Greetings American Studies Folks:

I’m writing in my capacity as interim chair of the Department of American Studies to give you a brief summary of the 2012-2013 academic year.

The interim portion of my title reflects that fact that our real chair, Dan Nathan, was on a well-deserved sabbatical leave this year. One might think that having a year away from classes and service work would offer Professor Nathan the chance to put his feet up a bit, but, in fact, he has been very busy and very productive over the last nine months, delivering papers or serving as a panelist at conferences in such far-away places as Halifax, Nova Scotia; Tempe, Arizona; San Juan, Puerto Rico; and Austin, Texas. He was also elected president of the North American Society for Sport History (NASSH), a national honor that carries with it the responsibility of chairing the national convention. Returning to the chair’s desk will likely seem a break for the peripatetic Nathan. I will be on a full-year sabbatical for the 2013-2014 academic year, and I can assure you that I plan to put my feet up a bit more than Dan did, as I am likely to have some knee replacement surgery at some point during that period.

Most years the chair reports on a wide-range of activities and speakers that have enlivened our academic experience, and this year is no exception. We began the fall semester with a visit from Lisa Alexander of the Africana Studies Department of Wayne State University who delivered a lecture on “The State of Race and Ethnicity in Major League Baseball: A View from the Cheap Seats.” Former Skidmore student Jocelyn Arem spoke to our majors and minors about The Caffe Lena Project, an oral history and photographic archive designed to commemorate America’s “oldest continuously operating folk coffeehouse.” A few of those in the audience were interested enough in the project to arrange for American Studies internships in the following spring and summer terms. Another recent American Studies graduate, Lauren Roberts of the Saratoga County Historian’s office, discussed her experiences as a re-enactor of 18th century American colonial life, detailing for students (while in full period costume) what motivates people to participate in ritualistic re-enactments of past events.

The Department of American Studies was also involved in other speaking engagements across the campus. Two American Studies students, Sara Vosberg (‘14) and Evan Krasner (‘13) delivered papers at the bi-annual Kuroda Seminar held on campus. Professor Krefting gave the introductory remarks for the Student Speaker’s Bureau Annual Lecturer, Gloria Steinem, to a packed house in Zankel Auditorium. Beck was also selected to give the commencement address this May. The Department co-sponsored various lectureships, including those on Lincoln, Rap music and Service Learning.

Much of our time this year was devoted to the classroom, which is as it should be, of course. This spring we welcomed Visiting Assistant Professor Megan Williams back to campus. Megan was a 2004 graduate of our very own American Studies program and then went on to earn a Ph. D. in American Studies at the University of Kansas. She taught courses on The Wizard of Oz, The American Past in Film and World War II and in subsequent semesters (Megan will be with us for the next two years) she expects to offer courses on Jazz, Material Culture, and Black-Jewish Studies. Professor Krefting offered a new course this year on Post-Apocalyptic Film and Literature, while Len Slade of the University of Albany reprised two courses on the African American (continued on page 4)
Saratoga Battlefield  Scribner Seminar Field Trip

The Saratoga Battlefield Fieldtrip

I don't know what my plans are for next year, but I sure did love being an American Studies major. The first thing that drew me into the American Studies major were the classes that intellectualized subjects that I did not think were appropriate for academics. For example, my first class in the American Studies department was Intro to American Studies: Basketball. What I took from all my American Studies classes was an enhanced ability for research, writing, and thinking about new and exciting subjects in different ways. Thank you - Jared Seigal (Major)

Professor Pfiter took his fall senior seminar class to visit The Saratoga Battlefield on a rainy fall October day. Despite the weather everyone had a great time!

The Seniors

Honorable Mention

Evan Krasner was awarded the American Studies Faculty Award. This is awarded to a graduating senior for academic excellence and growth in the major.

