



American Studies

Newsletter

SKIDMORE COLLEGE

Spring 2018

For most of you, it will be unsurprising to learn that American Studies had another productive, interesting year. That is our tradition, after all. Some of you, however, may not know that we experienced some sorrowful losses, too. But first, the good news, of which there is plenty.

As always, we offered some fabulous classes and taught some great, engaged students. Blessed with a large cohort of American Studies seniors, their work in Senior Seminar resulted in a binder chockfull of interesting theses about a wide variety of subjects, from birth justice and doulas to intercollegiate athletics reform to how social media platforms are influencing the identity of millennials. We are proud to report that four of those students—Miller Fina, Magden Gipe, Laila Morgan, and Jack Spiegelman—wrote Honor Theses in the spring and presented their work at Academic Festival, which was once again well attended. The presentations were superb.

Speaking of presentations, our annual departmental lecture was in September. We hosted Erik Christiansen of Rhode Island College and the author of *Channeling the Past: Politicizing History in Postwar America* (2013). Christiansen's lecture was titled "When the Illegals Were White (Russians): Protecting Refugees in Restrictionist America." It was a timely and fascinating subject. Interestingly, Christiansen devoted some of his research and remarks to immigrants who came to Saratoga Springs. Christiansen also attended Senior Seminar and offered some helpful strategies for our thesis-writing seniors.

American Studies also co-sponsored and participated in many on-campus lectures and events. With International Affairs, we co-sponsored a lecture by Betsy Hartmann, professor emerita at Hampshire College, a feminist, and developmental economist. Her talk was titled "The American Obsession with Apocalypse: Puritan Legacies, Nuclear War and the Dangers of Doomsday Environmentalism." We also partnered with the John B. Moore Documentary Studies Collaborative (MDOCS) and co-sponsored a lecture and workshop by Amy Starecheski, the Co-Director of Oral History MA Program at Columbia University. I'm pleased to report that Beck Krefting took our Methods and Approaches students to the workshop, which was smart. We also contributed to a screening (organized by our History Department colleague Kate Paarlberg-Kvam) of the documentary *No Más Bebés*, which is about a landmark event in reproductive justice, when a small group of Mexican immigrant women sued county doctors, the state, and the U.S. government after they were sterilized while giving birth at Los Angeles County-USC Medical Center during the late 1960s and early 1970s. In February, our own Greg Pfitzer gave the Skidmore Spring Research Colloquium talk, which was titled

Department Chairs letter cont'd.

“Fake History: Teaching Children about the Past in the Age of Trump.” Well attended, GP’s lecture discussed how two collections of history books for children—one from the nineteenth century and the other from the twentieth—are being recycled for use in home schools and educational institutions by those looking to promote customized versions of a “post-factual” past, and how those who are repurposing such texts are contributing to an epistemological crisis among history educators concerning how to teach children about historical truth. It was an energizing event, with lots of bonhomie.

Sadly, tragically, a few weeks later, Greg and his family experienced an unexpected and devastating loss when Greg’s beloved wife Mia Pfitzer had an aneurysm and died while visiting family in Boston. Beck Krefting correctly notes that Mia “was an amazing woman and indefatigable in her support of us and this department. You could find her at our bowling parties, departmental social events, and always with a smile, a funny comment and kind ear. We are deeply saddened to lose someone so special, so young.” Mia was 59 and full of life, generosity, and good cheer. For those of you who missed it, Mia’s obituary can be found here:

http://www.burkefuneralhome.com/memsol.cgi?user_id=2076885

The outpouring of condolences and supportive phone calls, texts, emails, and handwritten cards we received was gratifying and a testament to a life well lived. We all miss Mia dearly.

Then, in late April, we learned that our colleague Amber Wiley decided to leave Skidmore and will take her considerable talents to Rutgers University in the fall. In the three years Amber worked at Skidmore, she taught some terrific classes and contributed to the department and college in numerous ways. We all benefited from her knowledge, hard work, generosity, positive energy, and warmth. Our loss is Rutgers’s gain. We will all miss Amber and her teenage niece Joo-Yung and wish them the best.

The silver lining in this personnel development is that Skidmore alumna extraordinaire, Emma Newcombe ’10, who just earned her PhD. in American Studies from Boston University, will be moving into Amber Wiley’s soon-to-be-vacated office. We’re very much looking forward to welcoming Emma back to Skidmore and to working with her. We’re not the only ones. Our English department colleague Professor Catherine Golden is similarly thrilled to have Emma back on campus.

