the world films, but they had lots of opportunities to frighten themselves in the relative safety of an amusement park.

I'm already planning the catastrophes we can study in the next iteration of AM103—those which have already led to a scholarly analysis are most eligible, in case you'd like to send me suggestions.

Winston Grady-Willis

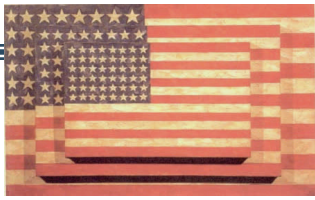
This academic year has been especially rewarding in the classroom. Students in Black Feminist Thoughts (AM 342) took the seminar to new heights in the fall. Everyone embraced the bedrock notion of intersectionality seen in Black feminisms throughout the semester. The seminar really benefitted from a synergy generated by the mix of American Studies majors and Gender Studies majors. Civil Rights: Twentieth Century U.S. (AM 260A) provided students with an opportunity to not only study African American freedom struggles, but also, the contemporary Chicano/a and Native American movements. Although some progress was made this semester, I am still trying to incorporate a more substantive discussion of LGBTQ activist

struggles as well. I taught U.S. Regional Culture: The South (AM 250C) for the first time this semester, attempting to draw students to an understanding of the South that moves beyond myth. We began with the early interplay of indigenous, African and European cultures and ended with the debate over the Confederate battle flag. What a challenge!

March was certainly a special month outside the classroom. I had an opportunity to be on a panel with award-winning Williams College historian Leslie Brown sponsored by our department, "Rethinking Southern History: A Panel on the Intersections of Race, Class, Gender, and Urban Studies." Professor Brown and I had a rare chance to talk about our respective book projects, and to reiterate the specific significance of Black women as agents of change locally and regionally, both as established figures and in the grassroots. I also had the opportunity to return to Atlanta as keynote speaker for the fiftieth anniversary celebration of the Atlanta Student Movement, sponsored by the Atlanta History Center. Although the college sit-in movement to protest segregation in the South began in Greensboro, North Carolina, the most organized (and arguably longest in duration) protests took place in Atlanta between 1960-1964. The highlight of the evening was a panel featuring former student activists. These freedom fighters made a point of telling current undergraduates that there is much unfinished business in terms of these human rights struggles, particularly regarding education and the growth of the prison industrial complex.

Janet G. Casey

Professor Casey came off a one-year leave in the Fall of 2009 and has had a busy re-entry year. She has published articles recently in *Radical Teacher* and in a volume of centennial essays on *The Grapes of Wrath*, and she has been working on two other pieces—one on teaching middlebrow texts and one on the politics of race, gender, and populism in the creation of a 1920s monument to Pioneer Women. She also presented papers at the Middlebrow Cultures Conference in Glasgow, Scotland and at the Conference of the Society for the Study of American Women Writers in Philadelphia. On the teaching side, she again offered *Magazines and Modernity*, which resulted in some top-notch archival work by students, and taught a range of courses in the English Department. This summer she is looking forward to a three-week trip to Alaska with her husband and their two teenagers.



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CONGRATULATIONS

Class of 2010