Kali A. Block-Steele was awarded departmental honors in American Studies. Congratulations Kali!
As a student who is passionate about American history and environmental studies, American studies served as the perfect outlet for my interdisciplinary interests. For my Senior Thesis in Professor Pfitzer’s section of Senior Seminar (AM-374) I wrote about John James Audubon, a nineteenth-century American naturalist best known for his paintings of North American birds. With the help of professors in the American studies and history departments, I was able to construct an argument that combined my academic strengths and enabled me to conduct primary research at Harvard University’s Houghton Library, which has one of the largest collections of John James Audubon’s papers. Faculty in the American studies, history and government departments chose my paper, entitled John James Audubon: Debunking the Myth of the Early Conservationist, as one of six papers to be presented at the Kuroda Symposium in early American politics and culture in April 2013. In May, I will also receive the American Studies Faculty Award, which is given to a graduating senior for academic excellence and growth in the major. Other academic highlights have been several courses including Regional Culture: The Hudson River (AM-250A), Methods and Approaches (AM-221), and The 1960s (AM-360C). Overall, the American studies major allowed me to study all of my academic pursuits and it has made me a more critical thinker as well.

- Evan Krasner (Major)

Kali Block-Steele 2013
Evan Krasner 2013
Mallory Mendelsohn 2013
Jared Seigal 2013
Alexandra Becker 2013
Mallie Buffum 2013
Taylor Dafoe 2013
Rachel Kim 2013
Meghan Leishman 2013
Marcos Luna 2013
Michael Pannozzi 2013
Victoria Young 2013
Isaac Forman 2014
Kyle Giard-Chase 2014
Gabrielle Gignoux-Wolfsohn 2014
Grace Hammerstein 2014
Mackenzie Lacy 2014
Christopher Lawton 2014
Julia Mandel-Folly 2014
Veronica Monroe 2014
Matthew Schonfeld 2014
Jung-Hee Schwartz 2014
Aidan Shimonov 2014
Martha Snow, 2014
Rebecca Stern, 2014
Alicia Pierce 2015
Harrison Priest 2015
Brooks Robinson 2015
Robyn Baird 2014
Melissa Davis 2014
Elijah Johnston 2014
Michael Rivera 2014
Lawrence Siegel 2014
Molly Sinsheimer 2014
Michelle Tarkulich 2014
Rebecca Baruc 2015
Joanna Mendelsohn 2015
Elizabeth Pattison 2015
Alicia Pierce 2015
Harrison Priest 2015
Brooks Robinson 2015
Exhibit and the American South. The students in these courses accomplished an impressive amount of work, and some earned recognition for their efforts. Students in Professor Krefting’s AM376E: Disorderly Women course fulfilled a service learning component by working with Camp Little Notch, a non-profit camp in the Adirondacks, for which they raised $3,000 for need-based scholarships. Jared Seigal and Evan Krasner received Joanna Zangrando Student Opportunity Funds for travel to primary source repositories associated with their senior capstone projects. Martha Snow (’14) was selected as the department’s SEE-Beyond nominee, and she was granted funds to complete an internship this summer at MASS Creative, an organization that works with creative leaders, artists, and arts educators “to advocate for the resources and attention necessary to build vibrant, connected, and creative communities.”

In its spare time, the faculty has been busy working on scholarship. Dan Nathan’s latest book, Rooting For the Home Team: Sport, Community, and Identity, has been published by the University of Illinois Press. The manuscript of Beck Krefting’s book All Joking Aside: American Humor and Its Discontents has been completed and will be published by the Johns Hopkins University Press next year. Mary Lynn is collaborating with twelve scholars and writers on a book celebrating 150 years of Saratoga history. And I have just completed the manuscript for a book tentatively titled History Repeating Itself: The Re-Publication Phenomenon and the Christian Right which deals 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 explore the original context in which these works were created and investigate the recent efforts of various contemporary publishers, primarily on the Christian Right, to reissue such works for home school markets.

Finally, join me in congratulating Professor Mary Lynn who was selected to receive the Distinguished Service Award, an honor conferred on the faculty member who has done more than all others in the areas of governance and citizenship. She was also one of several faculty honored with a President’s Award for participation in the Apocalypse Project. We’ll need to take the opportunity to celebrate Mary’s many accomplishments over the next few months, as she will retire from the department in December of this year after more than 45 years of service to the college.