Keeping with transitions, it is with pride and pleasure that I am handing over the American Studies department’s chairpersonship to Beck Krefting, effective June 1. It was an honor to be chair these past eight years. I think we did some good things and kept the trains running on time. But to everything there is a season. Fortunately, Beck is unusually well prepared to take over the department’s reins and we all have complete confidence in her as a leader. She is going to be a great chair and we will all be the beneficiaries of her administrative work.

Finally, as I say every year in this space, there is a bittersweet quality to the end of the academic year. It is of course a time of celebration and excitement for our graduating seniors. Yet we are also sad to see them fly the American Studies nest. Still, we know that they are going to do great things in the world and make it a better place. We wish them, and all of you, the best. Please, drop us a line. We love to hear what you’re all doing.

Hope everyone has a great summer.

Sincerely,

DN

American Studies Majors

2018

Ari Bogom-Shanon
Alessandra Canario
Nora Faber
Miller Young Fina
Magden Gipe
Brian Hall
Devon Kilburn
Lisanny Manzueta
Laila Morgan
Lucas Pickering
Zoe Resnick
Jack Spiegelman
Bailey Wilmit

2019

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

2020

Eve Gertzman
Max Grossman
Kit Meyer
Liza Pennington
Charlotte Sweeney
Henry Thomas
Noah Walker
Adam Weinreb
Issac Weiss-Meyer

2021

Julia Boral
Sylas Hebert

American Studies Minors

2018

Ari Fustini
Meaghan McDonald
Emma Sturdevant
Louise Sullivan
Allison Trunkey
Emily Walter

2019

Lexi Parker
Wyeth Taylor

DEPARTMENT & PROGRAM HONORS

2018

(Distinguished Work in a Major
Field)

***With Honors in American Studies**

***Miller Young Fina**

***Laila Maria Morgan**

***Jack Morrison Spiegelman**



Beck Krefting

Last summer my wife and I hit the road in Europe chasing temperate climates and good swimming holes. We moseyed through the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, and Scotland, finally landing in England. Along the way I ate rijsttafel, schnitzel, and haggis and picked up wooden puppets, glass jewelry, and hypothermia. Next time I plan to swim across a lake, I would do well to have a wet suit warm enough for the challenge. Life's lessons can be cold sometimes.

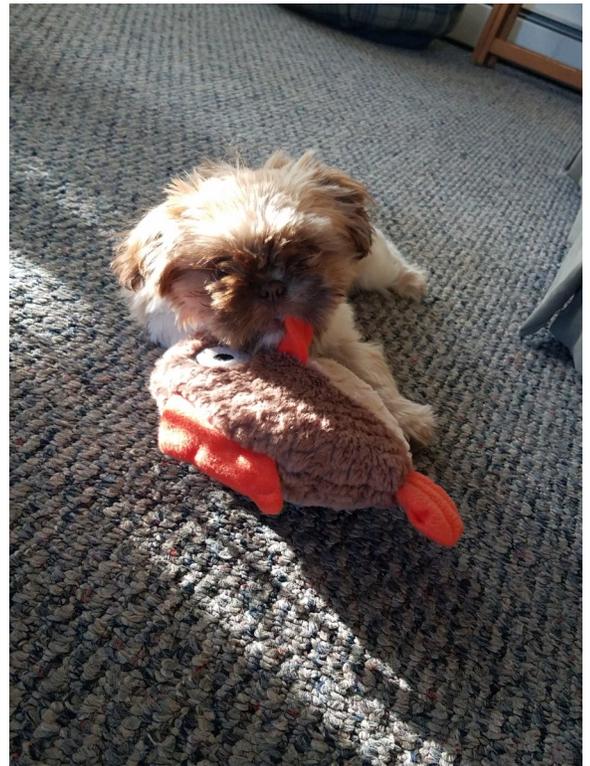


After watching incredible comedy at the Fringe Festival in mid-August, I met up with the London first-year cohort. Together we roamed the streets of the city watching shows and patronizing museums; our adventures included trips to Stratford-upon-Avon and Edinburgh. Miraculously, no one lost any limbs on my watch but we did flirt with diabetes as we plowed through popular English desserts like eton mess, sticky toffee pudding, and scones with clotted cream. Speaking of food, throw a crumpet in London and you will hit someone on a walking tour. There are a bevy of them for you to enjoy, ranging from the gruesome but popular Jack the Ripper tours, to Unseen tours led by the ex-homeless who reveal off the beaten path gems in their neighborhoods. In my class, called Comics, Satirists, Jesters, and Hacks: Locating British Humor, I took the “locating” part seriously by having students devise a one-hour walking tour covering two miles in the heart of London focusing on the history of comedic cultural forms including: music halls, variety theaters, working-men’s clubs, and stand-up comedy clubs. Students researched and selected the venues, paid site visits to plan walking routes, and provided information about the physical site—its patronage, surrounding neighborhood, and, of course, detailed information about the entertainment that went on inside the building. Engaging with primary source materials about legendary venues like the Palladium and Palace Theater, students considered questions such as: whose perspective is privileged; whose history is included or excluded; and, more pragmatically, what are effective strategies for guiding a tour safely, maintaining interest, and troubleshooting for environmental shifts?

With heavy hearts and distended bellies, we left London and returned to the States. It was truly a trip of a lifetime but being gone reminded me just how much I enjoy my colleagues. It was good to be back home at Skidmore where I taught three classes in the spring, two of which I have not taught in several years: AM-266: Diversity in the US and AM-331: Critical Whiteness Studies. It was fun to revisit and update that course content. One of the semester’s highlights was working with Tang staff to curate an exhibit with students enrolled in AM-331 based on course themes such as the social construction of race, the problematics of a black/white binary, and whiteness as the invisible norm. Students learned about the curation process: researching and selecting art work, developing a cohesive exhibit with introductory text, placement of art in the gallery, and writing effective labels. The exhibit, titled: “When and Where I Enter... : A Race Project,” will be up in the Winter Gallery from October 20, 2018 – January 6, 2019 and will feature art work from Kara Walker, Carrie Mae Weems (whose work doubles as the namesake of the exhibit), Jeff Sonhouse, Kerry James Marshall, Nikki Lee, and more.

Beck Krefting continued

Although it appears that all I do is travel, eat, and play with students, I do continue to maintain a robust research agenda. In the past year, I published two chapters in edited collections, one on Margaret Cho's comedy in *Hysterical! Women in American Comedy* (University of Texas Press) and the other on gendered discourses in stand-up comedy in *Transgressive Humor of American Women Writers* (Palgrave MacMillan). Forthcoming publications in edited volumes include a chapter on Maria Bamford as a public intellectual, another that examines the discourses of political correctness and their impact on the economy of stand-up comedy, and a third chapter that focuses on rhetorical strategies comics employ to discuss marginalized identities (usually in bigoted ways, though that is not a foregone conclusion). I am currently writing a piece on feminist media studies for a special issue of the *Cinema Journal* (forthcoming 2019). Busy times lie ahead when it comes to the research front and I continue to make time to speak about my scholarship. This spring, I accepted invitations to the University of South Carolina and University of Copenhagen and will also head to a couple conferences this summer in San Francisco and Chicago. Other summer travels will take us to Montreal, Burlington, and Lake Winnepesaukee.



We are enjoying staying close to home for much of the summer since we just bought a house and got a puppy. Part deep thinker and part fartlek runner, Eli Stilton is a five-month old shih tzu with an appetite for popcorn and pant cuffs. In the fall, you will find us roaming around campus or playing with plushies in my newly renovated office. I will be stepping up to be Chair of the American Studies Department and to the impossible task of replacing Dan Nathan who has served us faithfully for eight years. The truth is that the department deserves better than me and everyone's faith in me is misguided; that said, Dan and Greg may have taught me *just enough* to

keep this ship from sinking. I will try not to embarrass the family. To all 2018 graduates: You inspire me... now go out and do the same with the rest of the world.

Professor Gregory Pfitzer

I had a full academic year, replete with classes to prepare, papers to grade, and examinations to deliver. In the fall I taught AM-374: Senior Seminar and helped shepherd fourteen hardworking students through the rather exhaustive editorial process of producing a senior capstone research paper. I also taught for the second time AM-265: Pop History, where (among many other things) we read and critiqued the work of Erik Christensen, who was this year's annual departmental lecturer. In addition, I offered a new version of a course developed by my former colleague Megan Williams on *The Wizard of Oz*. The class examined the cultural impact of L. Frank Baum's novel *The Wizard of Oz* (1900) and its various twentieth and twenty-first century adaptations, including MGM's 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz*, the African-American musical *The Wiz*, the novel *Wicked*, and the SyFy Channel miniseries *Tin Man*. Students studied the original novel and its sequels, reflecting on the social, economic, and political contexts of each. They also considered how revised and reinvented versions of the Baum narrative reflect and shape cultural anxieties as they intersect with gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, age, spirituality, and consumerism as categories of analysis. A variety of methods and approaches were employed, especially myth/symbol theory, feminism, queer theory, and performance studies.