That sums up a very busy year in American Studies at Skidmore. I would be remiss if I did not mention that the faculty beat the majors and minors in our annual bowling outing this past fall. The students dominated on the bumper car track, however, which, as several of them reminded me, is what really matters.

Have a safe and enjoyable summer everyone.

Greg Pfitzer
Interim Chair, American Studies

Alumni News

Elise Fariello is now officially enrolled in American University for their Public History MA program for fall semester 2013. She is excited to move to DC and get settled into a program. We wish you the best in this endeavor Elise!
This year, as in years past, has been a busy one full of many rewards. Summer 2012, I had the good fortune to receive a Faculty-Student Summer Research grant from Skidmore, wherein I was able to work with Becky Stern, a bright American Studies major already familiar with my research. Among a variety of tasks accomplished over the summer, we traveled to New York City to conduct research at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts informing a new chapter for my book. Her assistance was invaluable in making progress towards completion of my manuscript: *All Joking Aside: American Humor and Its Discontents*.

In March, I happily submitted a completed manuscript to Johns Hopkins University Press and the wheels are in motion for publication (forthcoming 2014). I turned my attention towards gathering data informing an article investigating whether social media has done anything to create gender parity in the stand-up comedy profession. Spoiler alert: it has not. I presented my findings in Chicago, IL at the Gender Matters Annual Conference in April. Other works in progress include a review essay for Yael Kohen’s book: *We Killed: The Rise of Women in American Comedy* (2012) and I am in the very nascent stages of researching for a new monograph project.

I taught a range of courses over the last year—some new and some old with fun updates—including *AM 376E Disorderly Women*. The course entails a service learning project, which changes each time the course is taught. In this iteration of the course, students developed a series of fundraising events to generate need-based scholarships (a.k.a. camperships) for Camp Little Notch, a progressive all-girls camp located in the Adirondacks. Throughout the fall semester students wrote grants and secured funding to put on FemFest 2012, which consisted of musical, spoken word and comedic benefit performances as well as working in tandem with the staff at the Tang Museum to host a silent auction. Incredibly, students raised over $3,000 during FemFest 2012 for camperships. Additionally, some students visited the camp to connect with staff and camp counselors and were so inspired by the experience that they began volunteering, creating curriculum and arranged their summer to work as camp staff. In the spring, I trotted out a new course in popular culture studies focusing on post-apocalyptic film and literature. The students and I had a marvelous time covering this material and exploring the genre’s impact on American identity and culture.

My service commitments this year have provided valuable experience such as working with the Education Studies Department on their search for a tenure-track hire in the department. In the Subcommittee on Responsible Citizenship, I was a part of a small working group that drafted definitions that we hope will become the basis for determining how civic engagement courses will be identified and earmarked by the Registrar’s Office. Be on the lookout for that in the coming years.
Field Trip to Hyde Park

Greg Pfitzer’s 1960s class put on a radio show on WSPN 91.1 FM, Skidmore’s radio station. Students had the opportunity to think and talk about songs they admired during those years. Each student gave background information on the song they chose along with the year it was recorded and anecdotal information on the songs. As Professor Pfitzer put it, “Our definition of the 1960s is more expansive” “We call it the long 60s”. The songs selected range from the 1950s to the 1970s. The show was recorded by our Media Services department to copy onto CD’s as a keepsake for our students. Here is the play list:

### Playlist Disc 1
1. “Stand By Me”, Ben E. King, 1961 (Erin Cauley)
2. “Give Us Your Blessings, Shangri Las, 1965 (Grace Hammerstein)
3. “Bread and Butter”, New Beats, 1964 (Christopher Lawton)
4. “The Times are a-Changin”, Bob Dylan, 1964 (Rachel Kim)
5. “Seven and Seven Is,” Love, 1966 (Veronica Monroe)
7. “America”, Simon & Garfunkel, 1966 (Becky Stern)
8. “Old Friends”, Simon & Garfunkel, 1966 (Molly Sinsheimer)

### Playlist Disc 2
15. “This is Not A Song, It’s an Outburst, Rodriguez, 1970 (Martha Snow)
Megan E. Williams '04

After earning my PhD with Honors from the University of Kansas in 2012, I am thrilled to return to Skidmore College as a visiting faculty member in the American Studies department.