In the spring I taught two courses: AM-221: Methods and Approaches and AM-368: The Sixties. In the latter course, which dealt extensively with the vagaries of historical memory, we interviewed via Skype one of the founders of the Diggers movement in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood in San Francisco in the late 1960s, actor Peter Coyote. He spoke with us at length about the efforts his group made to “develop collaborative social structures, trade groups, relationships with other peoples.” He admitted that “looking back, it's fair to say that we lost all of the political battles. We didn't end war, we didn't end racism, we didn't end neo-liberalism, we didn't end capitalism, we didn't end misogyny, we didn't end the domination of corporate medicine, corporate everything.” Yet he acknowledged the important legacies of the movement as well. “If you look on the cultural level, we won everything,” he told us. “We swept the board. There's no place that you can't go today where there's not an active women's movement, where there's not organic food, where there are not alternative medical practices, homeopathy, naturopathy, acupuncture, herbalism. Where there are not alternative religious practices, yoga, Tibetan Buddhism, Zen Buddhism.” Coyote concluded that historical memory is time sensitive. He explained, “We were borne out to be correct in putting our emphasis on culture but the truth of it is that we had exaggerated timelines. We were young. My father told me that the changes we were looking for would take fifty years and the time's not up from the day he said that.”



Professor Gregory Pfitzer cont.

I also delivered the Spring Faculty Research Colloquium “Fake History: Teaching Children about the past in the Age of Trump.” The premise of the talk was that we have entered a “post-truth” world in which “objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.” I considered what this relativistic outlook implies for teaching children about history, a discipline traditionally devoted to rational argumentation and rigorous evidentiary standards. I discussed how two collections of history books for children—one from the nineteenth century and the other from the twentieth—are being recycled for use in home schools and educational institutions by those looking to promote customized versions of a “post-factual” past, and how those who are repurposing such texts are contributing to an epistemological crisis among history educators concerning how to teach children about truth and value.

Finally, for reasons that are discussed elsewhere in this newsletter, it has been a difficult year for me personally. I want to acknowledge the wonderful support I have received from my colleagues in American Studies—Dan, Amber, Beck, and Sue—who pinch-hit for me when I was away from campus, and who have provided friendship, dog sitting, and many excellent meals over the past few months. I also want to thank my students who were understanding of my absences and who helped pull me through a trying spring term.

With appreciation,

Greg Pfitzer



American Studies Alumni



Junghee Schwartz '14
Marketing and Project Coordinator
San Francisco, California



Becky Stern '14
Associate at Pythia Public
Affairs
Greater New York City Area



Callison Stratton '12
Director of Visitor Services at
the Museum at Eldridge Street
New York City



Kyle Giard Chase '14
Junior Developer at Metal
Toad



Carrie von Glahn Jenkins '08
Prevention and Training Specialist
at the Children's Trust
Boston, Massachusetts



Mack Lacy '14
Operational Support Manager
EF High School Exchange
Somerville, Massachusetts



Evan Krasner '13
MA Program in
American Studies at
the University of Iowa.



Nevon Kipperman '16
Associate at ACTIVATE
Tenafly, New Jersey

Amber Wiley

This is a bit of a swan song, as it is my last newsletter update as part of the American

Studies Department at Skidmore. In the fall I taught three classes – The City, (AM-101W), The African-American Experience (AM-264) and History and Theory of Historic Preservation (AM-351D). The first two courses included slight modification, while the third was created anew in tandem with the IdeaLab grant funded by the Arthur Vining Davis Foundation. Students in The City worked on their narrative writing skills as well as film analysis, with specific focus on investigations of place. Sample narrative essays included application of Kevin Lynch’s notions of paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks from his seminal work *The Image of The City*, while film essays analyzed movies where the urban location is central to the plot, such as *Gangs of New York* and *Blade Runner*. Students in The African-American Experience spent a significant amount of time at the Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery, contemplating works in three exhibits: *If I Had Possession Over Judgement Day: Collections of Claude Simard*, *Other Side: Art, Object, Self*, and *Opener 30 Njideka Akunyili Crosby: Predecessors*. Their final project consisted of an art analysis of either Crosby’s multimedia series or Yinka Shonibare’s photographic series *Dorian Gray*. The inclusion of the Crosby work into the class was part of the Teagle Foundation grant “Teaching and Learning with Museum Exhibitions: An Inter-Institutional Approach.” Finally, *History and Theory of Historic Preservation* students spent time learning inside and outside the classroom, with guided site visits to the Universal Preservation Hall, Saratoga Springs Preservation Foundation, and the Saratoga Springs History Museum.

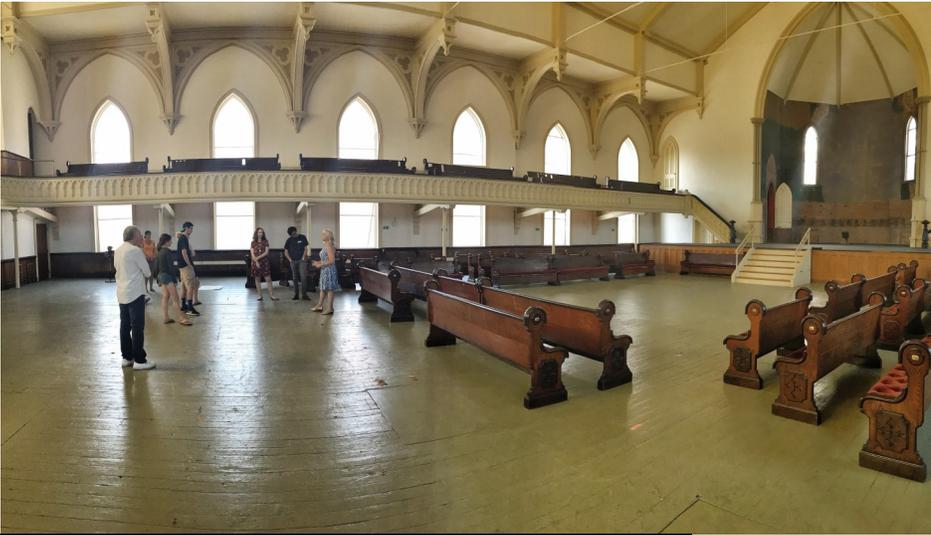


My spring course load was lighter, though the semester was no less professionally rigorous. I had a course release for my work as the Associate Director of the Intergroup Relations program. I helped to oversee implementation of the spring dialogues as well as other administrative tasks related to the minor. I also served on the Art History Search Committee for an Africanist, a long but enlightening process. I taught the second half of my IdeaLab course, Historic Preservation Practicum (AM-351C). Through some creative imagining of the course, as well as the Saratoga-focused theme of urban renewal, I was able to have the course designated as an Applied Civic Engagement class and engaged with the *This Place* exhibit at the Tang, another Teagle Foundation project. Students in the small class visited various archives in the city, heard from local historians, and took a longer trip to Schenectady to learn about that city’s experience with urban renewal. The class met with several challenges that semester, not the least of which was the ferocious winter which led to class cancellations and rescheduling trips and lectures.

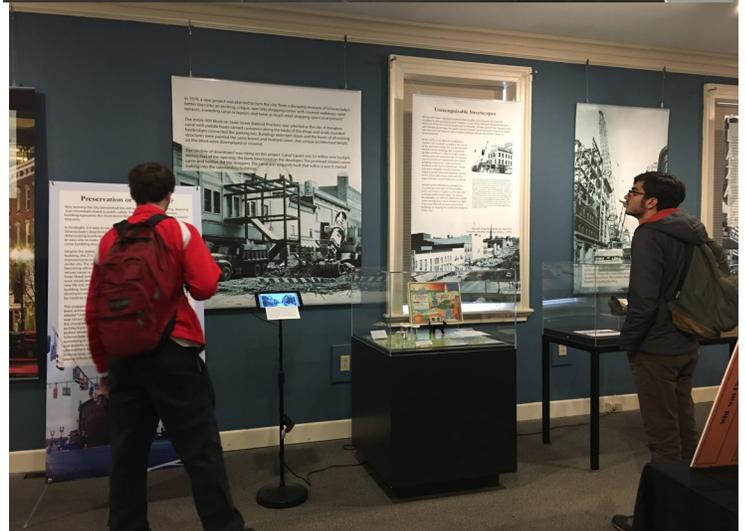
My work in public history expanded over the course of the year, as I teamed up with the Tang on its first *Accelerate* publication, contributing two essays: “[Amber N. Wiley on Teaching with the Tang Collection](#),” and “[Carrie Mae Weems, When and Where I Enter the British Museum](#),” portions of which are available in video form on the Tang website. I also worked as a consultant for the Historical Society of Washington, D.C., for the exhibit [Community Policing in the Nation’s Capital: The Pilot District Project, 1968-1973](#) at the National Building Museum. In addition to my consultant work, I gave two lectures related to the exhibit, the first entitled “The Alphabet Soup of Community Activism: PDP in the Context of MICCO” at the Annual Conference on Washington, DC Historical Studies, then a second entitled “The People of the Pilot District Project” at the National Building Museum. I also published a short profile in the spring issue of *Washington History* on Carlos Rosario, a Latinx community activist affiliated with the Pilot District Project. Finally, I teamed up with former colleagues and students from Tulane on the [Paper Monuments](#) project, an initiative of Colloqate Design. I was the storyteller for the [Pythian Temple poster](#) in the Paper Monuments series.