This spring, I taught three new courses. In AM 103 - Introduction to American Studies, we analyzed The Wizard of Oz narrative as an evolving American myth. Starting with L. Frank Baum's The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, we studied the ways that Oz adaptations - including the MGM classic film, The Wiz, Wicked, The Muppets' Wizard of Oz, and Tin Man - have reflected and shaped American culture.

Drawing on my research interests, I modified Daniel Nathan's AM 233 - American Past in Film class. We explored representations of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability in Classical Hollywood cinema. Students presented papers on a variety of films from the silent and "golden" eras of Hollywood moviemaking.

Finally, I offered World War II: The Home Front and Beyond, a new AM 360 - American Cultural Periods course. In this seminar, we studied home-front popular culture, American identity, and the fight for a "Double Victory" over fascism abroad and discrimination at home. Students wrote fascinating papers on a range of topics including the gendered implications of representations of veterans with disabilities in postwar social problem films; the public response to American and German concentration camps; the wartime significance of our "national pastime" for marginalized groups, specifically African Americans, white women, and Japanese American internees; wartime propaganda and food rationing; the mediated reality of the "Good War" and the evolution of first-person shooter games; and the postwar desegregation of the U.S. military.

This summer and fall, I will teach Jazz, Race, and Gender, an adaptation of Lewis Rosengarten's AM 236 - Jazz: A Multicultural Expression, in which we will study the intersections of race and gender in twentieth-century jazz contexts. I look forward to offering The Wizard of Oz as a writing seminar and a new AM 376 - Topics in American Culture class called Black-Jewish Studies in the fall as well.


Needless to say, I feel privileged to have this opportunity to work with intelligent and passionate students at my alma mater alongside my mentors, Professors Mary Lynn, Daniel Nathan, and Gregory Pfitzer, and my new colleague, Professor Beck Krefting. Thank you to my students, the AM faculty, Sue Matrazzo, and the department's student assistants for making my first semester back at Skidmore such a wonderful experience.
FALL COURSES 2013

Am 103 Intro to American Studies
Daniel Nathan
TuTh, 9:40-11:00
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, theater, television, and music) and from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. In addition to reading Baum’s The Wonderful Wizard of Oz (1900), students will consider MGM’s The Wizard of Oz (1939); the “super soul” Broadway musical, The Wiz (1975), and its 1978 film adaptation; Pink Floyd’s The Dark Side of the Moon (1973); Gregory Maguire’s Wicked (1996); Stephen Schwartz’s 2003 Broadway musical version of the Maguire novel; ABC television’s The Muppets’ Wizard of Oz (2005); and the television mini-series Tin Man (2007).

Am 103W Intro to Wizard of Oz
Megan Williams
Tu, Th 12:40-2:00
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. By analyzing these topics, reading about them, writing about them, and thinking about and discussing various aspects of each, we will work to gain a greater understanding of how social change occurs, and what studying reproduction can tell us about the evolution of American society.

AM 230 Born in America
Mary C. Lynn
Tu, Th 11:10-12:30
An exploration of the changing ways in which American women have experienced contraception, abortion, pregnancy, and childbirth from 1587 to the present. We will examine developments in technology, law, medicine, the economy, and the role and position of women and the family in society as they have influenced the reproductive lives of American women, using sources from the history of medicine, social history, literature, legal and constitutional studies, government and sociology. Issues we will consider include social childbirth and the role of the midwife in the colonial period, the masculinization of obstetrics, introduction of anesthesia, criminalization of abortion in the nineteenth century, the struggle for reproductive freedom and the introduction of hospital birth, as well as the legalization of abortion and introduction of alternative birthing patterns in the twentieth century.

AM 234 Sports American Culture
Mel Adelman
MW 4:00-5:20
A historical examination of three hundred years of sport in America as an important and revealing site of popular expression, conflict and cultural meaning. Special attention is devoted to the ways in which contemporary sports provide a
window into politics, economics, racial and ethnic relations, class formation and gender identity. Students analyze the ways in which Americans have played, watched and understood sports and will focus on some of the recurrent cultural values, trends, and symbolism associated with American athletes and public life.