Amber Wiley cont.

Beyond these endeavors I gave three separate lectures focused on diversity, equity, and social justice in historic preservation at the University of Pennsylvania, the [University of Virginia](#), and here at [Skidmore College](#). I reworked a previous journal article for inclusion in an edited volume on preservation that is forthcoming from Routledge, and published two book reviews, one in the [Journal of Architectural Education](#) and the other in the [Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians](#). I am currently working on an entry for the *Sub-Saharan Africa: Architectural Guide* that will be published this fall. Last, but certainly not least, I joined the steering committee of the [Progressive Preservation Network](#), an organization that was “formed following the 2016 election to bring together educators, designers, and other professionals to advance equitable, sustainable, and inclusive practices and philosophies in the field of historic preservation.”



It has been quite a busy year, one where I have grown as a scholar and as a teacher. I am thankful for the three years at Skidmore where I have been a member of the best department in the college, and for the wonderful working relations I have cultivated with the staff, faculty, and students in the Intergroup Relations Program, at the Tang, in MDOCS, the Office of Student Diversity Programs, and the Opportunity Program.



STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCE

Sydney Nathan

This past semester I studied abroad in South Africa through SIT's Multiculturalism and Human Rights Program. The program consisted of 4 homestays: a township just outside of Cape Town, the Bo Kaap area of Cape Town, Stellenbosch, and the rural village of Tshabo, which was located in the Eastern Cape. I had the experience of a lifetime. I learned about South Africa's history, culture, and people and got to visit dozens of iconic historical sites, as well as enjoy the beauty of the country. I cannot wait to go back.



STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCE

Gill Hurtig An Abroad Experience to Dublin

I had a difficult task ahead of me when I began researching study abroad programs last summer. As an English and American Studies double major, I found that if I wanted my experience to count for credit back at Skidmore, I would be confined to learning in an English-speaking country. I could join the Skidmore study abroad program in London, or I could go to Dublin, Ireland, with a program created by the University of Minnesota. I chose Dublin. I thought the Skidmore program would include too many students I already knew, and therefore lack many of the important social challenges of study-abroad. I also thought of this decision as an opportunity to study with students from the Midwest, reaching back to my own roots in Chicago.

I didn't, however, anticipate the intimacy of the program I was joining. I had heard the program was new, and fairly small, but only after completing the paperwork did I learn that there were only eleven of us on the program, and the rest of the group were University of Minnesota students. Needless to say, I felt like the odd man out.



My entire program (except for one person) in Northern Ireland

Despite all of this, I couldn't have asked for a better study abroad adventure. I expected my experience to be polarizing, but I found that all of us on the program became closer than any of us could have imagined. Our various explorations, inside and outside of Dublin—Kilmainham jail one day, the Cliffs of Moher the next—brought us together. And even though at first impression none of those kids would have been people I would have immediately connected with, after four months, I couldn't bear to leave them.

FALL 2018

AMERICAN STUDIES COURSE OFFERINGS

AM 101W 001 Eating in America

TR, 9:10-11:00, Professor Beck Krefting,
4 credits



This course is an interdisciplinary analysis of the evolution of American cuisine and food politics. Beginning with Native American and early European settler's foodways, we will study regional food patterns of the colonial period. The United States is host to a unique amalgamation of cultures, nationalities, and food traditions. In this class we will examine ethnic/national foodways and the impact of social and political conditions on them, i.e., enslavement, poverty, regional differences, pressures to assimilate, etc. We will also consider the development of distinctively American styles of cooking and eating in the 19th century with special attention to the effect of immigration, and explore the impact of science, business, technology, globalization and changing family patterns on U.S. food in the 20th and 21st centuries. This course will introduce you to disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives on American food and foodways as a way of deepening and broadening student understanding of American culture. Since American Studies focuses on identity, course assignments and readings will focus on race, gender, and class and the ways such identity categories influence the ways we eat in America.



AM 101W 002 Civil War in American Memory

MWF, 11:15-12:10,
Professor Gregory Pfitzer, 4 credits

This course 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, television, music, and re-enactors' conventions among other cultural sources, it focuses on how memory and history interact in the popular imagination to shape the cultural legacy of the conflict.

AM 231 001 Ethnic and Immigrant Experience

MW, 2:30-3:50, Visiting Professor, Emma Newcombe, 3 Credits

An introduction to the historical experience of several American ethnic and immigrant groups, including Native Americans, African Americans, and people from Latin America, Asia, and Europe. Emphasizing both the larger society's view of a particular ethnic group and that group's perception of its own experiences, the course examines the processes of the assimilation and acculturation, racism, nativism, ethnic conflict, and cultural survival mechanisms as found in historical monographs, films, novels, biographies and autobiographies, demographic materials and oral histories.

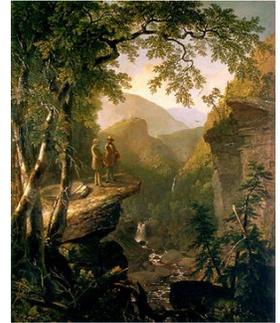
FALL 2018

AMERICAN STUDIES COURSE OFFERINGS

AM 252 001 Hudson River Culture

MWF, 9:05-10:00, Professor Gregory Pfitzer, 4 credits

This course is designed to introduce students to the culture of the Hudson River Valley. It deals with the Hudson River as an environmental entity, an economic and political concern, and especially as a cultural symbol. The focus will be local and national. Students will be asked to consider how popular and official attitudes toward the Hudson have reflected changing cultural priorities for residents of the valley and for the nation at large.



AM 265 001 Post-Apocalyptic Film and Literature

TR, 3:40-5:30,
Professor Beck Krefting,
4 credits

Fear of nuclear warfare in the mid-twentieth century led to a surge in family home bomb shelters and elaborate underground fortresses intended for high-profile public officials and authorities. A computer glitch that threatened to bring an end to the electronic age, spurred the Y2K problem, prompting people to hoard water and provisions on the millennium's cusp. Religious groups continue to forecast an apocalypse and the Mayan calendar predicted December 21, 2012 as that "end date." The DIY and self-subsistence movements reflect a desire to broaden our skill sets as much as they reflect a desire for readiness in the face of imminent disaster. Threats of an apocalypse shape human behavior, practices and identity. How these are imagined and what happens in the aftermath can tell us about who we are, how we will behave in crisis, what we are afraid of and who matters.

AM 361D 001 American Material Culture

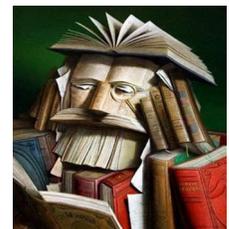
TR, 2:10-3:30, Visiting Professor Emma Newcombe, 4 credits

This course is an introduction to the material aspects of American culture—the variety of ways in which artifacts serve as social and cultural documents. Artifacts include three dimensional objects such as furniture, clothing, toys, buildings and other structures, architecture and art styles, as well as industrial archaeology and other aspects of the built environment that serve as tangible records of life and culture in the United States over time.

AM 374 00 Senior Seminar

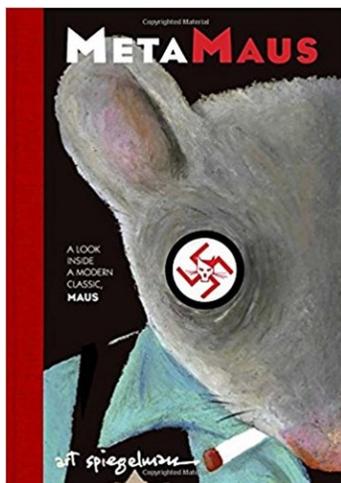
MW, 4:00-5:50, Professor Gregory Pfitzer, 4 Credits