AM 236 Jazz: Multicultural Expression
Megan Williams MW 2:30-3:50

JAZZ, RACE, AND GENDER

This course is neither a “traditional” historical survey of jazz styles and musicians, nor a close reading of the structures of the music itself. Rather, “Jazz, Race, and Gender” is an interdisciplinary introduction to theories of race and gender – as they intersect with other social categories such as class, sexuality, and nation – as lenses for studying jazz and its impact on U.S. culture. Focusing mainly on U.S. expression from the 1920s to 1960s, we will consider the ways that racial and gender dynamics have shaped the history and criticism of American jazz culture. Through reading, listening, viewing, discussing, and writing, students will learn skills for analyzing the meanings of gender and race within jazz contexts.

AM 260J: Diversity in the United States
Beck Krefting | TuTh, 2:10-3:30

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 characterize a culturally diverse democracy by examining how accepted cultural traditions intersect with contested themes such as race, the family, adoption, gender, sexuality, and education. (Fulfills social sciences requirement; designated as a Cultural Diversity course.)

AM 331: Critical Whiteness in the U.S.
Beck Krefting M 6:10-9:00
4 Credits

Critical Whiteness in the U.S.

AM 360A: The 1920s

Mary C. Lynn | W/F 10:10-11:30

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.
My study abroad has been amazing. I have had a chance to travel abroad and explore London as well. London is so diverse and multi-ethnic with a huge range of food and drink choices. One of my favorite activities is going to the markets on the weekends. I am lucky to live near Borough market, which has gourmet food available everyday. I live on the South Bank and am a ten-minute walk from the Tate Modern, London Eye and other cultural venues. I often walk across Waterloo Bridge to get to class and can see the Big Ben, Houses of Parliament, and Thames River.

So far I have been to Canterbury, Paris, Barcelona, Rome and Florence. I am planning another trip in June after exams and anticipate going to Amsterdam, Berlin, Prague and possibly Morocco. I am still working out the details for that trip. I feel extremely lucky to be here and everyday is a new adventure. Being abroad has made me more conscious of other cultures and how to navigate them respectfully. I am very lucky to live in a big city where anything I want is available to me. London has the most amazing museum culture and the art galleries are always busy. The best part is all of them are free (with a few exceptions for special exhibitions).
Fall Course Preview continued

AM 374: Senior Seminar
Daniel Nathan
Tu,Th 3:40-5:50

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.

Faculty News

As some of you know, I was on sabbatical (which is one of the most beautiful words in the English language) this year and had a productive, interesting, and invigorating experience. I read, wrote, and travelled. I walked a lot, too. In October, I attended a workshop at Penn State about The Lives (and Deaths) of American National Pastimes. My paper was titled, “Baseball as the National Pastime: A Fiction Whose Time is Past.” A month later, I was on a panel at the American Studies Association in San Juan, Puerto Rico, where Greg and Mia Pfitzer and I had a great dinner. Later in November, I spoke at a symposium on basketball at the University of Texas. That was great fun, one of the highlights of which was spending time with basketball Hall of Famer and former U.S. Senator Bill Bradley. Throughout the sabbatical, I worked on my book about the Negro leagues and how they have been represented, remembered, and forgotten. But I also wrote a few other things: some book reviews, a film review, and two essays—one for a book about sport and Washington, D.C., and another about sport and the law. I also put the finishing touches on my book Rooting For the Home Team: Sport, Community, and Identity (University of Illinois Press), which was recently published. At the same time, I served my second and final year as the President-Elect of the NorthAmerican Society for Sport History (NASSH). My main duty in that position was to organize the 2013 NASSH conference, which is this May in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Looking forward to that. This summer, Greg will pass the American Studies Chair baton back to me, after doing a great job this past year. (That guy is awesome.) I’m going to keep plugging away on my writing projects, move down the street to a new house, and prepare to teach Senior Seminar (Greg will be on his much-deserved sabbatical during the 2013-14 academic year) and a new version of intro to American Studies, which will be centered on 1968. I also hope to get to a few Orioles games and eat some crab cakes.