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



Professor Daniel Nathan

Like most of us, I had a challenging, interesting year, with ups and downs. One constant was chairing the department, which I did for the eighth and final year. Another was my service on Skidmore's Committee on Appointments, Promotion, and Tenure (CAPT). It was my second year on CAPT and it was a rewarding and time and energy-consuming experience. Because of that work, I only taught one class in the fall. It was a brand-new course, something I have been thinking about and planning for a long time: The Holocaust and American Culture (AM-261C). The class employs an interdisciplinary methodology to critique and put in context a variety of texts—graphic non-fiction, museums, and films, among others—created by and for Americans that have represented the Shoah (“the catastrophe”). One of the most memorable things about the class was the four “super seniors” (i.e., senior citizens) who audited it: they were a pleasure and enriched the class in innumerable ways. Also in the fall, my review of Ezra Edelman's brilliant documentary on O.J. Simpson was published in the *Journal of Sport History*. I also published a chapter about Hollywood sports films in *LA Sports: Play, Games, and Community in the City of Angels* (2018). This spring, I taught my 1968 version of Introduction to American Studies (AM-101W) and, for the third time, Reading *The Wire* (AM-351D), which is about the critically acclaimed HBO TV series. Both classes had some super students and went well, I think, although I'm not always the best judge of these things. When the semester concluded, I had the pleasure of hosting my American Studies colleagues at my family's house in the Berkshires for a day-long retreat, where we discussed various assessment matters, ate some good food, and had some laughs. Later in May, I'm off to the annual North American Society for Sport History conference, which is being held at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg. I'm looking forward to the meeting, where I will reconnect with colleagues and some old friends. This year, I will be commenting on a session about baseball history and will give a paper titled “Taking Small-Time College Sports Seriously (and without Sentimentality).” This summer I'm going to keep plugging away on my writing projects, do some pleasure reading, travel with my family (out West), do some yard work, spend time in the Berkshires, and root for the Orioles, who are terrible this year, at least so far.



Academic Festival

American Studies Honor Theses

Faculty Sponsor: Daniel Nathan, American Studies

Presenters: Miller Fina '18, Magden Gipe '18, Laila Morgan '18, Jack Spiegelman '18



Jack Spiegelman '18, "Love & Haight in the 1960s"

No decade in American history has been defined by greater societal tumult and agitation to disrupt the status quo more than the 1960s. San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury neighborhood during this period offered a bold attempt to think and behave differently, questioning the mainstream and disrupting a society historically resistant to change. This podcast will present some of the stories, sounds and voices that shaped the height and would help to define generations to come.

Miller Fina '18, "Bad Apples Win: Gender, Race, and the State of Exception on post 9/11 Television"

My Honors Thesis is about how, in the post-9/11 world, television serials such as *24*, *Homeland*, and the *Hawaii Five-O* reboot are informed by and perpetuate trauma culture and the state of exception. I argue that these shows glorify hyper-masculinity, violent nationalism, and discrimination against the racialized Other. They also leave viewers suspicious of evil in their own backyards and in their government.

Laila Morgan '18, "Birth Justice through Birth Stories"

My Honors Thesis is an ethnographic exploration of racial disparities in local maternal healthcare systems, focusing on how doulas understand and act on the notion of birth justice. This project highlights the birth stories of eight women in the Capital Region. It uses oral histories of birth as valuable tools for understanding and achieving birth justice.

Academic Festival continued

Magden Gipe '18, "Appropriation as Celebration: A New View of Remixing"

By critiquing the stereotype of the "remix rebel," this paper documents a collective shift in attitudes towards copyright law and artistic appropriation in the digital age. It also refutes claims that remix artists are "copyright abolitionists" with no regard for the sanctity of ideas. Further, it discusses how remixes can express how an individual experiences popular culture. Ultimately, I argue that context is essential to understanding and appreciate remix art.



Message from Academic Festival Coordinators

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

AMERICAN STUDIES BOWLING NIGHT



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



Honors Convocation



Congratulations Laila Morgan
American Studies
Faculty Award recipient 2018



Laila Morgan '18

From biology to art history, practicing doula and maybe midwifery

Laila Morgan came to Skidmore considering biology and medicine but found fulfillment in the humanities. Morgan is now an American studies major. But, in an interdisciplinary fashion, she's blended her studies with art history, English, and, uniquely, her "side job" as a doula, a trained, non-medical person who stays with and assists a woman with the childbirth process.

Through the Tang Teaching Museum, Morgan even had the opportunity to display her own exhibition titled "Birthing Bodies" which doubled as her senior capstone project on birth justice and the role midwives and doulas play in it.

Congratulations 2018 American Studies Graduates

